

APRIL 2017

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds
of prayers and requests.*

Ephesians 6:18

THE GIFT OF INTERCESSION

A devotional from



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES

TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

I'll Pray for You



How often have you responded to a friend's troubles with these words: "I'll pray for you"? I know I have. Even though this response might

seem overused, we should never forget what a significant privilege it is to offer prayers to God on another's behalf.

Prayer is the most important thing we can do for others. Oswald Chambers, the Scottish author best known for his book *My Utmost for His Highest*, once said, "We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all."

Of course, we also care for each other in practical ways. We are called to "bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). In most church families, people come together to help when someone faces a serious illness, loss of a loved one, or financial hardship. I've watched church members bring meals, care for young children, sit for hours with the bereaved, or even shovel snow from a driveway.

But intercessory prayer, another privilege given to God's children, is also

powerful and necessary. At churches I have attended, I have seen intercessory prayer in practice. During weekly prayer meetings, members gather to share their needs and bring one another's requests before God. Some churches have a prayer chain— one member phones the next, asking God to provide healing or help for one of their own. Together, they pray for one another.

Some might think that praying on behalf of others should be done only by people who seem most holy. But reserving those prayers for the pastor or church leaders is simply not scriptural. Again and again, the apostle Paul asks ordinary men and women to pray on his behalf (see Rom. 15:30 and Col. 4:2–3).

James 5 urges us as well: "Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him (vv. 13–14). As James reminds us: "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (v. 16).

What a wonderful opportunity we have to carry every burden, both for ourselves and for others, before the Lord in prayer! May we never neglect this important task. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

Prayer and the Attributes of God

The believer's confidence in prayer is grounded in two fundamental attributes of God: His omnipotence and His omniscience. The divine attribute of omnipotence describes His power, and the attribute of omniscience describes His knowledge.

Our hope in prayer is rooted in the fact that God is unlimited in His power. He can bring to pass anything He wills. God is the Creator who brought heaven and earth into existence by His word (Gen. 1:1–3). God's omnipotence entails His sovereignty. He is ruler over all (Ps. 103:19). His omnipotence means that all God does must be consistent with His nature. For instance, God cannot lie or break His promises (Num. 23:19). He is not the author of sin.

Divine omniscience is a result of God's perfect knowledge. He knows everything before it comes to pass. He knows our thoughts, desires, and actions. The psalmist declares: "Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely" (Ps. 139:4). This perfect knowledge means that God understands what we need better than we do. This is why Jesus told His disciples not to babble like pagans hoping to impress God with the number of their words, "for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt. 6:8).

This certainty should not make us less inclined to pray; indeed, just the opposite. If God knows what we need before we ask, then we can be confident that He will take our requests seriously. If He has a better sense of what we need than we do, then we ought to make our requests without reservation, confident that He will only grant those answers that are in our best interest.

If He is omnipotent, we can pray in the certainty that nothing that we ask according to His will is beyond His ability to grant. As John Newton's hymn about prayer says, "Thou art coming to a King, large petitions with thee bring, for His grace and power are such none can ever ask too much."

God's omnipotence and omniscience are not the only attributes that shape our theology of prayer. We pray with an assurance of God's righteousness, loving-kindness and goodness. He will never harm us or answer us with spite. His answers to our requests always have His glory and our good as their intent. ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* by C. S. Lewis (Mariner).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Bruce Everhart

Thank You for Praying

One of the regular features of *Today in the Word* is the prayer request accompanying each day's devotional. You may have wondered why we ask you to pray for our employees by name.

Let me tell you about one sister in Christ whom you have encouraged with your prayers. Eunice Childress works as a staff accountant in Moody's Controller's Office. She commutes to Chicago each day from her home in Indiana. "I enjoy working at Moody because it provides a great opportunity to exercise my professional skills for the benefit of God's kingdom," she said. "Not everyone has the opportunity to provide for their family and serve the Lord in the same place, so I consider it a rare blessing."

Eunice prays with her department several times throughout the week, and she appreciates the prayers of *Today in the Word* readers on her behalf. She has specific examples of the blessings of your prayers.

A few years ago, one of my daughter's school friends was home. When her mom came to pick her up I came to answer the door. We didn't know each other very well then, so she asked me, "Do you work at Moody?" When I replied yes, she told me she had

prayed for me the day before when reading Today in the Word. I was very encouraged to hear that.

Another evening, I was accompanying my husband, who is a pastor, in his hospital visits. I was so blessed when one of the gentlemen we visited told me, "You guys are coming to pray for me, but you know, I prayed for you today with Today in the Word!"

Other employees have told me that in God's perfect timing, their name was featured on a day when they especially needed prayer support. You're our prayer warriors, and we are thankful for your role in this ministry.

As devoted readers of God's Word, you know we are called to be men and women of prayer. What a privilege to encourage one another to faithfully complete the tasks set before us, to "build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).

You play an integral role in what God is doing through Moody. As believers, we are one body, united in purpose, working toward a common goal. Thank you from all of us at Moody, and may God bless you and your loved ones this Easter as we celebrate our Risen Lord! ■

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

The Gift of Intercession

Many kids in the 1980s and 1990s delighted in the “Choose Your Own Adventure” children’s book series. Based on the original idea of American author Edward Packard, readers make choices that determine the plot’s twists and turns. The books involved the readers in the development of the story, enlarging their imagination and sense of adventure.

Intercessory prayer is a lifelong adventure for every Christian. We can’t know the outcome, but we have to make a decision to pray. In his book *Prayer*, pastor Timothy Keller writes: “Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. We must learn to pray. We have to.” This month’s study in *Today in the Word* will help us learn about prayer and intercession. We’ll learn what the Bible says about prayer for each other, for our families, and for the unbelievers. We’ll look at examples of intercessory prayers—for forgiveness, healing, revival, and missions—as well as what Jesus said when He taught His disciples how to pray.

We hope you will be encouraged by this month’s study and continue to walk faithfully with our living Lord, seeing the answers to your prayers. Thank you for praying each day for various Moody’s departments and ministries in the “Pray with Us” column in each issue. And your financial support of the ministry of *Today in the Word* is the Lord’s answer to our prayer for provision. We praise God for our readers! ■

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SATURDAY
APRIL

1

Let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the LORD.

Psalms 106:48

Praying Together Is Normal

In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “It is in fact the most normal thing in the common Christian life to pray together.” A circle of people with their eyes closed and heads bowed might seem strange to a non-Christian, but it should be normal for believers.

Following Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, members of the early church prayed together. Jesus had gone away—at least physically. As they obeyed His command to remain in Jerusalem, the first followers of Christ found themselves drawn together for strength and comfort. When they gathered in one place for prayer, they could continue to experience the nearness of Christ’s presence (see Matt. 18:20) and could encourage one another with their shared petitions and praises.

They had much to pray about. Jesus had given them a task: “You will be my

witnesses” (v. 8). He had also given them a promise: “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (v. 5). Their prayer meetings in the Upper Room were both an act of dependence on the God who uses frail people to accomplish His work in the world and an act of faith that He would keep His promise and send His Spirit.

Not only was praying together a normal part of the early church’s shared life, it was normal for all kinds of people in that church. Each one of the remaining eleven disciples was present, and “they all joined together” in prayer, including women as well as Jesus’ mother and brothers (v. 14). Intercession is an activity for everyone—no matter our age, gender, ability, or spiritual maturity. As we will see more fully later in this study, every person who belongs to Christ can contribute to the work of praying together. Let us pray.

APPLY THE WORD

We have many good reasons to pray with others as a normal part of our Christian life. We too are called to be Christ’s witnesses in the world, and we too need the help of His Holy Spirit to accomplish our task. As we study intercession and corporate prayer this month, commit to putting this gift of praying together into practice.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for our Planned Giving team in the Stewardship department: Crystal Davis-Landrum, Eric Beckman, Lysa Ellis, and Stephen Kott. Ask God to guide them as they oversee the generous donations and funds given by friends of Moody.

This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

Matthew 6:9

We Talk to God

When she was a teenager, Rifqa Bary came to Christ out of Islam. In her testimony, *Hiding in the Light*, she recounts how she was first attracted to Christianity when she witnessed a prayer meeting at a friend’s house. Coming from the cold and regimented prayers of her Muslim home, she was astonished by how intimately these Christians prayed, as if they were simply talking to God.

This is the great delight of Christian prayer: calling on God our Father as an expression of our relationship. But as we see in today’s passage, the problem of our sin must be addressed before we can approach a holy God (v. 1). To demonstrate the immense burden of sin, the writer of Hebrews describes the great cost and effort required for the Old Testament sacrifices. The blood of animals, which was offered by human priests, was designed to point God’s

people toward the better sacrifice that was to come (vv. 9–11).

Jesus is both the ultimate sacrifice and the ultimate priest. His once-for-all sacrifice is better than the ongoing presentation of the blood of animals. His perfect obedience, death, and resurrection makes us holy and secures our relationship with the Father. His sacrifice is so complete that the writer tells us “he sat down” (v. 12), not needing to do anything more in order to bring us to God.

Through the blood of Jesus, our prayers can be confident, sincere, full of faith, free from guilt, unswervingly hopeful, and encouraging to those around us (vv. 19–25). If we trust in Christ, we are free to call out to God in prayer with all the eagerness of children calling to a parent, fully assured that we will be heard with love.

APPLY THE WORD

Prayer is not like a birthday wish or a magic abracadabra. It is our confident communication with God in the context of a mutually loving relationship. Our Savior Jesus Christ died so that we can pray to the Father with “a sincere heart” and “full assurance” (v. 22). Pray with this assurance today!

PRAY WITH US

We thank God for all the hope, comfort, and joy Moody Radio’s ministry brings to its listeners, and we lift in prayer Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio. We pray today that the Lord would give him encouragement in his day-to-day responsibilities.

MONDAY
APRIL

3

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Romans 8:34

Father, Son, and Spirit—and Us

In 1918, Eric Enstrom took a photograph he called *Grace*, and the iconic print has hung in countless Christian homes and churches ever since. In this image, an elderly man with clasped hands bows his head in prayer over a simple meal of gruel and bread. As far as viewer can see, the man is completely alone.

We often think of prayer as a solitary activity done behind closed doors or, as in *Grace*, by ourselves at the table. But our text reminds us that even when we appear to be praying alone, we are actually joined by the triune God. The first participant in a believer's prayers is the Father, who hears His child's cries of "*Abba!*" The Father's hearing is not passive; it is His active inclination to accept requests and respond by doing what is best. The loving Father has the power to accomplish all things for His children's good.

Next, the Son brings the prayers to the Father as mediator and intercessor. We saw yesterday that Christ secures our right to pray. We see today that Christ also prays for His people (v. 34). Just as He prayed for Job in the midst of trials (Job 16:20–21), just as He prayed for Peter before Satan's temptation (Luke 22:31–32), and just as He prayed for His disciples before they became His witnesses (John 17), Jesus prays for all believers, bringing their concerns to the listening Father.

Finally, the Spirit helps us when we pray by fixing our imperfect prayers and by praying for what is best. The Spirit is the divine prayer partner who "intercedes for us through wordless groans" (v. 26) when we don't know how to pray. The Father hears, the Spirit helps, and the Son intercedes, making our prayers part of a glorious, heavenly conversation!

APPLY THE WORD

A praying believer is never alone with his thoughts at the table but is joining a divine conversation already in progress. It is perfectly correct to say that when we pray, each person of the Trinity is involved in our prayer. The knowledge that God the Father, Son, and Spirit are actively participating gives us both confidence and eagerness to pray.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for Radio Moody, our Spanish station, and its team: Elsa Mazón, Gerson García, and Yahir Vergara. We ask that the Holy Spirit blesses their efforts as they bring biblical programming to Spanish speakers in the United States and beyond.

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Acts 4:24

All of Us Talk to Our God

A recent research brief from the Institute for Family Studies reports that praying with a spouse is “a stronger predictor of relationship quality than other religious factors in our statistical models. It is also a better predictor of relationship quality than race, education, age, sex, or region.”

Christians don’t base discipleship on statistics, of course, but it is no surprise that God’s good gift of praying together brings reports of happiness. Not only in families but also in churches and among friends, praying together is an expression of the closeness believers have in Christ. As the old Sunday school song goes: “He is the vine, and we are the branches.” Today’s passage describes the church as a body that grows, matures, and uses every part as it does its work, an image which highlights the essential connectedness of fellow Christians through their shared relationship to Christ.

In verses 4 through 6, Paul repeatedly uses the word *one* to reinforce just how much Christians have in common. We are part of one body and indwelt by one Spirit, and we also have one unified hope that gives rise to one profession of faith.

Our relationship to one another is also a matter for intentional effort. In verse 3, Paul exhorts his readers to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The believers in Ephesus met for worship, served one another, encouraged one another, exhorted one another, and prayed with and for one another as an expression of their relationship and as a means of strengthening those bonds. Prayers of intercession, in particular, allowed the early church to unite their hearts even as they united their voices, allowing them to bear one another’s burdens to the One who cares for all of His people.

APPLY THE WORD

Nineteenth-century churches often called their midweek prayer meeting “the social meeting.” This is appropriate when we consider that the church is a society under Christ and that intercession is one of its most important and blessed practices. As we organize social events for our churches and communities, we ought to include times of prayer.

PRAY WITH US

Lift in prayer Joel Wright and Mark Williames, Moody Radio’s Engineering Services staff. We thank God for their dedication and hard work to provide our listeners with quality broadcasts. Praise God for Moody Radio’s daily outreach to thousands!

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

5

Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

Acts 9:11

The First Prayer Meeting

In September 1646, Massachusetts Bay colonist and minister John Eliot first traveled to an Algonquin settlement to preach the gospel. That gathering became the first of many and would result in the conversion of hundreds of people. Year after year, Algonquin men, women, and children left debauchery and sorcery in order to worship God. Those settlements of new Christians came to be known as “Praying Towns.”

Throughout the Bible, prayer—especially corporate prayer—is the distinguishing mark of God’s people. We see this first in Genesis 4, the original family tree. After their fall into sin, Adam and Eve were shut out of the garden home where God had originally placed them. But God continued to be gracious toward them despite their rebellion, and He gave them children. These descendants, the family of Cain and the family of Seth, became the two very different lines of humanity.

Cain’s line was marked by exponentially increasing wickedness. Today’s passage particularly notes Lamech, an arrogant man who bragged about his short temper and violent habits (vv. 23–24). The members of Cain’s family were undoubtedly gifted: they raised livestock, played musical instruments, and forged useful metal tools. But the attitude of their hearts was rebellion against the God who had created them.

Seth, God’s gift to Eve after Abel’s death, fathered a line of godly descendants. In contrast to the description of the Cainites, Genesis does not give many details about the family of Seth. It does record that they were praying people. To “call on the name of the Lord” (v. 26) means to call on Yahweh—the relational, covenant-making God—to accomplish His purposes in the world. By this practice the children of Seth distinguished themselves from the wickedness around them.

APPLY THE WORD

Like the family of Seth, we are surrounded by a culture that is filled with brilliant, talented people who continually reject the Lord. And like the family of Seth, we too can call on the name of the Lord. Take time this week to join with your spiritual family members to pray for God’s mercy and blessing, helping you to stand for Him.

PRAY WITH US

Will you remember Moody’s chief financial officer Ken Heulitt in prayer today? We are grateful to our Lord for Ken’s financial advice and expertise, and we pray God guides him to best utilize our funds for His glory.

My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

Isaiah 56:7

THURSDAY
APRIL

6

God's House of Prayer

Most organizations have a statement that declares their goals and explains how these goals will be accomplished. The mission statement is usually made public to inform and guide anyone who interacts with the organization.

In today's passage, Solomon's prayer is a kind of mission statement for the newly built temple. He marvels at a God who would make a way to dwell with humanity in fellowship, and he recognizes that God's people can come to Him only through humble supplication. Here, Solomon envisions seven situations in which people will come to the temple. In this list, he describes the feuding neighbors, the defeated army, the drought-plagued farmers, the afflicted citizens, and the despairing captives. Caught in a variety of troubles, these people pray.

Perhaps most surprisingly Solomon includes "the foreigner who does not

belong to your people Israel" (v. 32) among those who stand in the temple courts and bring their requests to God. Right in the middle of his repeated supplications to God on behalf of "your people," he asks God to hear the prayers of those who are not His people. The temple, built in Israel by Israel for Israel, is not Israel's alone. Any person—or all people together—can pray there.

Unlike a mission statement, Solomon's prayer is not simply aspirational but is based on the sure and certain covenant promises of God. His prayer foreshadows the vision of Isaiah and, later still, of Jesus. The promised future of God's people includes every nation and people group coming together to pray. As commentator Edward Young writes: "Here is the beauty of holiness; men from all nations, brought to His household by sovereign grace, lift up the sacrifice of prayer unto His holy name."

APPLY THE WORD

Solomon set prayer as a clear priority for God's people, and Isaiah and Jesus both called the temple "a house of prayer" (see Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:3). Would you describe your church that way? What about your home? Why or why not? What are some ways you could seek to make interceding for and with others part of the mission statement for your life?

PRAY WITH US

Continue to pray for Moody's financial staff today by upholding the Office of the Treasurer in prayer: Eleanor Ehresman, Abigail Vega, Holly Motta, and Julie Vinlasaca. Praise God for their wise stewardship of our finances.

FRIDAY
APRIL

7

May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us.

Psalm 90:17

Praying Together in Exile

Christians love to tell and retell stories about prayer in hard times: Corrie ten Boom praying in the Nazi concentration camp, Darlene Deibler Rose praying in a Japanese prison camp, Amy Carmichael praying in the spiritual darkness of India. These favorite narratives remind us that God faithfully hears and answers the desperate cries of His children.

Today's passage is another such story, this time from the inspired Word of God. In it, Daniel and his three friends find themselves in a perilous situation. Separated from their godly families, renamed, educated in pagan culture, and listed on the king's roster of sorcerers and magicians, these four were continually in danger of being absorbed into the godless practices of Babylon (see Daniel 1). But when Daniel was asked by the king to interpret a dream he hadn't even heard, his immediate response was clearly countercultural: he organized a prayer

meeting. While the king's so-called wise men demonstrated their ignorance, the Jewish teenagers sought the help of the only wise God.

Perhaps even more remarkable than the teens' inclination to pray together for help is their immediate response of thanksgiving when God answered them (vv. 19–23). The impatient king was waiting and the life of every wise man—including Daniel—was under a death sentence, but the four young men chose to deal with the most urgent matter first: they prayed together. As strangers in a strange land, they had neither parents nor priests to remind them to develop godly habits, but their sincere faith drew them to communion with their God.

God's people in exile always find themselves on their knees. This practice sets them apart from the world and draws them near to the God who hears.

APPLY THE WORD

While we might know that our first response to difficulties ought to be prayer, in practice we often do everything else instead. While we know that we ought to receive the Lord's answers to our prayers with thanksgiving, we sometimes forget. Ask the Lord to help you make intercession and thanksgiving your first response to every situation.

PRAY WITH US

Your prayers today will be an encouragement to Frank Leber, vice president of Information Technology Services. Pray that the Lord guides him to lead his team well, that they may address computer issues efficiently and accurately.

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Matthew 18:20

SATURDAY
APRIL

8

Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray

On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln delivered one of the most famous presidential speeches in the history of the United States. His “Gettysburg Address” was only 272 words long—just ten sentences, but it defined the country’s purpose and set its priorities for generations.

Our study now brings us to the New Testament, and in today’s familiar passage Jesus establishes a focus and framework for His disciples’ prayers. First, He cautions them against pride. Prayer is an acknowledgment of dependence on God, and pride—in public displays of piety (v. 5) or in fancy, fluent language (v. 7)—has no place in true supplication. Instead, the one who comes to God can bring only what the English Puritan Thomas Manton called “the empty hand of faith.”

Jesus’ exemplary prayer, surprisingly brief, shows His disciples what to

ask. He sets the primary concerns of God’s glory and the fulfillment of His saving purposes at the forefront. Then, He reminds the disciples what they need: material provision, forgiveness, and deliverance from sin. And Jesus shows them how to ask, demonstrating by His words a sincere and humble dependence on God for both kingdom concerns and daily needs.

He also tells them with whom they should ask. Jesus’ disciples were familiar with praying together; several times during His earthly ministry, Jesus took His disciples with Him to the place of prayer and asked them to pray alongside Him. So it is not surprising that the language of the Lord’s Prayer is consistently corporate. From “Our Father” to “deliver us from the evil one,” Jesus taught His disciples not just to pray in private (v. 6) but also to pray with other believers, asking their common Father for their common needs.

APPLY THE WORD

We are not left to figure out prayer on our own. God has graciously given us an example of the kind of prayer that He is pleased to hear. What’s more, He encourages us to join in prayer with other people who share the same needs and concerns. Ask the Lord to show you someone with whom you could come to Him in prayer.

PRAY WITH US

Please include the ITS Support Center in your prayers today. May God honor the dedication of Erubey Bautista, Jason Floyd, Rebekah Campbell, Stephen McElhiney, and William Eyerdom, allowing them to solve Moody’s computer issues with speed and competency.

SUNDAY
APRIL

9

*The children [were] shouting in the temple courts,
“Hosanna to the Son of David.”*

Matthew 21:15

Our Spiritual Weapon for Spiritual Victory

On the first Palm Sunday in Jerusalem, crowds of people gathered shouting *Hosannas* for Jesus the Messiah. But not everyone was jubilant. As our key verse today notes, the chief priests and teachers of the law reacted to the cries of even little children with resentment and anger. They knew public praise had great power, and they quickly tried to stop it.

Today’s passage places prayer among the spiritual weapons that God gives to His people for their spiritual battles. While our visible and immediate troubles—unemployment, family discord, illness—sometimes seem like our most pressing concerns, Paul reminds us that our most dangerous enemies are ones we cannot see. Whether or not we always realize it, “the powers of this dark world” and the “spiritual forces of evil” (v. 12) constantly attack the godly.

To wage war against them, we need a special set of weapons. Earthly blades and bullets would be useless against the demonic arrows of Satan, so our God-given equipment is uniquely spiritual. To battle evil, Christians have an arsenal stocked with faith, truth, righteousness, and peace. And we have the powerful weapon of prayer, not only for ourselves but also through intercession for “all the Lord’s people” (v. 18) who are fighting the same battle. As the theologian John Calvin commented, “We ought to fight by our prayers and supplications.”

Our spiritual war is often frighteningly intense, but these verses give us great confidence. The Savior who crushed Satan by His death on the cross has given us the most effective tools for the battle. By His Spirit, we are able to be strong and stand our ground. By His mighty power, even the praises of little children can shut the mouth of the Evil One (see Ps. 8:2).

APPLY THE WORD

We may not always feel like soldiers, but God’s people are engaged in battle against the spiritual enemies of sin, Satan, and our own evil desires. Praying with and for one another is one of the pieces of our God-given spiritual armor. Take up the weapon of prayer with confidence, knowing that God will use your intercession to accomplish great things.

PRAY WITH US

The Network Services team appreciates your prayers today. We are grateful for Johnny Wu and Joseph Runkles, and we pray for strength and insight as they oversee the intricate details of Moody’s data, storage, and communication technology.

Every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.

Romans 14:11

MONDAY
APRIL

10

Making God Known

The experiences of others influence us. A friend's book recommendation prompts us to download the Kindle edition as soon as we get home. A coworker's story of a great restaurant meal causes us to grab a table at that café the next weekend. Harvard Business School professor Michael Luca quantified this effect, demonstrating from his research that a single positive online review can boost a business's revenue by 5 to 9 percent.

Just as we might make a restaurant reservation or choose a vacation spot on the testimony of those who have been there, we are also encouraged to worship God by those who give Him public praise. In this psalm, David moves quickly from expressing personal worship to joining the praises of all His people. Our God is not the God of just one individual but is the God of all creation, rightly receiving the adoration of every creature.

No one can fathom the greatness of God (v. 3), but the worshipers in Psalm 145 tell one another about each mighty act they have witnessed in order to lead others to praise. Generation after generation, they magnify the name of God in the hearing of every living thing. Like Hannah before them (see 1 Sam. 2:1–10) and Mary after them (Luke 1:46–55), they marvel at this God who faithfully cares for the weak and needy.

In their crescendo of praise, it is as if God's people are constructing a giant arena or a huge stage where God's glorious works are displayed for a vast audience to admire. And we join them when we add our praises to theirs, publicly telling others about the greatness of our God until that final day when "every knee will bow" and "every tongue will acknowledge God" (Rom. 14:11).

APPLY THE WORD

Though we might feel self-conscious telling others about our experiences of God, this psalm reminds us that our praises can benefit people around us. Our public prayers and praise attest to God's greatness and invite others to come and see what He can do. What has God done for you? Who could you encourage with your testimony of praise?

PRAY WITH US

Moody students across all campuses come to the top of our prayer list today. This week is spring break for our Spokane campus, and we pray for the students' time at home with their families, as well as on the missions trips.

TUESDAY
APRIL

11

Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

Psalm 85:6

Humble Yourselves and Pray

In 1742 in Cambuslang, Scotland, a pastor described the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in his community: “Vain persons, who minded no religion, but frequented taverns and frolics, passing their time in filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, or singing paltry songs, do now frequent Christian societies for prayer, seek Christian conversation, talk of what concerns the soul, and express their mirth in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.”

Like many periods of spiritual revival, this one began with the prayers of a small group, and its radical effects extended to an entire town. As Scripture tells us in the story of Solomon, God also promised revival to His people and their community if they would commit themselves to prayer.

Rather than strident demands, the Lord makes it clear that the prayer He hears is one of humility. God’s

people kneel before Him in distressing circumstances—drought, plague, and sinful habits—and confess their weakness and failure. These prayers are public admissions that God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Humbled, we then lift our eyes to seek God’s face. We renounce our allegiance to sin and to Satan (v. 14) and declare instead that we desire to know and follow our God alone. The Lord answers by sending His Holy Spirit, the greatest gift the Father bestows on His children (see Luke 11:11–13). His Spirit heals the land and assures us that God’s eyes and heart will always be with us (v. 16).

In response to our humility, God promises to hear our cries. In response to our confession of sin, He promises to grant forgiveness. And in response to our request to know Him more, God promises to send His reviving and refreshing Spirit.

APPLY THE WORD

The greatest need of our communities and nations is the Holy Spirit. More than financial stability, adequate health care, improved education, or wise legislation, the people who live and work beside us need the gift of God Himself dwelling within them. Encouraged by God’s promises, intercede for your community this week (Ps. 85:6).

PRAY WITH US

We praise God for Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, and his faithfulness in continuing D. L. Moody’s vision to raise Christian leaders and ministers to serve all over the world. Pray that God allows him to reach his goals this year.

If you . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Luke 11:13

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

12

Jesus Attends Prayer Meeting

The Guinness Book of World Records has fascinated readers since its debut in 1955. Cataloguing everything from “most tattoos” to “largest cheese sculpture,” the book’s pages are a celebration of the biggest and best. In 2009, it even bestowed the record “Person with the Most Records” on Ashrita Furman, winner of 100 Guinness records.

In today’s passage, Jesus upends our love for everything big and outwardly impressive. First, He emphasizes the value of a single individual to the body of Christ. Neither a childlike believer (v. 10), nor a doubting and wandering church member (vv. 12–14), nor the person who has separated himself from the Christian community by deliberate sin (vv. 15–17) should be ignored or forgotten. Each “little one” is important.

And, likewise, when a tiny group of believers comes together in prayer, they shouldn’t be dismissed either. Even

two people on their knees can agree before God. This agreement has three strands: the believers agree with Christ when “two or three gather in my name” (v. 20). They agree with one another “if two of you on earth agree” (v. 19). And the Father agrees with their united prayer, “it will be done for them by my Father in heaven” (v. 19). A handful of praying people are important.

Though our times of coming together for intercession may never win any world records, they are accompanied by something much better: the promise of Christ’s presence. We gather in His name, with His brothers and sisters, giving Him praise, and asking for things that please Him. Then, by His Spirit, He will be with us. When two or three people pray together, Jesus will attend every time. And the Father will not deny the intercessions of a prayer meeting where Christ is also praying (see Heb. 7:25).

APPLY THE WORD

It can be discouraging to plan or attend a church meeting and have only a few people show up. We can be tempted to think that nothing significant will happen when our numbers are so small. The next time this happens, remember that Christ affirms your value and is present with you no matter how tiny your gathering.

PRAY WITH US

Pray for the Undergraduate faculty of the Intercultural Studies department today as they train students to minister worldwide. We give thanks for the instruction of Samuel Naaman, Andrew Pflederer, and Michael Rydelnik.

THURSDAY
APRIL

13

Jesus . . . offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears.

Hebrews 5:7

Jesus Intercedes for His Disciples

Jesus healed the sick, freed the oppressed, and proclaimed good news to the poor (see Luke 4:18–19). Then, after three years, He approached the inaugural act of His priestly work: His death on the cross that would culminate in our atonement. At Passover, He knew the coming hours would bring the full wrath of God for the sins of the world upon Him. And yet, even in His anguish (see Luke 22:44), He prayed for all who were called by His name.

John records this prayer, beginning with Jesus' request that the Father would glorify Him. The One who was with the Father from the beginning, equal with Him in power and glory, prays that He might again receive His rightful place of honor. For Christ's followers, too, Jesus' exaltation is our chief delight and the great purpose of our lives (v. 10).

It's logical that Jesus' prayer would move from Himself and His glory to His disciples and their good. His love for them is evident here. Though we might be tempted to think of the twelve disciples as ignorant, self-focused, and slow to believe, Jesus describes them tenderly. He calls them obedient, faithful, and teachable. He commends them for believing He was the promised Messiah. Jesus knew His disciples' failings—He was about to die for them—but He also knew that they were the Father's gift to Him (v. 6) and would soon share in His glory (v. 22).

This same love leads Christ to intercede for His disciples' protection. The world, with its evil desires and prideful attitudes, is the enemy of God's people, but Jesus continually intercedes (see 1 John 2:16). For the sake of His glory and the unity of His body, Jesus asks the Father to keep His followers safe.

APPLY THE WORD

Reflect on this quote by theologian Charles Ross: "What is Jesus now doing at the right hand of God? Pleading with a continuous . . . special intercession for his own. Does sin plead loud against you? The blood of Jesus pleads louder still. Does Satan stand at your right hand to accuse you? Your Advocate stands at God's right hand to plead for you."

PRAY WITH US

Join us in continued prayer for the Intercultural Studies faculty: Stephen Clark, Kyeong-Sook Park, Timothy Sisk, and Walter Cirafesi. Pray for strength to train students for missionary work across the globe, cultures, and generations.

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Hebrews 7:25

FRIDAY
APRIL

14

Jesus Intercedes for Us

In coming days, many of us will have opportunity to sing Charles Wesley’s Easter hymn, “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today.” The fourth verse proclaims: “Soar we now where Christ has led, following our exalted Head; made like him, like him we rise; ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!” We will together affirm our hope in the future that Christ Himself prayed for more than 2,000 years ago.

Today we’ll continue the reading from the passage we began yesterday. This is Jesus’ Passion-week intercession for “those who will believe in me through [the Apostles’] message” (v. 20). In other words, we are reading Jesus’ prayer for us. It is a prayer both simple and radical: Christ prays that we would be made so completely one that our unity would be like the unity of the Father and Son within the Trinity.

Just as Christ’s prayer for His disciples (which we studied yesterday) flows naturally into prayer for those who come to faith through their teaching, His prayer for all believers is also a prayer with greater implications. He asks that all Christians would be unified in love for the sake of their testimony in the world. As the early church father Tertullian explained, the instinctive response of the world to the church ought to be: “See how they love one another!”

When we pray for one another—when we ask the Father to unify His church, to pour out His love among us, and to take us to be in His presence forever—we are adding our “Amen” to the prayers that Jesus prayed just hours before His crucifixion. And we pray with great confidence, knowing that we will one day soar together where Christ has led.

APPLY THE WORD

Our Easter-week observance might include singing glorious hymns, celebrating the Lord’s Supper, and gathering to hear God’s Word preached. We may have times of feasting and fellowship with family and friends. Let’s also remember that prayer was an important element of Christ’s final hours and make room for intercession in our schedule.

PRAY WITH US

We ask the Holy Spirit encourage Dr. Bryan O’Neal, vice president and dean of Moody Distance Learning. May God bless his leadership in bringing a Moody education for those who study while keeping commitments to their families and work.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Homiletics

Q I have a close family member (not a spouse) who has treated me badly most of my life, making me feel inadequate, unloved, and insecure. It took me years to work through the damage and come to forgiveness and letting go of the hurt. The person who hurt me has never admitted wrong even when confronted. In fact, she has suggested it was my problem. I accepted this and tried for a while to stay in touch, but I am becoming reluctant to take what feels like abuse. What is the Christian thing to do?

A This is one of those heart-breaking situations that are too much a part of our fallen existence. One of the worst things sin does to the spirit is to harden it, making someone unable to hear the truth (see Zech. 7:12; Matt. 13:15). First of all, that you have worked through your injuries and come to forgiveness of the offender is the grace of God at work in your life. I also respect your tenacity about the relationship. A time comes to walk away, however, not as a way to be manipulative but in order to hold her accountable for her behavior. Your sincere forgiveness of this family member does not require you to excuse bad behavior. You do not have to tolerate sin or soothe it by a false acceptance. That is participating in deception. Although you might choose

to stay away from this person, do continue to pray for her, asking God to bring truth into her life in a way that will reach her.

Q Reading through the New Testament, I came to the story of the demon-possessed man of the Gerasenes told in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. I thought it was a really powerful story, but I wondered about a couple of things. Why did the demons ask to be sent into the pigs, and why did Jesus allow the demons to go into the pigs? Could He not just have destroyed them?

A The details you note have often been seen as a controversial part of the narrative. In response to your first question, several possibilities exist. The demons, who can do nothing without God's permission, know they have been bested (see Mark 5:13). Perhaps they asked to be put into the pigs so they would have a bodily home for their evil activity and avoid being sent into the Abyss (place of torment). Or, perhaps, they wanted to continue their destruction, in the case of the pigs, knowing that would make trouble for Jesus. Demons are always bent on creating chaos.

The greater question is, as you note, why Jesus assented to this plan. After all, it does involve destruction

*We are called in Christian community
to be our brother's and sister's keeper.*

of property and the livelihood of the pigs' owners. Here is where we see the love of God for individuals. We have to remember that the point of the story is not to destroy the demons but to deliver the demonized man from their power (Mark 5:19–10; Luke 8:39). As one commentator has noted, by sending the demons into the pigs, Jesus was giving proof that the demons had left the man, which was a profound gesture of mercy. When the people in the area saw those pig corpses floating in the lake and the man clothed and sane, no one could deny what had happened. More significantly, the man who was delivered, in the most dramatic deliverance given us in Scripture, would know that those demons were gone for good and feel supreme relief.

Q **I am in leadership in a church where one of my colleagues is not fulfilling the responsibilities of his job description. He is often late, takes long breaks, shifts some of his work onto others, and is casual about his teaching assignments. He is, however, very likeable, talking his way out of trouble with his superiors. I care about him and feel as though he needs accountability to grow. Others seem to avoid the problem, suggesting that we need to mind our own business. Who is right?**

A Many years ago, psychologist Dan Kiley wrote *The Peter Pan Syndrome*, referring to the famous 1928 story *Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*. Kiley argues that Peter Pan symbolizes the essence of youthfulness, and we are drawn to him. But we must consider why Peter Pan wanted to stay young. He was, says Kiley, avoiding growing up, a condition whose symptoms include procrastination, emotional paralysis, and low self-worth, which lead to magical thinking and irresponsibility. Kiley contends we need to intervene in cases like this for the sake of all involved.

From a biblical perspective, anything affecting one part of the body of Christ affects the other parts. To ignore an irresponsible person is to be complicit in neglecting the well-being of a fellow believer. Everyone may be too carefully minding his or her own business instead of minding the business of the church, the body of Christ. We are called in Christian community to be our brother's and sister's keeper. "Brothers and sisters, if anyone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1–2). This is the full picture: gentle restoration of the offender by those who are spiritually mature and self-aware.

SATURDAY
APRIL

15

Lead us not into temptation.

Luke 11:4

Praying Against Temptation

A segment of the BBC series *Human Planet* depicts two fishermen harvesting rare goose barnacles from dangerous rocks along Spain's northern coast. The men are attached to one another by ropes and take turns descending to the base of the rocks between onslaughts of violent waves. As one man gathers barnacles, he depends on the other to shout a warning when a particularly large breaker approaches and to pull him to safety if necessary.

Our calling as Christians often brings us into potentially dangerous situations. We struggle not against flesh and blood—or waves and rocks—but against spiritual forces of evil that seek to destroy our souls (see Eph. 6:12). To survive unharmed, we too must be constantly vigilant, both for ourselves and for others.

Jesus knew the vulnerabilities of His disciples. Earlier He had taught them to pray, “And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). Now, on the Mount of Olives hours before His death on the cross, He reminded them that they would face a renewed onslaught of spiritual danger for which they must be prayerfully alert.

They failed at watchfulness, however. The evening advanced, and fatigue won. Thankfully, they were not alone. While their prayerful vigilance faltered, Christ's never does. He is so alert and earnest in His prayers that His anguished sweat was “like drops of blood” as it fell (v. 44). While Peter failed to consider his danger, Jesus was praying for his spiritual safety (vv. 31–32). While the disciples snored, their intercessor was pleading for them.

Temptation presses us, but today's passage strengthens us. We have been given warning of danger and help to escape it. We have someone who joins us in prayer.

APPLY THE WORD

Puritan theologian John Owen wrote, “Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.” Are you aware of the danger of sin? What sins are particular temptations for you, your family, your church, or your community? Take a few moments today to pray for the Lord's help to escape these temptations, and be encouraged by the thought that Jesus is praying alongside you.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for the Procurement Office today. We give thanks for the hard work and dedication of Brenda Crump and Stephen Richardson, and we pray for their wise stewardship of funds as they purchase all the necessary supplies for Moody's operations.

Many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

2 Corinthians 1:11

SUNDAY
APRIL

16

The Early Church Prays Together

Sociologist Christian Smith has studied the religious lives of American young adults and found them to be highly individualistic. Many believe “religion need not be practiced in and by a community.” Statistics documenting declining church participation support his findings that Americans increasingly believe that other people are not essential to an individual’s faith.

That idea stands in stark contrast to the communal Christianity we see modeled for us in the book of Acts. After that first Resurrection Sunday, the early followers of Christ did not scatter to their own private spiritual disciplines. Instead, the 120 believers found themselves almost constantly together, especially for prayer. Having received Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit, they confidently prayed together for the promise’s fulfillment.

The first church prayed together, and the Lord answered them together.

On the day of Pentecost, “they were all together in one place” (v. 1) when tongues of fire came upon them and the prophesy of Joel came to pass: “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29). As a community, God’s people were blessed.

But the answer to their prayers was not only for their own edification. The coming of the Holy Spirit equipped and empowered the church to proclaim Christ to those around them—and those as far away as the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In a single day, the infant church grew by 3,000 people. Doubtless, those thousands of people who first trusted Christ at Pentecost gave thanks to the Lord for the community of praying believers who had first gathered in one place to intercede for their salvation.

APPLY THE WORD

Private prayer is a priority of the Christian life (see Matt. 6:6), but when we pray together we multiply our thanks to God. Paul encourages the practice of praying together with others for others: “Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many” (1 Cor. 1:11). Look for opportunities to pray in community.

PRAY WITH US

This Easter Sunday, let us give thanks for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are grateful that, because of His death and resurrection, we can come to Him in prayer, and that He is forever our intercessor to God the Father.

MONDAY
APRIL

17

Pray continually.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Wrestling on Behalf of Others

The sport of obstacle racing has rapidly gained popularity. At events like Tough Mudder and Spartan Race, competitors complete a course that includes not only trail running but also dashing through burning firewood, swimming across an icy pool, and running between electrified wires. According to *The New Yorker*, these races are “designed to challenge strength, stamina, mental grit, and camaraderie.”

By contrast, prayer may seem like a sedentary, low-impact activity. What could be challenging about closing your eyes and talking to God? But Paul’s instructions to the Colossians reveal that prayer is often more like a Tough Mudder than like a leisurely walk in the park. To begin, Paul calls the church to “devote” themselves to prayer and to be “watchful” in it. Furthermore, he calls them to be “thankful,” which is no easy task for most of us (v. 2).

Paul gives a specific example of someone who demonstrated this kind of praying grit. Epaphras was a champion intercessor, “always wrestling in prayer” for the Colossians (v. 12). At times, we may be tempted to undervalue the work of intercession. We can esteem teachers, preachers, missionaries, or organizers more than those who pray. But Paul testifies to the churches that Epaphras was doing essential and difficult work on their behalf—by praying (v. 13).

The exchange of information and encouragement are essential. Paul challenges the churches by asking them to intercede for something that might seem impossible: a successful ministry by an incarcerated preacher (vv. 3–4). He arranges for messengers to visit the churches to collect and disperse additional requests. While unbelievers might think such updates are just news, Christians know they are fuel for the hard work of intercession.

APPLY THE WORD

If you signed up for a competitive event, you would spend hours training in order to ready your body and mind for the upcoming challenge. Do you view the work of intercession with the same focused determination? Recognize that praying for others will be hard work and devote yourself to it wholeheartedly.

PRAY WITH US

We have the privilege of praying for WCRF, Moody Radio’s Cleveland station, established in 1958. Thank God for the staff who minister God’s hope, peace, and joy via the airwaves and online: Alice Andrews, Brian Dahlen, and Doug Hainer.

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Ephesians 6:18

TUESDAY
APRIL

18

Do Not Give Up

The assertion “It takes 21 days to form a new habit” is often accepted as scientific fact, but a 2009 study in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* found it usually takes much longer. In the study, participants tried building a new habit such as regular exercise or increased water consumption.

The researchers discovered that, on average, it took 66 days to form a habit, and some habits took as long as 254 days (eight months!) to take hold.

As we saw yesterday, prayer is a particularly difficult habit. Today’s passage gives us the much-needed encouragement to press on. Here, we have encouragement to faithful intercession because the Lord Himself welcomes it. Jesus gathers His disciples to tell them this parable for one reason: “To show them that they should always pray and not give up” (v. 1). When prayer seems difficult, we must remember that

our Lord stands nearby, encouraging us. All of His commands to pray—continually (1 Thess. 5:17), always (Eph. 6:18), and in every situation (Phil. 4:6)—are the Lord’s loving invitations. We can never nag or exasperate a God who bids us to “give him no rest” (Isa. 62:7).

And we are not alone. The widow in the parable was given by Jesus as an encouraging example. Elsewhere, Scripture reminds us of other persistent intercessors. Abraham repeatedly asked God to spare Sodom (Gen. 18:23–32); Elijah prayed earnestly for rain (James 5:17–18); and the apostle Paul interceded for the Thessalonians night and day (1 Thess. 3:10). Most of all, we look to Christ Himself who “always lives to intercede” (Heb. 7:25). Prayer may be a hard habit to form, but we have plenty of role models. Let us always pray and not give up!

APPLY THE WORD

Tertullian called praying together “a holy conspiracy [by which] we may set upon God by a force that is welcome to him.” Knowing that God invites our intercessions greatly encourages us to persist. Pray again today for something you have prayed for in the past, knowing that the loving Father welcomes your cries “day and night” (v. 7).

PRAY WITH US

Continue to pray for the dedicated staff of Moody Radio’s WCRF, ministering to listeners in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Raise in prayer Kathleen Zion, Paul Carter, and Scott Krus who daily bring God’s Word and Christian music to Moody friends.

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

19

Rejoice with those who rejoice.

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with Those Who Rejoice

In three consecutive parables in Luke 15, Jesus tells stories about people who lost something—a sheep, a coin, and a child—and, having found it again, throw a party to celebrate. We can relate to the joy described in the finale of these parables. Instinctively we too welcome friends and family to our birthdays, weddings, and new homes because we are happiest when others rejoice with us.

Our shared joy with other believers is rooted in our shared life. As today's passage makes clear, there are no solo Christians. Each believer is united to Christ, which therefore brings that person into relationship with everyone else who is united to Christ. The rich diversity of the members—feet, hands, eyes, and ears—means that each one makes important and unique contributions to the flourishing of the whole body. Just as a physical body needs each of its parts, the body of Christ needs each member. And just as

damage or health in one part of a body has implications for the rest, suffering or rejoicing by an individual member of Christ affects everyone in the church.

While unbelievers might greet one another's successes with inward envy, believers can give thanks for the blessings God has granted those around us, because we know that a blessing given to them is also a blessing to the whole body. The Lord places the parts in the body, each one with unique gifts and graces, for the good of everyone (vv. 18–19).

In prayer, sick members can give thanks for healthy members, financially needy members can praise the Lord for financially stable members, and lonely members can rejoice with those whom God sets in families. Such thanksgiving furthers our unity, keeping us from division and expressing our “equal concern for each other” (v. 25).

APPLY THE WORD

Repeatedly in Paul's letters, he expresses his joy in the believers' growing faith. He tells the Corinthians that he gives thanks for them “always” (1 Cor. 1:4) and the Ephesians that he “does not cease” to give thanks for them (Eph. 1:16). Like Paul, we must embrace every opportunity to rejoice with others at the grace of God in their lives.

PRAY WITH US

We bring Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, before the Lord today. Give thanks for his leadership in producing quality media content and pray that the Lord will continue to be glorified worldwide with Moody's impact.

Mourn with those who mourn.

Romans 12:15

THURSDAY
APRIL

20

Weep with Those Who Weep

Modern technology makes it easier for people to communicate without being in the same place. Virtual meetings by webcam can include coworkers who are logging in from home as well as those present at the office, and programs like Skype and FaceTime make it possible to chat on video with family and friends around the world.

These tools are useful, but they seldom replace the deep relationships that develop when people are actually face to face. In today's passage, we see that Jesus was not content to hear about our weaknesses and sorrows from afar. He entered into them, joining us in the limitations of our humanity. Though He was rich, for our sake He became poor (2 Cor. 8:9). He was tempted, betrayed, hungry, tired, misunderstood, and falsely accused. He was subject to space and time, to frailty and ignorance, to death and taxes.

Christ comes alongside in our trials right now. The One who promises to be in our midst when we gather with a small group of His people to pray, promises to pray with us as we suffer. He mourned with Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus and sorrowed over the sin-enslaved residents of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). He weeps with us as we weep.

In His name, then, we enter into the sorrows of others. Paul instructs us: "Mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15). Contrast this with the so-called friends of David whom he described in Psalm 38. Instead of grieving with him, they "avoid me because of my wounds" and "stay far away" (Ps. 38:11). By God's grace, we should not stand far off in fear or disgust. In prayer, we cry out to God with those who mourn, trusting in Christ's promise that we shall all be comforted (Matt. 5:4).

APPLY THE WORD

The psalms are full of lamentations, prayers of shared sorrow lifted up to our Lord. Read one of the psalms of lament (see 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85, 90) and use it as the basis of your intercession for someone who is suffering. As you pray, remember that Christ Himself comes alongside both of you in sympathy and love.

PRAY WITH US

The Moody Publishers Fulfillment team appreciates your prayers today as they fulfill thousands of orders for our readers nationwide. We give thanks for the dedicated efforts of Arthur Eastern, Chieu Nguyen, Ernesto Laya, and James Seffinga.

FRIDAY
APRIL

21

Continue to remember . . . those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Hebrews 13:3

Bear One Another's Burdens

In developing countries, collecting life-sustaining drinking water strains the bodies of the women and children who retrieve and carry the water. Spinal and neck damage is often widespread. To solve this problem, entrepreneurs began designing and distributing wheel-shaped water containers that allow people to move water without injury.

In Galatians, Paul instructs the church: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2). In today’s passage from Philippians, he gives us a real-life example of this burden bearing. Paul begins by expressing his love for the Philippian believers, his partners in the gospel. Though some might think of Paul as the New Testament’s tough and brainy theologian, these verses (vv. 3–8) reveal his tender affection.

Having begun to ease their burden by reaffirming his love, Paul went on to tell

the believers exactly what he is praying for them: love, discernment, purity, fruitfulness, and God’s glory. This is Paul’s regular practice. He also tells the Ephesians (Eph. 1:15–23), the Colossians (Col. 1:9–14), and the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 1:11–12) the substance of his intercession for them. In this way, he reminds the churches that their specific burdens are not forgotten, and he encourages them to look expectantly for God’s help.

The burden-bearing is not one-sided. Paul reinforces their mutual love by sharing his own burdens and affirming the essential part that he believes the prayers of the Philippians will play in his release from prison. The great apostle depended on these prayers of intercession. Like those inventors who create ergonomic water vessels, we take up one another’s burdens in prayer, lending each other a hand to bring them to the Lord.

APPLY THE WORD

In many places—Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa—Christians face persecution. Hebrews tells us, “Continue to remember those who are in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (Heb. 13:3). In prayer, bear the burdens of fellow-Christians in chains.

PRAY WITH US

Continue in prayer for the Moody Publishers Fulfillment team. We are grateful for their attention to detail as they help Moody Publishers distribute quality, God-glorifying literature: James Tran, Junico Arroz, Matthew Tran, and Michael Alcazar.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray
for each other.*

James 5:16

SATURDAY
APRIL

22

Interceding for Forgiveness

In January 1907, in what is now North Korea, more than one thousand Christians met for a worship service. During the prayer time, many became convicted of sins they had committed against one another. The subsequent outpouring of confession, which spilled over into the surrounding community, was the beginning of a season of growth and revival in the Pyongyang church.

Today's passage recounts when God's covenant people fell under conviction of sin. After leaving Babylon, the Israelite exiles began to rebuild their lives in Jerusalem. But almost immediately, they learned that the Israelites who had arrived ahead of them sinned against God by intermarrying with their ungodly neighbors (Ezra 9:1–2).

Ezra, as the priest of God's people, took the lead in pouring out prayers of confession for this widespread sin in his community. So, too, church leaders

have a responsibility to intercede for the members of their churches. When sins like pride, racism, and spiritual apathy invade our congregations, our leaders must publicly confess them and ask God for forgiveness.

Not only did Ezra make intercession, prayers of confession were also in the hearts of "a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children" (v. 1). In an episode similar to the days of Josiah, when all the people humbled themselves after the long-lost book of the law was read (2 Chron. 34:8–33), Ezra's entire community gathered to repent. When our churches are troubled by quarreling, our love for outsiders is weak, or our zeal for worship grows dim, we should gather to pray for forgiveness.

Having each voiced our confession, we join together to pray that we might all be restored to fellowship with our holy God and with one another.

APPLY THE WORD

One account of the Pyongyang revival says: "All through the city men were going from house to house, confessing to individuals they had injured, returning stolen property and money, not only to Christian but to heathen as well, till the whole city was stirred." Ask God to give you and the members of your community a spirit of prayerful repentance.

PRAY WITH US

Ask the Father to bless the efforts of the Moody Publishers Marketing team as they create marketing and advertising materials to reach more readers. We pray for Ashley Torres, Denise Ortiz, Grace Park, Janis Backing, Jeremy Williamson, and Richard Knox.

People brought to [Jesus] all who were ill with various diseases . . . and he healed them.

Matthew 4:24

Interceding for Healing

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, the list of diseases and impairments that He healed is diverse. Leprosy, paralysis, fever, and unexplained bleeding (see Matthew 8) were cured. Blindness (Matt. 9:27–29), deafness (Mark 7:31–35), and abnormal swelling (Luke 14:1–4), and more were all included in the work done by the Great Physician. When those we love are sick and suffering, we might wish we could find Jesus of Nazareth still walking the earth. But James 5 reminds us that we will always have recourse to the One who forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases (see Ps. 103:3).

In today’s passage, James gives instruction for the church member who is seriously ill, exhorting the elders of the church to intercede for the sick person. Prayer for the sick is first of all the priority of church leaders, but James quickly follows this with a general call to “pray for each other” (v. 16).

In some ways, God’s promise in this passage is mysterious. In answer to our intercession for a suffering fellow Christian, He promises to “make the sick person well,” to “raise them up,” and to forgive them (v. 15). It is difficult to tell from these words whether we ought to expect physical or spiritual healing. Many scholars believe that the ambiguity is deliberate. If we are tempted to overlook physical healing in our intercession, James gives us encouragement to ask God for bodily healing. If we are tempted to skip over spiritual healing, James reminds us of the precious gift of spiritual wellness.

Even if we never see physical healing granted to our loved ones in this life, we will certainly rejoice in it in heaven. As commentator Daniel Doriani explains, “The Lord will heal all his people sooner or later.” The Great Physician will one day ensure all His people are whole and well.

APPLY THE WORD

James commends “the prayer offered in faith” (v. 15). Christian faith is placed in Christ alone. Our prayers of faith do not depend on our boldness but on Christ’s goodness, not on the hope for a certain result but on the God who does all things well. Like the paralytic’s friends (Matt. 9:1–7), humbly bring your loved ones to Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

Remember Bruce Everhart, vice president of Donor Development and Channel Strategy, during your prayer time today. Pray God guides him, giving him the strategy and grace needed to plan donor outreaches and oversee fundraising.

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 4:31

MONDAY
APRIL

24

Interceding for Revival

In 1858 God poured out His Spirit in a revival, first in New York City and then throughout the United States. The revival affected people of all ages, races, and church denominations. During the next few years, churches grew and thousands of people trusted in Christ. It started at a prayer meeting attended by seven people.

Revival—what J. I. Packer calls “an extraordinary work of God the Holy Ghost”—usually begins in the church and then impacts unbelieving neighbors in the community. This is the pattern we see in Isaiah 62. The Lord’s first purpose is to make His people righteous (v. 1), beautiful (v. 3), and an object of His delight (v. 5). He promises that they will be nourished (v. 8), at peace (v. 8), and firmly established (v. 7).

Then, when God’s people are healthy and lovely, their reputation in the community grows. For us today, Isaiah’s

hopeful imagery of a shining dawn and a blazing torch parallels Jesus’ similar encouragement: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14). When the Lord revives His people, He also works in the hearts of unbelievers.

The promises in today’s passage are not simply beautiful ideals to be enjoyed; Isaiah’s words come to us with the imperative of action. On the strength of God’s promises, God’s people must persistently intercede for revival. We give God no rest and we take no rest for ourselves (vv. 6–7) because we are so sure that God delights to do the things He has said. With God’s encouragement, we become like the New Testament prophetess Anna who never left the place of prayer and fasting, but looked eagerly for the fulfillment of God’s promise (see Luke 2:37–38).

APPLY THE WORD

At the time of the 1858 revival, the minister Samuel Prime wrote: “This revival is to be remembered through all coming ages as simply an answer to prayer.” Do you believe that the Lord loves to work in the church and in our communities? Are you confident that He has called us to intercede for this? Then give Him no rest!

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for Steven Mogck, executive vice president, who serves alongside Moody’s president, Dr. Paul Nyquist. May the Lord provide them with wisdom and strength as they oversee the operations of Moody’s ministries.

TUESDAY
APRIL

25

There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language.

Revelation 7:9

Interceding for Missions

Anyone who is on the mailing list of a missionary or Christian organization is familiar with the final paragraph of the letter explaining how supporters can help. Typically, this section includes a request for prayer, and it may be the most important part of the whole letter. As cross-cultural worker Gloria Furman wrote, “Missions is the fruit of prayer being picked.”

In Luke 10, we are invited to witness a commissioning service. Jesus sends out seventy-two missionaries to visit all the surrounding towns, to spend time with the citizens, to heal the sick, and to proclaim the saving name of Christ to everyone who would listen.

Seventy-two might seem like a large number of gospel workers, but, surprisingly, Jesus says it is not even close to enough. He exhorts his hearers to pray for more. So we too must not be satisfied by one preacher here or there

when the world needs a vast company of them.

The promised great harvest is not always visible to human eyes. At the time Jesus spoke these words, the total number of those who embraced Him as the Messiah was probably smaller than the size of many churches today. For us, too, it can be hard to imagine very many coming to Christ. Most of us have never witnessed the conversion of huge numbers of people like the three thousand at Pentecost on a single day (Acts 2:41)—but these verses give us an incentive to pray for it. A harvest of souls is waiting, promises Jesus, and it is amazingly large.

When we pray for the conversion of many, we pray alongside Christ Himself whom the Father invites, “Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession” (Ps. 2:8).

APPLY THE WORD

Do you pray for missions with a sense of anticipation? One day you will see with your own eyes “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). Meditate on this promise, and allow it to compel your prayer for the people of the world.

PRAY WITH US

Include the Chicago campus Public Safety team in your prayers today. We are grateful for all they do on our campus to create a safe environment. Pray God’s protection over Alexander Logan, Andrea Smith, Beau Pieniak, and Brian Stoffer.

Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:18

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

26

Pray for All the Saints

In 2010, Brandon Stanton began a photography project titled “Humans of New York,” with the goal of photographing every one of New York City’s inhabitants. As he took pictures, Stanton also documented the stories his subjects told him about their lives. The resulting collection of images and quotes currently contains hundreds of portraits and has over twenty million social media followers. Part of the appeal of “Humans of New York” is its implicit affirmation that every person is valuable and every person’s story is worth knowing. In today’s passage, Paul gives us a portrait of the Thessalonian church; its intimate details celebrate the life of those Christians, providing a pattern for our own intercession.

Paul begins with a statement of fact: these believers belong to the Father and the Son by the work of the Spirit. Though this church endured severe suffering and was confused about their future

resurrection, they were securely and eternally loved by God. As we intercede for “all the Lord’s people” (Eph. 6:18), we remember that they are first of all people who belong to the Lord.

The Thessalonians lived out this identity with their “work produced by faith” (v. 3). In the midst of trials, they modeled their lives on the lives of the apostles, who were often persecuted, and on Christ himself—our highest example of righteous suffering (1 Peter 2:21). Then, having followed godly examples, the Thessalonians became examples for the other churches in their region and even believers everywhere (v. 8).

These stories motivated Paul. He gives thanks to God for the believers, he mentions them constantly in prayer, and he remembers them before the Lord (vv. 2–3). His knowledge of their situation and his concern for their spiritual wellbeing find their expression in prayer.

APPLY THE WORD

Though we might intend to pray for “all the Lord’s people” (Eph. 6:18), we often fail to remember everyone. If you have a directory of the members of your church, a list of missionaries you support, or a map of the world, you can use it to systematically mention people before the Lord. Or create your own list with notes about the needs of others.

PRAY WITH US

We continue in prayer for our Public Safety team today: George Kourtev, Jacob Muscat, Justin Copelin, and Kyle Hopp. May God protect them and bless their hard work and dedication as they keep Moody safe with their vigilance.

THURSDAY
APRIL

27

Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer.

1 Corinthians 7:5

Pray for Your Spouse

The lives of families today are often busy to the point of being nearly frantic. Husbands and wives work, maintain the house, care for children and aging relatives, exercise, pursue further education, and try to squeeze in the occasional dinner together. Sadly, the discipline of prayer may creep to the bottom of the list—or slide off entirely.

Though the specific activities may have been different in the first century, no doubt early Christians struggled to focus on righteousness as much as modern believers do. Peter’s instructions in today’s passage return our scattered energies to the marital priorities of greatest importance: mutual love, humility, and prayer.

Wives are to submit to their husbands, husbands are to be considerate and respectful to their wives, and all believers are characterized by compassion and sympathy. As Peter

will later summarize: “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another” (1 Peter 5:5). This, of course, is the way of our Lord who was rich and yet became poor (see 2 Cor. 8:9), who made Himself nothing (Phil. 2:7), and who washed the feet even of those who would later deny and betray him (see John 13:1–17).

One way we express humility is in prayer. Peter warns husbands that if they do not act with Christ-like humility and love toward their wives, their prayers will be hindered (v. 7). Bringing a spouse before the throne of God is an act of love for them and a testimony of our mutual need of the Lord’s help. Prayer should be as central to our married life as anything we do. As theologian Robert Leighton commented: “[Peter] supposes in Christians the necessary and frequent use of this; takes it for granted, that the heirs of life cannot live without prayer.”

APPLY THE WORD

If you are married, take time today to pray for your spouse. Ask the Lord to help you grow in humility and love in your relationship. If you aren’t married, pray that God will strengthen the marriages and families in your church, community, and across the nation. And seek the Spirit’s strength in your own relationships as you express His love to others.

PRAY WITH US

Today, we finish our prayers for the Public Safety team: Marc Lazarescu, Marques Funchess, and Steven Cascio. Ask that God give them encouragement and strength as they provide the best possible service to Moody’s students, staff, and guests.

The promise is for you and your children . . . for all whom the Lord our God will call.

Acts 2:39

FRIDAY
APRIL

28

Pray for Your Children

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that each child visit the doctor for a well-child exam eleven times before the age of three and once a year thereafter. In those twenty-seven childhood checkups, the pediatrician will administer immunizations, give recommendations for the child's nutrition and safety, and monitor growth and development. Whether the little one appears ill or not, the doctor will do everything possible to ensure appropriate physical wellbeing.

In today's passage, concerned parents bring their children to another kind of doctor: the Great Physician. Sometimes we have thought of this as a serene scene in a storybook. We imagine happy moms and dads posing their babies for a celebrity photo with Jesus. The text doesn't tell us that these children were sick in any way, so we might think the parents were simply requesting a nice ritual. Not so.

While some parents brought their children to Jesus for prayer, many did not. And the ones who did faced the hostility of the disciples who believed that Christ should not be bothered by healthy little kids. But these parents were just as determined as the friends of the paralytic who clawed their way through the roof (Luke 5:17–26) or the father with the demon-possessed son who begged Jesus to heal him (Luke 9:37–43). Following their example, we must be tireless in our efforts to place our children before Jesus. We know that He is the only one who can make them spiritually well, and so we intercede for them against all obstacles.

For His part, Jesus welcomed the little children. He was delighted to place His hands on them and intercede for their young lives. What parent or grandparent or aunt or uncle would not want the same for the children they love?

APPLY THE WORD

Who are the children in your life? Do you have children or grandchildren? Do you participate in the life of the church's children by teaching Sunday school or greeting them as they pass your pew? Jesus welcomes, loves, and intercedes for the weakest and youngest members of His body. We, too, bring children to Christ by prayer.

PRAY WITH US

Focus your prayers on Debbie Zelinski, vice president of Human Resources. We give thanks for her capable leadership in hiring competent Moody employees and pray for grace and strength to handle any challenging situations.

SATURDAY
APRIL

29

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Luke 23:34

Pray for Unbelievers

On December 25, 1914, during World War I, a remarkable display of kindness happened between opposing armies. The so-called Christmas Truce was an unofficial ceasefire that found German and Allied troops climbing out of their trenches, warily at first, to exchange food, sing carols, and even play a friendly soccer match. The soldiers who shook hands on the battlefield that day demonstrated human compassion and testified to their hope for future peace.

The Christians in today’s passage had also been battered recently by their enemies. Peter and John had just been released from prison, where they had been unjustly detained for preaching the gospel. Receiving them back, the church prayed together. Their prayer is starkly honest, acknowledging to the Lord the frustration of being opposed by raging nations and wicked rulers (vv. 25–26).

But the church does not pray without hope. They began their prayer by addressing the Lord of all creation who created all things and rules over them by His sovereign power. They also confessed that even the wicked forces that fight against them did so only under the power and permission of the Lord (v. 28). They knew that Satan and his angels are subject to One greater than themselves. We can learn from the early church’s prayerful example to be honest before the Lord and to be honest about the Lord.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about this prayer is found at its conclusion. We might expect the disciples to pray for the total obliteration of their enemies. Instead, we find them interceding for boldness to proclaim the gospel and power to work miracles among the unconverted. In short, they asked God to make His enemies His friends.

APPLY THE WORD

Jesus instructed us to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Though most of us don’t experience persecution the way early Christians did, we still might be surrounded by people who hate our Savior. Spend time praying for unbelievers, asking God to reconcile them to Himself and make them His friends.

PRAY WITH US

We request your prayers for the professors on our Moody Theological Seminary Michigan campus: Christopher Brooks, Eric Moore, Eugene Mayhew, James Wood, and John Restum. Pray for their teaching and guidance of students training for ministry.

Not giving up meeting together . . . and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:25

Intercession's Grand Finale

Sometimes our future eternal life with God can seem far away, belonging more to the realm of fairy tales than to the ordinary rhythms of everyday life. But as God's people, the priorities of eternity should set our priorities. We daily seek to live according to the aims of heaven, and we pray, as Jonathan Edwards prayed, "Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs!"

In today's passage we see that one of the main activities in our future life with God will be praying together with the fully assembled people of God. Prayer is not merely asking God for something we don't have. Prayer is presenting our desires to God with thanksgiving. In eternity, the gathered people of God join their voices to express their greatest desire—the exaltation of Jesus—and to give God thanks for His gift of salvation. Their meditation on the great things God has done for them gives rise to an eternal prayer meeting.

God's people in heaven are freed from sin and human weakness. No more do they struggle against their desires—sometimes asking for good things with wrong motives—or offer their prayers mixed with doubt. No more do they fall asleep mid-prayer or put off prayer time until tomorrow. The vision in Revelation 19 is thoroughly triumphant. The multitude speaks to God with both body and soul, with resounding shouts and untiring energy.

The prayer leader in the new heaven and new earth will be Christ Himself. He is the voice from the throne (v. 5) calling His people to praise, and He is the subject of their roaring, rushing, thundering *Hallelujahs*. Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem in Luke 19 was only a dim foretaste of His welcome among the multitudes who will dwell with Him forever. The humble, roadside *hosannas* of Jesus' disciples will be amplified by His people into eternity.

APPLY THE WORD

If praying together is an important part of life in the new heaven and new earth, it ought to be an important part of life now. God's Word holds forth the prospect of eternal corporate worship as encouragement to gather before His throne right now. Use times of prayer with others as a way to train your heart for eternal life with God.

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our prayer time this month, we give thanks for the gift of intercession through prayer. Let us praise God that we can come before Him, bringing our worries and cares to a God who listens and provides. Thank you for praying for us and with us!

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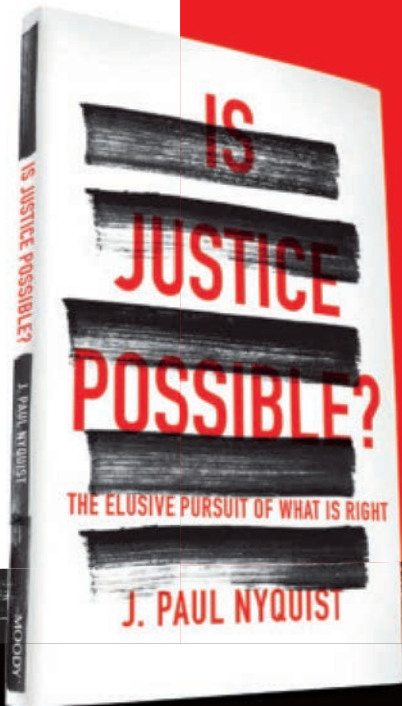
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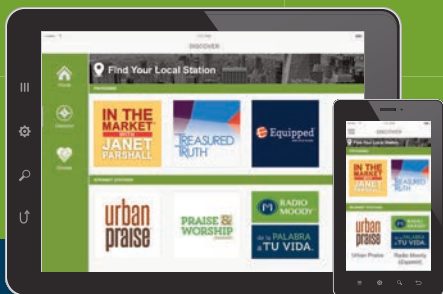
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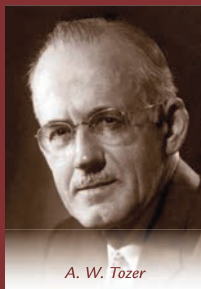
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