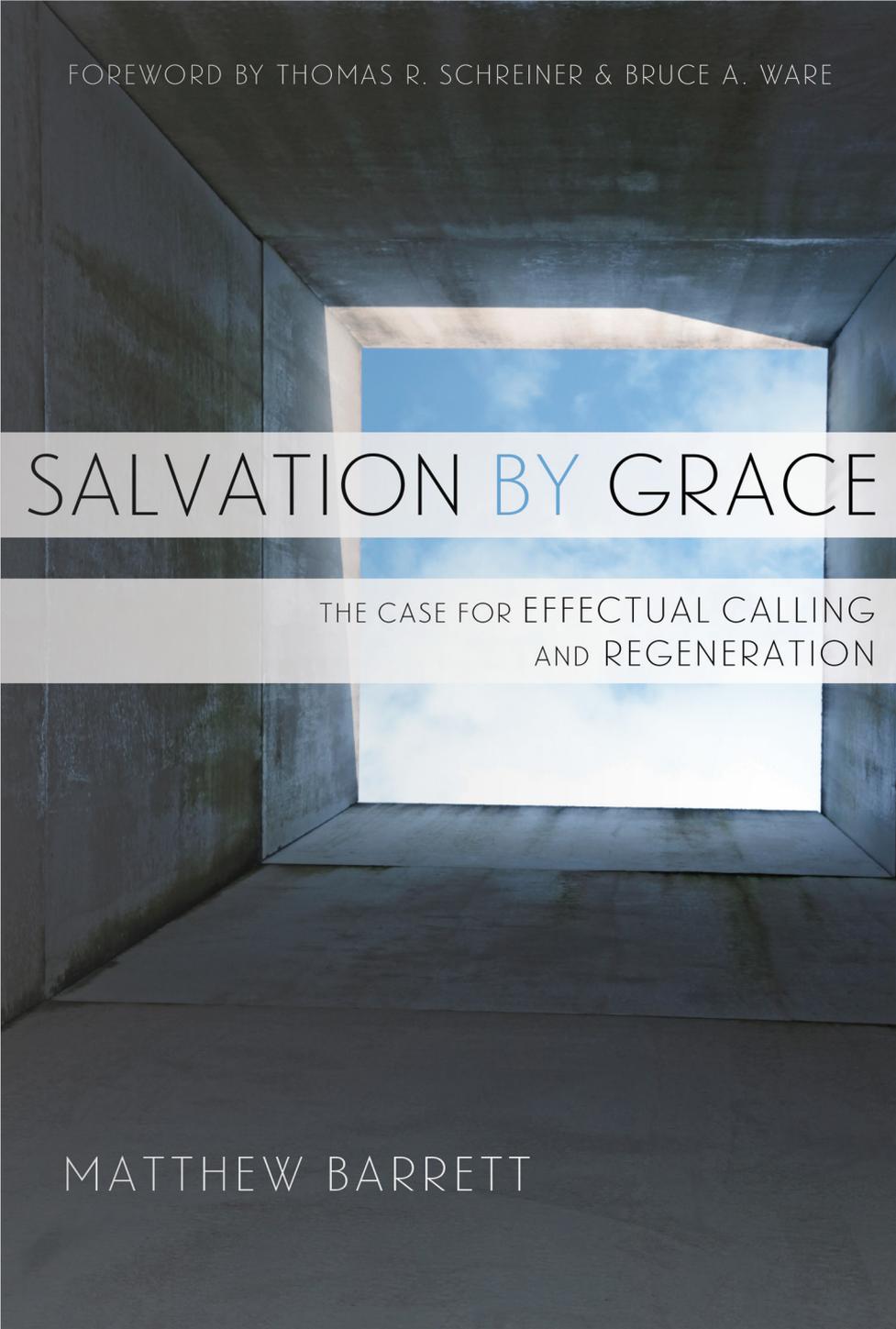


CREDO

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4 | NOVEMBER 2014

HOW
THEN
SHALL
WE
PRAY ?

The Necessity
of Prayer
for the Christian Life



FOREWORD BY THOMAS R. SCHREINER & BRUCE A. WARE

SALVATION BY GRACE

THE CASE FOR EFFECTUAL CALLING
AND REGENERATION

MATTHEW BARRETT

"This is quite simply the most thorough and convincing account of divine sovereignty, both over the new birth and over effectual calling, that I've ever read. It is historically informed, lucidly written, eminently practical, and, most important of all, biblically faithful. This book, and Matthew Barrett in particular, renews my confidence that the so-called young, restless, and Reformed are in good hands and moving in the right direction. *Salvation by Grace* merits a wide reading and will undoubtedly prove to be an indispensable resource for the serious student of God's Word. I cannot recommend it too highly."

-**Sam Storms**, Lead
Pastor for Preaching and
Vision, Bridgeway
Church, Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma

Salvation by Grace: The Case for Effectual Calling and Regeneration presents a magisterial case that God's grace is monergistic—that God acts alone, apart from human cooperation, to effectually call and sovereignly regenerate sinners. Thus effectual calling and regeneration logically precede conversion in the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), thereby ensuring that all of the glory in salvation belongs to God, not to man. Matthew Barrett also evaluates Arminian and modified views of the nature of God's grace in salvation, finding them unbiblical because they fail to do justice to the scriptural portrayal of God's sovereignty and glory in salvation.

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FOUR
VIEWS
ON

THE HISTORICAL ADAM



Ardel B. Caneday, Matthew Barrett, general editors
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COUNTERPOINTS
BIBLE & THEOLOGY

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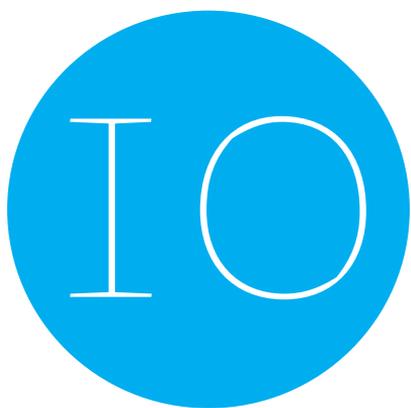
FROM THE EDITOR

We live in a world that screams to get our attention. From the moment you wake up to the second you hit your pillow at night, something or someone wants your time. Hosts of people are waiting for you to friend them on Facebook. The world awaits your next tweet and blogpost. Your phone is buzzing because you have another email that needs your response. When you go home and turn on your TV there are innumerable “must see” shows, as well as breaking news you cannot afford to miss. Let’s face it, the world we live in is quite loud, and it never sleeps.

In the midst of all this noise, where does extended time in prayer fit in? Or does it? Prayer seems to run contrary to the busyness of life in the twenty-first century. If you don’t believe me, ask yourself this question, “When was the last time I spent more than 15 minutes in *uninterrupted* prayer with the Lord?” Church history shows that for Christians who came before us, private and corporate prayer was essential, assumed to be a necessary staple for the Christian and the church. After all, it is the God-given means by which we have fellowship and communion with God himself. Should we neglect prayer we actually neglect God, and the consequences are spiritually fatal. But should we set aside time to pray to God, we will benefit greatly, finding God to be a refuge and a shield in the midst of a chaotic, consuming, and demanding world.

In this issue of *Credo Magazine* we will focus on prayer, looking at how Christians in ages past have understood the importance of prayer, as well as Scripture’s own emphasis on the necessity of prayer. Not only will we recognize the importance of prayer, but in this issue we will look at how we pray as well. My guess is that most Christians have never even thought about *how* they should pray. Well here is a great opportunity to do so! ■

Matthew Barrett
Executive Editor



10 QUESTIONS WITH PASTOR SANDY WILLSON

INTERVIEW BY MATT MANRY

1 **You have been working in pastoral ministry for over thirty years. What has been the most difficult part about working in the church for over three decades?**

There have been and are innumerable joys, but I would say one of the most difficult aspects of pastoral ministry is having to confront folks when they are out of line with the gospel.

2 **What have been some of the most joyful and rewarding moments that you have experienced in ministry?**

Leading people to a saving knowledge of Christ, studying and teaching Christ in the Scriptures, helping spouses with young children keep their marriages together, sending young men and women from our church to the mission field, helping people I love make crucial decisions, mobilizing resources to expand the kingdom, leading a beloved congregation in the worship of God—who else but a local church pastor gets to do these things?

3 **Why has world missions been so close to your heart, and how would you suggest young pastors direct their congregations to focus globally on making disciples?**

I was well trained in my early years. Roger Kvam, under whose ministry I became a believer, J. Christy Wilson Jr., and Harold Ockenga, both at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, taught and demonstrated the urgency of international mission. The key to the local church's progress in cross-cultural mission, humanly speaking, is the heart of the senior minister. Everybody can see what he believes by what he says and does. The apostle Paul teaches us that unless the people hear and believe the gospel they cannot call upon the Lord and be saved; therefore, we must go and continue to go until all have heard, or the Lord returns.

4

The Shalom Memphis Project is also a ministry that you co-founded. Can you tell us a little about this ministry and what exactly your inner ministry strategy is?

Our premise is this: in order for a city to have God's peace, every neighborhood in that city must have peace, and in order for a neighborhood to have peace, there must be in that neighborhood a Christ-centered, Bible-believing, holistic, neighborhood-based local church. We have helped bring evangelical suburban "resource churches" into partnership with neighborhood churches and church planters to begin the work of revitalizing or planting gospel-centered churches in all our neighborhoods. Concurrently, we are partnering with about sixty evangelical agencies to serve the lost and impoverished in Memphis.

5

You also co-founded the Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies. Please tell me why urban theological

education is so important for the church to support?

There are many aspects to a city's welfare (shalom)—good schools, economic development, law enforcement, affordable housing, the arts, etc.—but the biggest needs are decidedly spiritual, which means that we need well-trained men and women to teach, mentor, and pastor. That's why MCUTS is crucial to our strategy.

Some of our readers may be future pastors. Should they consider investing in seminary before they become a pastor?

I know there are different schools of thought on this, and sometimes sheer economics makes graduate education prohibitive; but far too many people who, with sacrifice, could find a way to be theologically trained are entering professional ministry without formal training. I think that's a huge mistake. The Bible is a big, complex book, the history of Christian theology is a vast subject but extremely valuable, the mind is the window to the soul, and our people deserve the best we can give them, because they are God's children. For all these reasons, I say the pastor will be a better servant if he has devoted the necessary time to formal studies.

What are three books that you would recommend every young pastor read?

William Guthrie's *The Christian's Great Interest*. John Owen's, *Of Temptation*. Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*.

6

7

8

What does your weekly sermon prep look like?

I plan my texts and themes one year ahead of time, which helps me throughout the year catalogue articles or ideas when I read them. I try to study all day Thursday for my Sunday morning message (with interruptions—I'm a multi-tasker), and then I refine the message on Saturday afternoon and evening. I do not produce a written manuscript but work with an oral outline, which enables much flexibility in preaching and very little possibility of publishing afterwards!

9

You have five children! What were some of the joys and challenges that you faced in being a pastor and raising five kids at the same time?

I have taught through the years that if one is best suited for pastoral ministry, his family will benefit from his being in ministry. To put it negatively, if I had ever thought that pastoral ministry undermined my care for my wife or young children, I would have chosen immediately to serve God in some other capacity. My wife and kids have flourished, in many ways, because I am a pastor, for which I am deeply grateful. Family life gives us an immediate context to identify with the lives of our people and our neighbors. Our failures and limitations in family leadership remind us constantly of our need for forgiveness and healing. And the lessons learned in family leadership serve us well in church leadership. All five of my kids and their spouses and their children are now walking with the Lord, which, I know now, is purely by his unadulterated grace.

What role does prayer play in your personal life and in your ministry?

10

Jesus is clear on this in his teaching and in his own life. But I've always had to confess my sorrow at how bad at prayer I am. I pray every day. I keep an intercessory list for each day of the week because I'm not good enough at prayer to get through my whole list every day. I schedule regular separate prayer meetings with elders, pastors, worship leaders, staff, and congregation, because I don't trust my own instincts to pray with them regularly otherwise. And I schedule full days of prayer. But I want to cry when I think of how disinclined I am by nature to bend my knees. My encouragement to any pastor with a similar problem is to join the fight. Prayer must be at the heart of our ministry. ▀

DIGGIN DEEP

DON'T ALWAYS PRAY THE SAME PRAYER

BY DONALD WHITNEY

Some people always pray the same prayer, whether they pray it just once a day or repeat it many times. They may use words straight out of Scripture, even praying one of the prayers of the Bible word for word, or they may speak sentences of a merely human origin. Either way, in Heaven their prayers must sound like an unchanging voicemail recording.

But one prayer does not a prayer life make. Prayers without variety eventually become words without meaning. Jesus said that to pray this way is to pray in vain, for in the Sermon on the Mount he warned, “But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matt. 6:7).

What, then, about Jesus’ teaching in the Lord’s Prayer? Don’t his introductory words to the prayer in Luke 11:2, “When you pray, say . . .” indicate that he wants us to repeat the words of this prayer verbatim? And if so, how can doing this involve “vain repetitions” since these are inspired words Jesus specifically told us to pray?

While it’s true that this command of Jesus in Luke 11:2 justifies praying the exact words of the prayer, remember that when he taught this prayer to his hearers in Matthew 6:9 he began by saying, “*In this manner, therefore, pray*” (emphasis added). That’s why, even though the prayer has been recited in unison by worshipers since the second century, it has been called the “Model” Prayer, because in it Jesus models all the elements we should include in our prayers. Not even the apostles understood the Lord’s words here to be the

exact and only words to use in prayer. We never read in the New Testament that the apostles repeated these words only, nor did they teach others to do so. The other prayers of the New Testament follow the model of this prayer, but not its form. Any prayer in the Bible consistent with the Model Prayer may also be prayed sincerely and/or used as a model, but none should be considered merely a script to be repeated ritualistically.

Jesus also taught the importance of perseverance in prayer (Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 18:1-8), meaning that it’s often necessary to pray many times (maybe even years) for the same thing. But frequent prayer for the same thing is very different from vain repetition of the same prayer. We should never think that we have found “just the right words” and make them the sum total of our prayer life.

It may seem simpler to pray only one prayer all the time rather than learning to pray in accordance with all that the Bible teaches on prayer. But in reality such praying is an oversimplification that reduces prayer to a magic formula designed to get God to do our bidding. The entire Bible is our guide to prayer, and to willfully neglect what God says about it throughout Scripture in order to isolate our attention on one prayer is a waste of breath.

Besides, talking to God is too great a privilege to settle for “vain repetitions” when the Bible invites you to “pour out your heart before Him” (Ps. 62:8).

Donald Whitney is the author of *Simplify Your Spiritual Life: Spiritual Disciplines for the Overwhelmed*. 



SAY WHAT?

SHOULD CHRISTIANS PRAY IN TONGUES?

SAM STORMS: YES!

Sam has spent over 40 years in ministry and since 2008 has been Lead Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City. Sam is founder and president of Enjoying God Ministries and regularly blogs at www.samstorms.com. He has authored or edited 22 books. Sam is a graduate of The University of Oklahoma (B.A.), Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M), and The University of Texas at Dallas (Ph.D.). He and his wife Ann have been married for 42 years and are the parents of two grown daughters and have four grandchildren.

My short answer is: If you believe the gift of speaking in tongues is still available to the church today and that the Spirit has granted it to you

THAT PAUL CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD TONGUES TO BE A FORM OF PRAYER IS SEEN FROM HIS DESCRIPTION OF IT IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14:2

(1 Cor. 12:11), Yes. This does not mean that all Christians should or will pray in tongues, for Paul is clear that no particular spiritual gift is given to every believer (1 Cor. 12:28-31).

That Paul clearly understood tongues to be a form of prayer is seen from his description of it in 1 Corinthians 14:2 (“for one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God”), 14:14a (“for if I pray in a tongue”), and 14:28 (in the absence of

interpretation the Christian is to speak in tongues “to God”). And according to 14:16, prayer in tongues is a perfectly legitimate way in which to express heartfelt gratitude to the Lord.

Furthermore, we know that praying in tongues was a staple experience in Paul’s private devotional life. This is clear from at least three texts:

First, in describing his own gift of speaking in tongues, Paul says “my spirit prays” (1 Cor. 14:14) but my mind is “unfruitful.” Many insist that if one’s mind is not engaged in such a way that the believer can rationally and cognitively grasp what is occurring, the experience, whatever its nature may be, is useless. Paul strongly disagrees. Having asserted that his mind is not fruitful when he prays in tongues, many would think his next step would be to repudiate the use of tongues altogether. After all, what possible benefit can there be in a spiritual experience where one’s mind can’t comprehend? At the very least one would expect Paul to say something to minimize its importance so as to render it trite, at least in comparison with other gifts. But he does no such thing.

In view of what has just been said in v. 14, he asks the question in v. 15a, “What am I to do?” His answer is that he is determined to do both! “I *will* pray with my spirit,” i.e., I will pray in tongues, and “I *will* pray with my mind,” i.e., I will pray in Greek so that others who speak and understand Greek can profit from what I say. Clearly, Paul

believed that a spiritual experience which was beyond the grasp of his mind was yet profoundly profitable. He believed that it wasn’t absolutely necessary for an experience to be rationally cognitive for it to be spiritually beneficial and glorifying to God.

A second indication that Paul prayed in tongues in private devotions is found in 1 Corinthians 14:18-19. Paul has said that tongues-speech in the public gathering of the church is prohibited unless there is an interpretation. Since the purpose of such meetings is the edification of other believers, Paul prefers to speak in a language all can understand. Consequently, he rarely speaks in tongues in a

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR THAT. THE NEW TESTAMENT NEVER RECORDS A SINGLE INSTANCE OF PRAYING IN TONGUES. NOR IS THERE ANY PRECEDENT FOR THE PRACTICE AMONG THE LEADING FIGURES IN CHURCH HISTORY.

public setting. But if Paul speaks in tongues more frequently and fervently than anyone else (“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you,” v. 18), yet in church almost never does (preferring there to speak in a way all can understand), where does he exercise this spiritual gift? The only possible answer is that Paul utilized this gift in private, in the context of his personal, devotional intimacy with God.

Third, this interpretation is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 14:28 where Paul gives instruction on what

to do in the absence of interpretation: let him (the tongues-speaker) “speak to himself and to God.” Where? Given the explicit prohibition of uninterpreted tongues-speech “in church” (v. 28), it seems likely Paul had in mind prayer in tongues in private—in a context other than the corporate gathering.



PHIL JOHNSON: NO!

Phil is the Executive Director of Grace to You. He has been closely associated with John MacArthur since 1981 and edits most of John’s major books. But he may be best known for several popular Websites he maintains, including The Spurgeon Archive and The Hall of Church History. Phil has a bachelor’s degree in theology from Moody Bible Institute (class of 1975) and was an editor at Moody Press before coming to Grace Community Church. He is an elder at Grace Community Church and pastors the GraceLife fellowship group. Phil and his wife, Darlene, have three adult sons, Jeremiah, Jedidiah, and Jonathan.

There is absolutely no biblical mandate for that. The New Testament never records a single instance of praying in tongues. Nor is there any precedent for the practice among the leading figures in church history. Speaking nonsense syllables as a form of “prayer” is one of many novelties that have crept into mainstream evangelicalism only recently, via the modern charismatic movement.

Two biblical texts are typically cited to justify the practice. One is Romans 8:26, which speaks of *the Holy Spirit praying* on our behalf. The verse has nothing whatsoever to do with strange languages or gibberish uttered by the Christian; it’s about the

Holy Spirit’s gracious intercession on our behalf, even when “we do not know what to pray for as we ought.” The Spirit—not the believer—utters “groanings too deep for words.” To inject the notion of praying in tongues into that verse is to do great violence to both text and context.

The main passage commonly used in support of glossolalia as a form of prayer is 1 Corinthians 14:2-17. That entire chapter is a rebuke for the way the Corinthians had *for selfish reasons* abused the gift of tongues in their corporate gatherings. So when the apostle says, “The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself” (v. 4), he is not commending spiritual self-aggrandizement as a legitimate goal. His whole point is that this would be a horrible misuse of the spiritual gift. The gifts are “for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7)—“to serve one another” (1 Pet. 4:10). Being “puffed up,” or building oneself up at the expense of others was the besetting sin of the Corinthian church, and every hint of superiority or self-seeking is portrayed throughout 1 Corinthians as a carnal iniquity (4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). Paul is by no means commending it as a virtue in 14:4.

Verse 14 *does* expressly mention “pray[ing] in a tongue,” but it’s clear that the apostle does not regard this as a legitimate spiritual discipline: “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.” Would Paul himself engage in such a practice? Clearly not: “I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also” (v. 15).

Finally, the biblical expression “praying in the Spirit” has nothing to do with tongues. That is totally foreign to the context of Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20 (the only two texts where that expression appears). ■

CONFESSIONS

I'M IN SEMINARY.

WHY PRAY?

BY MATT MANRY

In seminary it is very easy to get bogged down with all the required reading and papers. Trust me, I know. I am in seminary right now trying to complete two Master's degrees, and the struggle to maintain a healthy walk with the Lord is very real. That is why we seminarians must always remember to spend daily time praying to our Father in Heaven. Our prayer life cannot be sacrificed simply because we are in school studying theology. So let me share three reasons with you as to why prayer is so important in the life of a seminary student.

Cultivate the heart and the mind: We must never forget that we are called to love the Lord our God with both our heart and mind (Luke 10:27). We should never disconnect our head from our heart. This is why prayer is so essential. Learning and studying is such a blessed gift from the Lord, but we must always remember that God desires that we cultivate both our hearts and minds while in seminary. Prayer is what can help us with this.

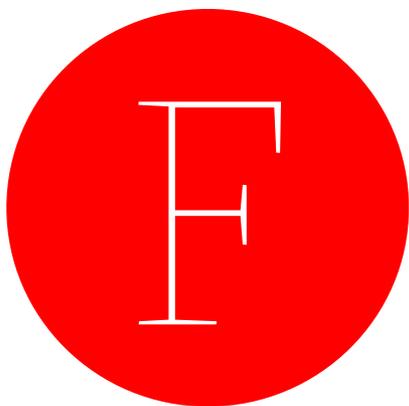
Grow in your relationship with your Father: To develop a strong relationship with someone, you must spend quality time with that person. This might seem like a given, but time is of the essence while you are in school, and time is definitely not easy to come by. However, we are

still commanded to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), and to come into a greater knowledge of our Father we must set aside time for quality prayer and Bible study. Let's not forget this.

Imitate Jesus: The Son of God spent a lot of time in prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12). Is this not reason enough to spend time praying? Obviously, we are all on a spiritual journey and we must never forget that our goal is to become more like Jesus in all that we do. To become like Jesus, we must act like Jesus. And by consistently praying, we will come to see that time spent with Christ is time well spent indeed.

My friends, I want to encourage you to do all that you can to set aside time for prayer. It is something that we must not forsake. May we never become so consumed with our seminary workload that we forget the most important thing of all: giving glory to God in all that we say and do!

Matt Manry is an editor for Credo Magazine as well as the Director of Discipleship at Life Bible Church in Canton, Georgia. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Religion at Reformed Theological Seminary and a Master of Arts in Christian and Classical Studies from Knox Theological Seminary. ■



FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

WHAT PSALM DO YOU FIND YOURSELF PRAYING THROUGH MOST OFTEN AND WHY?

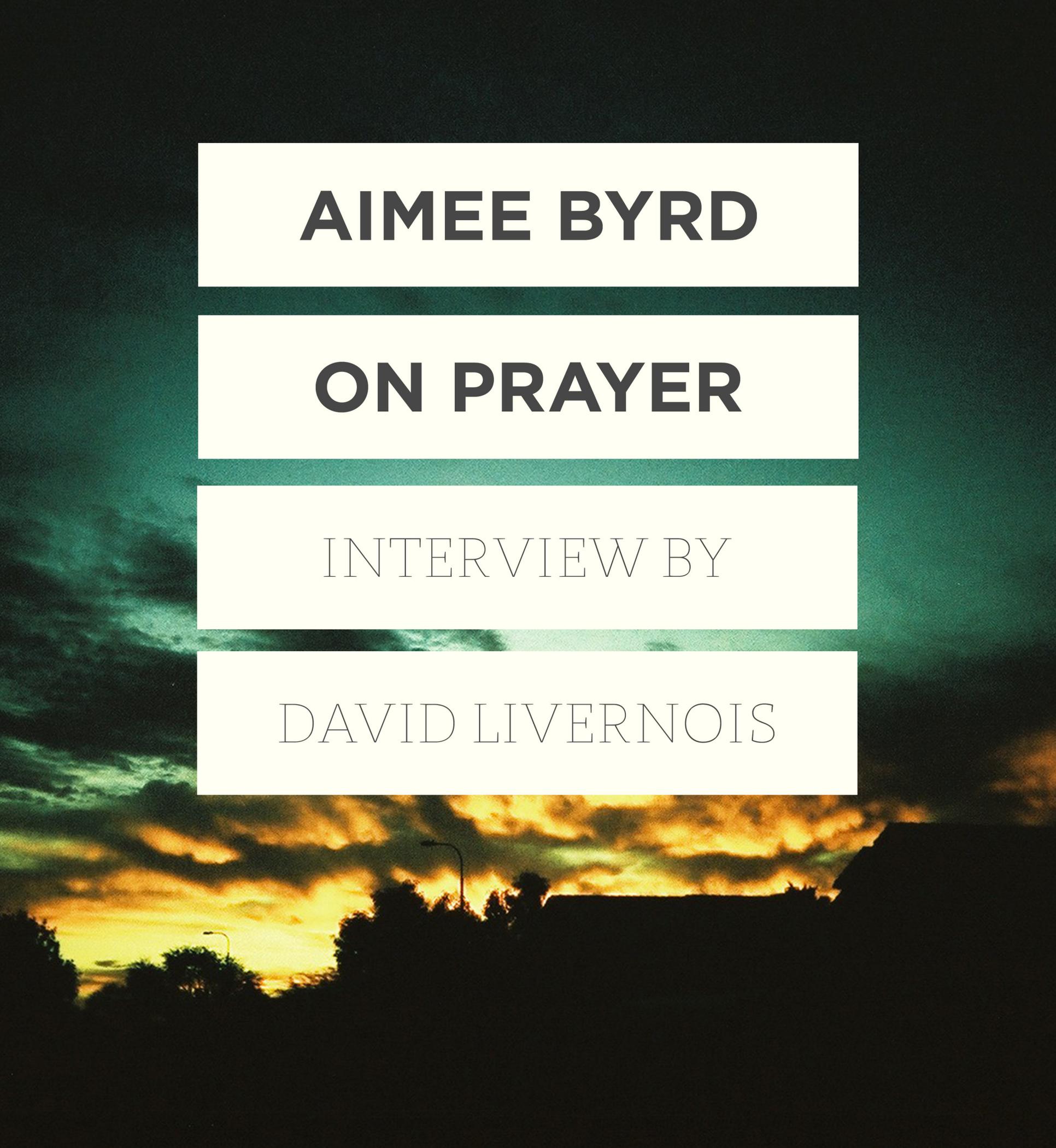
Nancy Guthrie

Several times a year we host a retreat at a lodge on the Cumberland River for couples who have deceased children. On Sunday morning we go out on the back deck and have a time of praying through various psalms. I love to start with Psalm 19 as we look up at the sky and consider how the heavens declare his glory. Then we work our way through the beauties and perfections of God's Word and what it does. This is a group of people who long to have their souls revived, to be given wisdom, to have joy return, to see things clearly, and to be assured that fearing the Lord and listening to him speak through his Word will be sweet. We need to hear more than our own voices which speak words of darkness and despair, and ques-

tion God's goodness. We need for the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts to be acceptable in his sight. We need for him to be a solid foundation underneath us. We need him to be a redeemer.

Nancy Guthrie teaches the Bible at her home church, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tennessee, as well as at conferences around the country and internationally, and through books and DVDs in the Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament series.





AIMEE BYRD

ON PRAYER

INTERVIEW BY

DAVID LIVERNOIS

Aimee Byrd lives with her husband and three kids in Martinsburg, WV. She blogs at mortificationofspin.org, is a cohost for The Mortification of Spin podcast, and is the author of *Housewife Theologian* (2013), and of the forthcoming title, *Theological Fitness* (2015). As we are examining the many facets of prayer in this issue of *Credo Magazine*, we asked Aimee to share with us her insights on the significance of prayer in the life of a wife and mother.

Though it could and should be just as easily asked of husbands and fathers, the first question that always seems to come up when discussing the subject of prayer and motherhood is: How do you find the time to pray?

Mothers go through different seasons and in some sense so does their prayer life. The big obstacle for most mothers when it comes to praying is all the interruptions. Trying to plan around this can be very frustrating. For example, I used to love to wake up early while the rest of the family slept to spend some time in my Bible and in prayer. And then I had my son. He is a morning person. Suddenly, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 opened up a whole new meaning to me. At that stage in my life, I didn't get to indulge in long, elaborate prayers often, but I prayed without ceasing. This reminded me both of my utter need for Christ and his continual presence. Although I

could not pray alone and uninterrupted, I could commune with God every moment.

Now my kids are all school-age and I can tell them that I am going to go out to sit on the porch to pray for a few minutes. They'll say something like "cool," but I can pretty much guarantee there will be an interruption. I do think that it is good to have a place like my porch to try to separate myself during opportune times. It's admittedly a nicer option than John Wesley's mother who threw an apron over her head to let her kids know she was praying. So, I would tell mothers to always pray without ceasing.

Can you define for us the term "housewife theologian," and speak to the importance of prayer when it comes to answering this call?

NOW MY KIDS ARE ALL SCHOOL-AGE AND I CAN TELL THEM THAT I AM GOING TO GO OUT TO SIT ON THE PORCH TO PRAY FOR A FEW MINUTES. THEY'LL SAY SOMETHING LIKE "COOL," BUT I CAN PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEE THERE WILL BE AN INTERRUPTION. I DO THINK THAT IT IS GOOD TO HAVE A PLACE LIKE MY PORCH TO TRY TO SEPARATE MYSELF DURING OPPORTUNE TIMES. IT'S ADMITTEDLY A NICER OPTION THAN JOHN WESLEY'S MOTHER WHO THREW AN APRON OVER HER HEAD TO LET HER KIDS KNOW SHE WAS PRAYING. SO, I WOULD TELL MOTHERS TO ALWAYS PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

I DO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF THINKING I AM DEFINED BY MY ROLES AND HOW WELL I PERFORM THEM. I TEND TO THINK THAT I AM INTERRUPTED ALL THE TIME FROM THE VERY IMPORTANT TASKS I AM ACCOMPLISHING. PRAYER REMINDS ME THAT GOD GRACIOUSLY INTERRUPTS ME FROM THE LIE, THE DEFAULT STORY THAT I BEGIN TO LIVE, NAMELY, THAT I AM RUNNING THE WORLD. MY ROLES ARE IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE. BUT I AM NOT ULTIMATELY THE ONE IN CONTROL.

I use the broad definition of “housewife” as a married woman, a man’s partner in marriage. So every married woman is a housewife, whether she works outside the home or not. A theologian is simply someone who knows God. Theology is the study of God. We all have some sort of knowledge of God and therefore are all theologians in some sense. But the question is really whether we are good theologians with a true knowledge of God according to his revealed Word, or poor theologians. Jesus prayed in John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Knowing God is an eternal matter. And here we have Jesus praying for us to know him. If Jesus prayed for us to answer this call, I have both a confidence when I pray and a strong awareness of its importance. Knowing involves relationship. God invites us to pray and he equips us with his Holy Spirit. What a blessing it is for a weary mom to have an open invitation to come to our

Lord with her praises and cast all her burdens on him!

There can often be a tendency for Christians to define ourselves by our roles, and thus find our identity therein. With this in view, how can a wife and mother not only be watchful to pray for herself in those roles respectively, but also seek to present herself before God in prayer simply as his daughter?

I mentioned the obstacle of interruption when it comes to mothers and prayer. I do fall into the trap of thinking I am defined by my roles and how well I perform them. I tend to think that I am interrupted all the time from the very important tasks I am accomplishing. Prayer reminds me that God graciously interrupts me from the lie, the default story that I begin to live, namely, that I am running the world. My roles are important and valuable. But I am not ultimately the one in control. I can get anxious when I think I am. Mothers are needed, but mothers are needy. And unlike me, God is never interrupted. He is not limited as I am. Prayer is for the needy. I’m not only a mother or a wife or an awesome barista. I am a child of God, one of the blessed who are being sanctified as the bride of Christ. It is a humbling act to come before our God in prayer. And it is the greatest privilege.

Can you speak to the value of a wife praying both for and with her husband,

yet doing so not only in light of his role to her as her husband, but also as her brother in Christ?

Wow, this is a great question. I don't know if I actually can pray for or with my husband without some sense of praying for him as my husband. I think that has something to do with the awareness of becoming one flesh. However, this distinction is helpful to keep in mind during my prayers for

IT IS EASY TO GET DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU LONG FOR YOUR HUSBAND TO KNOW THE LORD AND SHARE THAT JOY WITH YOU, AND HE CONTINUOUSLY REJECTS THE FAITH. I HAVE SEEN THE PAIN IN THESE WOMEN'S EYES, AND HEARD THEM EXPRESS HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO COME TO CHURCH ALONE WHILE MARRIED COUPLES FILL THE PEWS AROUND THEM. THEY NEED EXTRA ENCOURAGEMENT AND EXHORTATION TO RESPOND TO OUR WEEKLY CALL TO WORSHIP AND BE ACQUAINTED WITH THEIR CHURCH FAMILY. A WOMAN MARRIED TO AN UNBELIEVER NEEDS THE SAME GOSPEL THAT WE DO, AND SHE WILL BE BLESSED IN CHRIST BY THE SAME MEANS OF GRACE AS WE ARE. FURTHERMORE, SHE IS A VITAL MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, NOT A THIRD WHEEL TAG ALONG.

and with him. Since Matt is my husband, it's all too easy to be selfish when I pray for him. After all, he is to love me as Christ loves the church. His blessings are my blessings. His spiritual growth and fruitfulness benefit me. Remembering to intercede for him as my brother in Christ does help me to pray with an eternal perspective for God's glory and Matt's good. The fact is, Matt and I will not be married to one another in the new heaven and the new earth, but we will always be brother and sister in Christ. Praying with this in mind reiterates that Matt doesn't belong to me; he belongs to God. And I believe that praying in light of this truth ultimately helps me to be a better wife to him as well. I can pray knowing that even where I fail, God is always faithful. Where Matt fails, God is faithful. As we hold fast to our confession of hope together, our goal is to consummate our marriage to the ultimate Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. And we are privileged to be ambassadors of his gospel while living in the community of his church now.

What consolation do you have for the wife who is now a Christian but was not when she got married, and whose husband is an unbeliever?

This is a very lonely experience, and I think that it is easy for a woman married to an unbeliever to begin thinking she is in a unique situation. So my first consolation is to point her to Paul and Peter who both wrote to her circumstance (1 Cor. 7:13-16, 1 Pet. 3:1-6). This shows that this scenario was common enough to be addressed in Scripture, and also that her holiness is not lessened in any way because she is married

to an unbeliever. Of course, prayer plays a major role not only for the salvation of her husband, but for her own fortitude and witness. What a comfort it is to know that her heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, has pursued her! Because of this, she is not alone and can have true joy. It is the Lord who changed her heart and is now using her in her weakness and in his strength.

It is easy to get discouraged when you long for your husband to know the Lord and share that joy with you, and he continuously rejects the faith. I have seen the pain in these women's eyes, and heard them express how difficult it is to come to church alone while married couples fill the pews around them. They need extra encouragement and exhortation to respond to our weekly call to worship and be acquainted with their church family. A woman married to an unbeliever needs the same gospel that we do, and she will be blessed in Christ by the same means of grace as we are. Furthermore, she is a vital member of the body of Christ, not a third wheel tag along.

But as she and the church persist to pray for her husband's salvation, it's okay to acknowledge that longing and sadness before God. In a recent blog post titled, "The Land of Groaning," I reflected on a guest sermon given at my church by Rev. Paul Wolfe who preached on Romans 8:18-25. Rev. Wolfe encouraged us not to be ashamed to groan because that is what the gospel does to us now. And Jesus led the way for us in the land of groaning: "Jesus groaned but he never grumbled.

MY HUSBAND AND I PRAY WITH OUR KIDS, WE TEACH THEM THE THEOLOGY BEHIND IT, WE ARE ESTABLISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF HABITS AND GRATEFUL HEARTS, TEACHING ACRONYMS SUCH AS A.C.T.S. [ADORATION, CONFESSION, THANKSGIVING, SUPPLICATION], AND WE DO MIX A BIT OF PEDAGOGY IN WITH OUR PRAYERS. I FIGURE IF MY PASTOR CAN BE PEDAGOGICAL WHEN HE PRAYS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CONGREGATION, SO CAN WE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CHILDREN.

Jesus wept but he never whined. Jesus sweat great drops of blood, but never shook his fist at heaven." Not only that, Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf. He hears our groans and he brings them to the Father. "Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27). It is a great comfort to know our Savior can empathize with us, that although he suffered, he did not sin, and that he is our advocate before the Father now.

To what degree should prayer be pedagogical when praying with one's children, is it true that more is "caught than taught" when it comes to this, and what expectations, if any, should we have of our children when they pray?

There was this cheesy video I used to play for my first daughter, called Prayer Bear, as a way to reinforce our teaching on prayer. Now fifteen, she just remembered that video the other day. The main message of the video came from Jeremiah 33:3, "Call to me and I will answer you." Immediately she looked it up on the computer and began laughing at how cheesy it was (which is the reason I couldn't bear to continue showing it to the younger two kids). But I noticed she updated her Twitter profile with these words from Jeremiah 33:3.

My husband and I pray with our kids, we teach them the theology behind it, we are establishing the importance of habits and grateful hearts with acronyms such as A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication), and we do mix a bit of pedagogy in with our prayers. I figure if my pastor can be pedagogical when he prays for the benefit of the congregation, so can we for the benefit of our children. But my daughter's rediscovery pleased me because it reminded us that God invites us to pray with a promise to answer. That's just as much of an encouragement to her at fifteen as it was at four. Prayer was taught to my children at a young age. And we teach them more as they mature. I also believe it is caught in our family habits of praying together, our corporate prayers with the church, and when our children hear us discuss our personal prayer lives.

Many of us at some point have heard or even made reference to something along the lines of, "my mother was a praying woman," or, "if it hadn't been for my mother's prayers," etc. Even in church history, for example, one recalls the story of Monica praying for Augustine. What do you make of this? Is there something that is exceptionally different or remarkable about a mother's prayer?

Well, I'm not sure if there is something remarkably special to God about a mother's prayer, but I do know that there is something remarkable to us about a mother's love. A mother's love is a gift from God. Women are very influential; God has made us that way. Mothers get to participate in the creation and nurturing of life in a unique way. I would think that shapes our prayers, and it also provides an exclusive platform of influence for our children. God uses that. Like I said, mothers are needy. There are so many things that we can do to provide for our children, but we know it is the Lord who must grant them faith. Where do you think the children get their knack for persistently pleading for what they want? From their mothers!

What counsel would you give to the woman who may be reading this interview and finds herself stagnant in prayer, lacking incentive to pray, or struggling to believe that her prayers even matter?

I've been there! Sometimes just knowing that I am going to be interrupted makes me not even want to bother. Or many times my mind is just weary

and I go off track and get lost in my stream of consciousness while praying. After all, there is so much for a mother to do that we can feel way too unproductive when we are still. So I seek help. *The Valley of Vision* is a collection of Puritan prayers that has been an enormous blessing to my prayer life. I will take that little book with me out on my porch and begin by praying one of those prayers. They are short (which a mother certainly will appreciate) and rich. There's no shame in using someone else's words as our own prayer. And speaking of pedagogy, these prayers teach me and remind me of the gospel truths as I pray them. They often serve as a springboard for further prayer and reflection.

It's also always a good incentive to ask people how I can pray for them. Having a few friends who are willing to share their prayer requests gives me a new sense of responsibility in prayer, and it helps me to look outside of routine praises and requests. While prayer is a very personal interaction with God, it is both a privilege and a responsibility for the whole church.

You hear a lot of talking in evangelicalism about the importance of preaching the gospel to yourself. Well, I think that is what continued prayer does in many ways. In prayer, we are reminded that we are needy creatures before our Creator. We approach him with an awareness of his holiness and our unworthiness. And yet, our God has provided his own Son as a mediator so that we can draw near to him. When we reflect on the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation and the application of that work by his

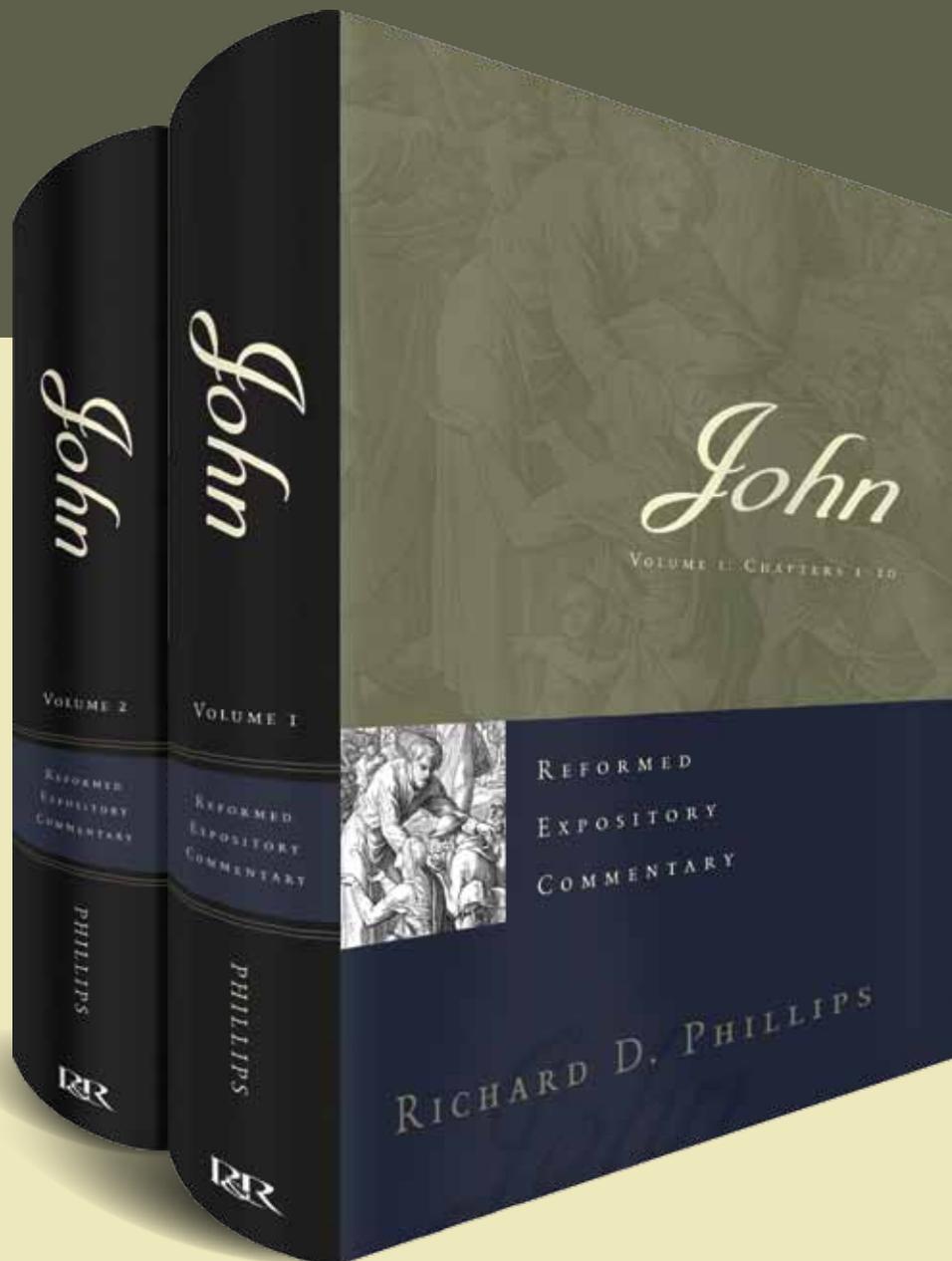
Spirit, how can we say that prayer doesn't matter? God didn't send his Son to this earth to live a life of obedience and suffering and die on a cross to then further distance himself from his beloved. No, when we pray, we are entering the throne room of God, where Christ is sitting at his right hand, interceding on our behalf! God's promise matters and Christ's work matters. Therefore, amazingly, your prayers and my prayers matter as God is working all things for his glory. Amen! ■

I'VE BEEN THERE! SOMETIMES JUST KNOWING THAT I AM GOING TO BE INTERRUPTED MAKES ME NOT EVEN WANT TO BOTHER. OR MANY TIMES MY MIND IS JUST WEARY AND I GO OFF TRACK AND GET LOST IN MY STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS WHILE PRAYING. AFTER ALL, THERE IS SO MUCH FOR A MOTHER TO DO THAT WE CAN FEEL WAY TOO UNPRODUCTIVE WHEN WE ARE STILL. SO I SEEK HELP. *THE VALLEY OF VISION* IS A COLLECTION OF PURITAN PRAYERS THAT HAS BEEN AN ENORMOUS BLESSING TO MY PRAYER LIFE. I WILL TAKE THAT LITTLE BOOK WITH ME OUT ON MY PORCH AND BEGIN BY PRAYING ONE OF THOSE PRAYERS.

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**PRAYER
IN THE
ENGLISH
REFORMATION**

by

GERALD

BRAY

PART 1

It may seem strange to think that arguments about prayer played a central role in the Protestant Reformation. We know that people did not have the Bible in their own language and that the institutional church suffered from defects that had to be put right, and we think that was what the Reformation was mainly about. Prayer, on the other hand, strikes us as having been much the same after the great upheaval of the sixteenth century as it had been before. It is hard to believe that people did not cry out to God before the Reformation, and since human needs do not change, it is equally hard to believe that their prayers did either. But prayer is at the heart of our devotional life as Christians, and because that devotional life was deeply affected by the movement of reform, questions surrounding the nature and practice of prayer were bound to be raised sooner or later.

WILL YOU PRAY FOR ME?

To understand what happened and why, we must step back into the medieval world in which Martin Luther grew up. The French historian Georges Duby (1919-96) classified medieval society into three distinct orders – those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked. These orders, better known to us as the three estates of the realm, were clearly demarcated from each other by a series of laws, customs, and taboos that extended even to what each of them was allowed to wear. The praying order was the first, or spiritual estate, consisting of priests, monks, friars, and

other people who were officially recognized as “religious.” It was their duty to connect society to God, a task which was thought to be aided by imposing a semi-heavenly lifestyle on them. Like the angels, they were required to be celibate and they spoke, wrote, and prayed in a language that was not in common use. They lived by their own laws, in their own quarters, and were as cut off from the world as they could be.

This way of life seems strange to us now, but it had a logic of its own. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing, but how is that possible if we have to earn a living? The medieval answer was to set certain people aside and let them do the praying, often on a continuous basis, while the rest of the population got on with its daily tasks. Just as the civilian population was not expected to fight in the way that the warrior class was, so they were not expected to pray either – others would do it for them. They did not think that this was unreasonable, and it can even be said that it bound society more closely together. After all, if I need prayer in order to perform my daily tasks but cannot pray myself, I am going to make sure that there is someone available to pray for me, and if I have to pay him to do it, so be it. This system worked fairly well until the mid-fourteenth century, when the crisis brought by the bubonic plague caused it to be questioned. Not only did the plague carry off up to one third of the entire population, but it struck more virulently at the clerical order because the priests had to care for the dying and were more exposed to infection than others were.

But how could this happen, if they had been praying faithfully for the preservation of God’s

people? Why had God so clearly not answered their prayers? Was there something amiss in the spiritual estate, some secret sin or corruption that was preventing its prayers from being heard? There was no easy answer to that question, but it was from this time that discontent with the traditional order began to rear its head and spread in a way that could not be ignored or overcome. Lay people began to develop a new kind of spirituality

THE BIBLE TELLS US TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, BUT HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE IF WE HAVE TO EARN A LIVING? THE MEDIEVAL ANSWER WAS TO SET CERTAIN PEOPLE ASIDE AND LET THEM DO THE PRAYING, OFTEN ON A CONTINUOUS BASIS, WHILE THE REST OF THE POPULATION GOT ON WITH ITS DAILY TASKS.

known as the “modern devotion,” and the belief that it was not only possible but necessary for individuals to make their own supplications to God gradually took root in some circles. We must not exaggerate this tendency of course – it remained an alternative lifestyle and might eventually have died out, as almost happened with the Lollard followers of John Wycliffe in England. We do not know. What we can say, however, is that it proved to be a forerunner of something that would become popular and public in the wake of the Reformation, which is the subject of our present concerns.

I CAN PRAY!

Looked at in broader terms, the Protestant Reformation was a challenge to the basic assumptions of medieval society. The radical fringes would have overturned the traditional order almost completely if they had been given a chance, but as things turned out, the warrior class and the workers remained much the same as they had been before. What changed, and changed dramatically, was the nature and status of the spiritual estate. To claim that every believer was a priest, as the Reformers did, was to destroy the first order of medieval society, or at least to transform it out of all recognition.

First of all, the barriers that had cut the priesthood off from the rest of society were dismantled. Clerical celibacy was abandoned, the monasteries were dissolved, and the esoteric language of the church’s worship gave way to the vernacular. The principal function of the clerical order was no longer praying on behalf of God’s people but preaching and teaching them to pray, too, whether they were warriors or workers, noblemen or commoners. Prayer was not abandoned, but now it was to be shared.

In the Reformed Church, all believers would pray, not merely for themselves but for each other. Worship, which had for centuries been the preserve

of the priesthood, now became the work of the lay people as well, taught and led by their clergy but not dominated by them. No longer would it be possible to think of the priest as a mediator between the laity and God. Instead he would be their president and leader, the first among equals rather than a superior being in his own right. For this to work, ordinary people would have to be taught how to pray, and that is what we find in the first generation after the Reformation. Every Protestant church undertook this task, but none did it more thoroughly or more conscientiously than the Church of England, which made public worship so central to its concerns that to this day its *Book of Common Prayer* remains a major source of its doctrine and a recognized marker of its distinctive identity.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

The *Book of Common Prayer*, which went through five recensions before finally settling down to its classical form in 1662, was undergirded by a series of sermons, or *Homilies*, which were appointed to be read in churches and which gave the theological rationale for the church's practices. No fewer than three of these homilies are devoted to the subject of prayer, and since these were read and studied by the church as a whole, they have a status that nothing else can match. The three sermons in question were produced in 1563 and were probably written by John Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, though they are officially anonymous. The first of them deals with prayer in general, the

second with the time and place of praying, and the third with the form and content of both prayer and the sacraments.

GOD WANTS US TO WORSHIP HIM IN A SPIRIT OF HUMBLE OBEDIENCE, AND NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE HE CAN GIVE US WHATEVER WE ASK HIM FOR. SCRIPTURE PROMISES US THAT THE CRY OF THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON WILL BE HEARD, AND THAT ASSURANCE SHOULD KEEP US FAITHFUL IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER [LUKE 18:1-8].

The first of these homilies begins with the assertion that hearty, zealous, and devout prayer is essential for the Christian life. Prayer is the means that God has given us to relate to him, and if we do not use it our relationship is liable to grow cold, if not disappear altogether. Of course, our prayers do not tell God anything he does not already know, but that is not why he has given us this gift. The purpose of prayer is to teach us to be grateful for what we have received, to understand that we can do nothing in our own strength, and to rely on him for future blessings, which will be greater than anything we can imagine. The fact that God already knows what he is going to do does not rule out the need for prayer, as the example and teaching of Jesus remind us. Our Lord would not have commanded us to pray if there was no need for it, and it is through prayer that we come to a deeper understanding of God's will and the way in which he works it out in our lives.

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH CORPORATE PRAYER IN CHURCH?

BY JEREMY KIMBLE

Corporate prayer in a local church setting can feel like a mundane item in the midst of a worship service. However, such a practice allows for a unique opportunity for the leadership of the church to instruct and intercede for the congregation in specific ways. This is a part of the worship service that is often overlooked and given very little thought, but I would encourage pastors to be intentional and thorough as they approach this sacred moment with their people. Here are some key thoughts on the practice of corporate prayer.

PLAN AHEAD. There are certain denominations that utilize a specific liturgy, and thus their services are planned well in advance. However, in the free-church tradition prayers are more extemporaneous. If that is the case for your church, it does not mean we cannot think ahead about what will be said in those prayers. We spend hours each week preparing our sermons; we should spend time thinking over how we pray with and for our people. This is a unique moment for your congregation and an important way for them to benefit each week. So pray specifically and intentionally by planning ahead.

USE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYER. So often, especially if we rely on extemporaneous prayers, our corporate intercession can sound strangely familiar from week to week. One way to bring variety is to recognize there are different kinds of prayers one can bring before God. This can include prayers of confession, praise to God, thanksgiving, as well as specific requests. Be sure to focus on different aspects in your corporate prayers.

USE APPROPRIATE RESOURCES. Learn from key resources on prayer, such as *The Valley of Vision*, or your denomination's creeds and confessions. These are helpful ways to expand your horizons as you pray for your people, causing you to think about praying for them in ways you may not have otherwise thought of.

BE BIBLICAL. Don't just ask God for what you want, but let him teach you what you should want. Immerse yourself in Scripture, study the prayers of Jesus, Paul, Moses, Solomon, and others, and see how they prayed to God. Read *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, by D. A. Carson, and note how you can and should meditate on Scripture in such a way that it shapes the way you pray.

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The biblical command to “pray without ceasing” is not to be taken literally, because that would be impossible (1 Thess. 5:17). What it means is that we should continue praying for things even when God does not answer us the first time round. The Bible provides many examples of people who had to pray several times before God responded, but the reason for this is that we must be taught patience and faithfulness. God wants us to worship him in a spirit of humble obedience, and not simply because he can give us whatever we ask him for. Scripture promises us that the cry of the righteous person will be heard, and that assurance should keep us faithful in the duty of prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

The second section of the homily reminds us of what James wrote in his epistle, that every good and perfect gift comes from God alone (James

1:17), and as the prophet Joel said, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32, quoted in Acts 2:21). That ought to be sufficient incentive for us to persevere in our prayers. However, it is also essential for us to understand whom we are praying to and why we should pray to him and to nobody else. For prayer to be effective, it must be directed to someone who is able to fulfil our desires, who is willing to help us, and who understands better than we do what our real needs are. If he were to answer us only in the terms in which we address him, we would run the risk of getting what we ask for, which may turn out not to be what we really need. The only person who meets these criteria is God himself, which is why it is wrong to pray to the saints as popular devotion long encouraged us to do.

The saints are not able to fulfill our requests even if they want to, and although it is possible that they are praying for us in heaven, we cannot and need not rely on that. God is not like an earthly potentate who can only be approached through intermediaries. By sending his Son into the world to unite us to himself and to die for us, the Father has allowed us into his presence (Eph. 2:6). We must believe this and understand that prayer is an affection of the heart, not a form of lip service. Only God knows our hearts – not the saints, nor the angels, nor other people, nor even ourselves. He reaches more deeply into our lives than words can express, which is why our attitude toward him is so much more important than what we actually say.

We are commanded to pray for one another because we are commanded to love one another and prayer is the most important way in which

we manifest that love. Prayer is primarily an expression of love – our love for God and the love that he has commanded us to have for our fellow men. Whether praying for ourselves or for others, our first concern must be for the needs of the soul, not the body. Jesus taught his disciples this and we must understand why it should be our priority, too. Seek first the kingdom of heaven, he said, and all your earthly needs will be taken care of, too (Matt. 6:33). Material things are for this life only, but spiritual things are for eternity, and it is in heaven that our treasure must be stored.

Furthermore, we must pray for God's appointed ministers, because they are the ones who are meant to teach us how we should grow in our spiritual lives. We must pray that they will understand the Scriptures, that they will preach their message effectively, and that they will see the fruits of their labors in the changed lives of their hearers. It is by the preaching of the gospel that God has chosen to bring people to salvation. But preaching is only effective when it is rooted and grounded in a life of prayer in which we can all share, whether we are called to be preachers or not.

Finally, the first homily on prayer ends with a warning that we cannot pray for the dead. That practice makes sense only if there is a purgatory where souls go after death before they are fit to enter the kingdom of heaven. But Christ has promised us that if we believe in him we shall be with him wherever he is, and that means heaven (John 12:26). Purgatory is meant to be a place of cleansing for the soul, but Christ's blood is our cleanser and our true purgatory. Our prayers should therefore be directed to him and not diverted to obtaining something that he has given us already.

WE MUST PRAY FOR GOD'S APPOINTED MINISTERS, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE ONES WHO ARE MEANT TO TEACH US HOW WE SHOULD GROW IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES. WE MUST PRAY THAT THEY WILL UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES, THAT THEY WILL PREACH THEIR MESSAGE EFFECTIVELY, AND THAT THEY WILL SEE THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABORS IN THE CHANGED LIVES OF THEIR HEARERS. IT IS BY THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN TO BRING PEOPLE TO SALVATION. BUT PREACHING IS ONLY EFFECTIVE WHEN IT IS ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN A LIFE OF PRAYER IN WHICH WE CAN ALL SHARE, WHETHER WE ARE CALLED TO BE PREACHERS OR NOT.

WHEN AND WHERE SHOULD I PRAY?

The second homily takes us on to the practical questions of when and where we should pray. We owe God our thanks at all times, of course, but it is also necessary to set aside special times when this can be expressed more directly and without interference from the stresses and strains of everyday life. God provided for that

need in the Old Testament by appointing the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship. The Sabbath commemorated the completion of creation and reminded the people that it was a gift from God that they were meant to enjoy. Christians follow the same principle, but with two important differences. The first is that our Sabbath is the first, and not the last, day of the week because it marks the resurrection of Christ and the beginning of a new creation. It is not the fulfilment of something already achieved but the start of a journey which will bring us to the perfection of the kingdom of heaven.

The other difference is that we are set free from the laws that governed the Sabbath so strictly that weightier matters of the law were forgotten. Christians must keep Sunday observance in proportion and not allow it to become an excuse to avoid the demands of love for our neighbors, but at the same time we must be prepared to set it aside in order to worship God together. The Christian Sabbath can be desecrated in one of two ways. Either it can be treated as a normal working day, in which case its special character is ignored, or it can be regarded as a day of leisure, in which case its special character is perverted, which is even worse. This was a real problem in the sixteenth century, because Sundays and other feast days

were often occasions when merchants would turn up at churches to set up their stalls, and when the men would play those games that have since developed into football, baseball, and cricket. These things were not wrong in themselves but they distracted people from the proper business of worship, and so they had to be curtailed. Prayer was meant to be conducted in a reverent spirit, and that required an equally reverent atmosphere for the spirit to flourish as it should.

It was the need to encourage reverence that lay behind the construction of places intended exclusively for the worship of God. The Reformers recognized that the patriarchs of ancient Israel and the early Christians had not had buildings to worship in, but they put this down to the exceptional circumstances in which the patriarchs lived. Abraham and his family were nomads who did not stay in one place long enough to build anything. The early Christians were persecuted, and so were forced to improvise and conceal their places of worship. The New Testament tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and it is in them that we pray above all (1 Cor. 6:19). Buildings are secondary to worship, but when people are settled and are free to worship God as they please, buildings can be a logical and important aid to it. The construction of the Jerusalem Temple was not the beginning of Israelite religion, but it was commanded and overseen by God, not for his benefit but for ours.

The Reformers pointed out that King David rejoiced to go into the house of the Lord, even though the Temple had not then been built, because it was there that he would worship God, there that he would be able to meditate properly on him, and

there that he would get a glimpse of God's power and majesty (Pss. 122:1; 138:2; 63:2). In support of this assertion, the homilist reminds his hearers of Simeon and Anna, two pious Jews who spent their lives in the Temple waiting for the Messiah to appear, and that it was there that Christ was revealed to them (Luke 2:25-38). The house of God was, therefore, meant to be regarded not just as a refuge from the world but as a place of expectation, where God would show himself to his faithful people in a special way. To profane it is to insult God and to cut ourselves off from his blessing. Times of worship are to be regarded like the great feast which the Gospels tell us the Lord prepared for his servants (Luke 14:16-24). Only those who were properly dressed would be admitted, but those who gained entry would discover that the feast was prepared for them. We must therefore come prepared, come expecting great blessings, and above all come full of love for God and for our neighbors as we feast on his goodness.

In part 2 of this article we will continue by looking to the third homily on prayer and discover what private and public prayer should look like. ▀

**PRAYER
IN THE
ENGLISH
REFORMATION**

by

GERALD

BRAY

PART 2

THE DEVOTION OF THE MIND

In part 1, we left off discussing the second homily on prayer. Now we turn to the third homily, which draws our attention to the private and public ways we pray, as well as the controversy that would erupt over public prayer.

In the third homily on prayer the preacher takes us into its inner meaning. Following what he thought was a tract of Augustine, but in fact came from an unknown twelfth-century monk who was probably a Cistercian disciple of Bernard of Clairvaux, he defines prayer as “the devotion of the mind...the returning to God, through a godly and humble affection, which affection is a certain willing, and sweet inclining of the mind itself towards God.” He goes on to distinguish three different kinds of prayer, two of which are private and one public.

The first kind of private prayer is the secret cry

of the heart that cannot be put into words. It is typified by the prayer of Hannah in the Temple, when she cried out in her soul to God for a son but was so inarticulate that the high priest thought she must be drunk (1 Sam. 1:13). That kind of prayer is sincere and devout and we are called to practice it at all times, but its limitations must also be borne in mind. Prayer of this kind does not fully engage the mind and is liable to be misunderstood, if it is detected at all. It is valuable and important for individuals, but not suited to public worship.

The second kind of prayer is vocalized, but it too is private. Jesus taught it to his disciples when he told them: “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:6). We are commanded to pray like this, but as with the first kind of prayer, it is a private matter between us and God and not something to be shared with the Church at large.

It is the third kind of prayer, the kind which we

use in public worship, that exercises the homilist most, for obvious reasons. Private prayer is beyond the reach of the Church, but public prayer must be carefully ordered and presented so that it will glorify God in worship and be accessible to everyone present. The importance of this was also taught by Jesus, who told his disciples that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is present with them, and if they agree about something, whatever they ask will be granted to them (Matt. 18:19-20). The power of collective prayer must never be underestimated, because it is when God's people are united that his power is most evidently displayed in their midst.

For public prayer to be effective, three things are necessary above all. First, it must be understood. This rules out praying in an unknown tongue,

HE MUST SPEAK DIRECTLY TO HIS HEARERS IN A WAY THAT IS MEANINGFUL TO THEM WITHOUT BECOMING SO PERSONAL THAT HE APPEARS TO BE ADDRESSING PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS AND NOT THE CONGREGATION AS A WHOLE. BUT JUST AS THE PREACHER MUST FACE UP TO THIS TENSION AND DEAL WITH IT, AND CANNOT ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH TO PIPE UP WITH THEIR OWN MINI-SERMONS, SO THE WORSHIP LEADER MUST ALSO FIND A WAY TO PRAY THAT ENGAGES HIS HEARERS AND NOT LET INDIVIDUALS USURP HIS ROLE.

whether that tongue is clerical Latin or angelic glossolalia. The Reformers had little time for speaking in tongues because to them it was essential that prayer should be shared, and for that a common language was indispensable. Secondly, it must be followed. People who attend public worship must be able not only to understand *what* is being said, but also know *why*. For this they need instruction, and that instruction must be provided by the minister. It is the duty of the people to follow what he is saying when he prays and to express their agreement with it by a hearty "Amen" at the end. Thirdly, public prayer must speak to the needs of the congregation, of which repentance and conversion are the greatest. Prayer that is not relevant will have no power, because even if it is answered nobody will notice or care.

It is when we come to the question of public prayer that we see the tension that exists in the Church between the need for personal faith and the danger of the privatized religion that will result if individual interests and preferences are given too much weight. The preacher, of course, faces the same dilemma in his sermons. He must speak directly to his hearers in a way that is meaningful to them without becoming so personal that he appears to be addressing particular individuals and not the congregation as a whole. But just as the preacher must face up to this tension and deal with it, and cannot allow members of the Church to pipe up with their own

mini-sermons, so the worship leader must also find a way to pray that engages his hearers and not let individuals usurp his role. Private prayer must stay where Jesus told his disciples it belongs – in the closet. Public prayer is something different, and the Reformed churches addressed themselves to it more particularly.

PUBLIC PRAYER: VAIN REPETITION OR SPIRIT-FILLED ADORATION?

In pursuit of this aim, most Reformed churches drew up forms of worship that were intended to teach ministers how they should pray. Just as the *Homilies* were originally meant to be preached by those who could not prepare their own sermons, so set prayers were intended for use by those who were incapable of composing their own. But whereas preachers gradually weaned themselves off set sermons, public prayer turned out to be a more challenging proposition. For a start, it is the common expression of a shared spirituality in a way that a sermon is not. Sermons are meant to be listened to, but prayers are there to be shared in. Is this really what is happening when the minister prays and the congregation merely says “Amen” at the end?

Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury who was largely responsible for the *Book of Common Prayer*, wanted something more than that. In his mind there was a place for prayer to be said by the minister alone, but the people were expected to respond in a fuller way than merely saying “Amen” allows for. He therefore built in prayers that were meant to be learned and spoken

PURITANISM IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINE PRECISELY, BUT IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT IT WAS A MOVEMENT OF HEARTFELT PIETY IN THE FACE OF A WOODEN LITURGY LEARNED BY ROTE AND REPEATED WITHOUT THINKING. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE PURITANS SELDOM OBJECTED TO WHAT THE SET PRAYERS SAID, BUT DOUBTED WHETHER THOSE WHO REPEATED THEM COULD POSSIBLY BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. THE PRAYER OF THE HEART HAD TO BE *EX TEMPORE* OR IT WAS NOT GENUINE, AND IT WAS TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT ANYONE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT WOULD REFLECT HIS WORDS AND NOT THEIRS AS THEY SPOKE.

by the congregation as a whole, which meant that ordinary people had to memorize them and understand when they were to be used in the service. Considering that not everyone could read, that relatively few people possessed a copy of the Prayer Book, and that even the clergy did not always know what they were supposed to be doing, it is hardly surprising that this did not work very well.

One of the problems is that some people were much better at doing what was required than

others were, with the result that the former did not want to be distracted by people who fumbled their way through the words while the latter were often too embarrassed to speak up. In churches where the prayers had traditionally been chanted, it was almost inevitable that they would be left to the choir, since few ordinary worshippers had either the ability or the inclination to sing along. Most difficult of all was the inescapable fact that the prayers were much the same every week, or even every day. Could praying them really be called a heartfelt work of the Holy Spirit? Inevitably there were large numbers of clergy who merely rattled

IN BISHOP JEWEL'S DAY THE MASS OF THE POPULATION WAS STILL IGNORANT AND IT WAS POSSIBLE TO BELIEVE THAT IF THEY WERE RIGHTLY INSTRUCTED THEY WOULD TURN AND EMBRACE THE TRUTH. BY BUNYAN'S TIME IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT THIS WAS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN. THOSE WHO WERE TRULY FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD WERE A SMALL MINORITY; THE REST WERE NOT SO MUCH IGNORANT AS DOWNRIGHT MALIGNANT, TO USE THE WORD IN VOGUE AT THE TIME, AND HOSTILE TO THE GOSPEL.

the service off as best they could, and any sense that they were standing in the presence of God was easily forgotten.

Finally, the official prayers had a political tone that did not always sit well with the hearers. The king, the royal family, and the parliament were mentioned on every possible occasion, while prayers for things like rain, which in a society that was still mostly rural is an important consideration, were optional and most unlikely to be known by heart. Whatever the original intention may have been, by the early years of the seventeenth century it seemed to many people that the official worship of the church was closer to the vain repetition of the Pharisees than it was to vibrant, Spirit-filled adoration of God.

PURITANISM: HEARTFELT PIETY IN THE FACE OF WOODEN LITURGY

This reality did not go unnoticed, and it was tackled by a number of ministers, most of whom would be what we now call Puritans. Puritanism is difficult to define precisely, but it is safe to say that it was a movement of heartfelt piety in the face of a wooden liturgy learned by rote and repeated without thinking. It is important to note that the Puritans seldom objected to what the set prayers said, but doubted whether those who repeated them could possibly be filled with the Spirit. The prayer of the heart had to be *ex tempore* or it was not genuine, and it was taken for granted that anyone filled with the Spirit

would reflect his words and not theirs as they spoke. That in turn implied that what they asked for in prayer would be God's will, since it is only what is in accordance with his will that God grants to us. As John Bunyan put it: "It is the Spirit only that can teach us so to ask; it only being able to search out all things, even the deep things of God. Without which Spirit, though we had a thousand Common Prayer Books, yet we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

Bunyan's words express the heart of the matter very well. He wrote them from prison, where he had been consigned for his refusal to conform to the established church. He was obviously bitter about this, as can be seen from his concluding remarks on prayer where he writes: "Look into the jails in England, and into the alehouses of the same; and I trow you will find those that plead for the Spirit of prayer in the jail, and them that look only after the form of men's inventions in the alehouse." It is clear from the preceding paragraph that by "the form of men's inventions" Bunyan meant the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was even then being imposed on the church in what is now its classical form. He and his fellow sufferers had spent their lives and suffered imprisonment, and sometimes even torture and death, because they could not reconcile set forms of prayer with the moving of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. What was it that made them so determined to defend their point of view?

We have already referred to the widespread abuse of the set forms and the indifference of so many clergy to their tasks, and undoubtedly that was a vital rallying cry for the Puritans. But abuses can be corrected and indifference can be overcome. If that

had been the full extent of the Puritan objection to liturgical prayer, they could presumably have set an example by doing it properly and in the right spirit, not by trying to overthrow it altogether.

When we read their writings more closely, we can see that much of what they have to say is in tune with the homilies on prayer that they would have heard and read in early life. Bunyan follows the same division of prayer into three different types as the homilies do, and takes pretty much the same line when it comes to the significance of the inarticulate prayer of the heart. Listen to what he says: "A man that truly prays...cannot express with his mouth or pen the unutterable desires, sense, affection, and longing that went to God in his prayer. The best prayers have often more groans than words; and those words that they have are but a lean and shallow representation of the heart, life, and spirit of prayer." If Bishop Jewel had still been alive he would surely have added a hearty "Amen" to this, and perhaps he did, if he was among the saints gathered around the throne of God who cry out day and night for the oppressed members of the church militant here on earth.

Bunyan's concern though, was not with the saints in heaven, but with the saints on earth. It is here that we notice a real difference of emphasis between him and those who wrote the *Homilies* a century before. The early Reformers still lived in a mental universe in which the saints and martyrs were the great company of the church triumphant in heaven, to which they felt themselves intimately bound and whose blessedness they believed they would one day inherit. They knew that the New Testament spoke of all the members of the church as "saints," including those still living on earth,

but they did not emphasize this. The Puritans did. They did not deny the beatitude of the saints in heaven, but their main concern was with the spiritual progress of the saints on earth.

That in turn meant taking another look at the institutional Church. In seventeenth-century Europe virtually everyone belonged to it, the only exceptions being the Jews, who were sectioned off in their own communities. But not everyone was religiously inclined, and in times of controversy, like the Reformation era, it soon became clear who knew what they believed and who was indifferent. In Bishop Jewel's day the mass of the population was still ignorant and it was possible to believe that if they were rightly instructed they would turn and embrace the truth. By Bunyan's time it had become clear that this was not going to happen. Those who were truly filled with the Spirit of God were a small minority; the rest were not so much ignorant as downright malignant, to use the word in vogue at the time, and hostile to the gospel. As Bunyan put it:

All this is too evident by the ignorance, profaneness, and spirit of envy that reign in the hearts of those men that are so hot for the forms, and not the power of praying. Few among them know what it is to be born again, to have communion with the Father through the Son; to feel the power of grace sanctifying their hearts. For all their prayers, they still live cursed, drunken, whorish, and abominable lives, full of malice, envy, deceit, persecuting the dear children of God. O what a dreadful

judgment is coming upon them!
A judgment from which all their hypocritical assembling themselves together, with all their prayers, shall never be able to help them against, or shelter them from!

What we need to pick up here is Bunyan's assumption that the saints are a group of individual believers gathered together to form the Church, and not a body of people some of whom know what they are doing but most of whom are ignorant and/or hypocritical. Bunyan's concept of prayer was different from that of the *Homilies* because his understanding of the Church had changed. For Bunyan, there was no such thing as "common prayer," at least not in the sense that the book of that name intended it. For him, if "common prayer" existed at all, it was only the shared prayer of the saints who happened to be praying for the same thing.

Bunyan was fully aware of this distinction and knew that he had to answer the objections of those who disagreed with him. The most powerful of these objections was that common prayer, including the Lord's Prayer as its supreme example, is meant to teach us how to pray, as the disciples begged Jesus to do. To this Bunyan replied: "We ought to prompt one another to prayer, though we ought not to make forms of prayer for each other. To exhort to pray with Christian direction is one thing, and to make stunted forms for tying up the Spirit of God to them is another thing." As for teaching children to pray by using a set form of words that they can learn, Bunyan had this to say:

To me it seems to be a better way

COMMON PRAYER WILL ALWAYS HAVE A STRONG DIDACTIC COMPONENT, WHICH THE EARLY REFORMERS UNDERSTOOD AND REGARDED AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THEIR REFORMATION. ONE OF ITS FUNCTIONS IS TO TEACH US HOW TO PRAY – NOT TO LIMIT US TO ITS PARTICULAR FORMS, BUT TO LAUNCH US ON THE RIGHT PATH FOR OUR OWN PRIVATE PRAYERS. BUT THE MAIN PURPOSE OF COMMON PRAYER IS TO BRING GLORY TO GOD BY ACTING AS A PUBLIC STANDARD OF WHAT WE SHOULD BE PRAYING FOR AND HOW. IT IS A WITNESS BOTH TO THE WIDER WORLD AND TO THOSE IN THE CHURCH WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT OUR FAITH IS ALL ABOUT. BY PARTICIPATING IN IT WE ARE SUBMITTING TO ITS DISCIPLINE AND IDENTIFYING OURSELVES WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD WHEREVER THEY MAY BE FOUND AND WHATEVER THEIR PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE. IT CANNOT STAND ALONE; AS THE HOMILIES REMIND US, THE FORMS OF PRIVATE PRAYER ARE EQUALLY NECESSARY AND HERE WE HAVE MUCH TO LEARN FROM THE PURITANS. BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR PUBLIC WITNESS TOO, AND IT IS AT THAT LEVEL THAT COMMON PRAYER COMES INTO ITS OWN.

for people...to tell their children what cursed creatures they are, and how they are under the wrath of God by reason of original and actual sin; also to tell them of the nature of God's wrath, and the duration of the misery; which if they conscientiously do, they would sooner teach their children to pray than they do. Men learn to pray by conviction for sin, and this is the way to make our children do so too. But the other way, namely, to be busy in teaching children forms of prayer, before they know anything else, it is the way to make them cursed hypocrites, and to puff them up with pride. Teach therefore your children to know their wretched state and condition; tell them of hellfire and their sins, of damnation, and salvation; the way to escape the one, and to enjoy the other, and this will bring tears to their eyes, and to make hearty groans flow from their hearts; and then also you may tell them to whom they should pray, and through whom they should pray; you may tell them also of God's promises, and his former grace extended to sinners, according to the Word.

In other words, scare people first and when they feel the need for prayer, point them to it. But do not give them a form of words to use, because that must

come from the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus told his disciples that he would send to take his place after his departure (John 14:16; 16:7).

IS COMMON PRAYER JUSTIFIED TODAY?

What would Bishop Jewel have said to this? What would we say about it today? At one level, of course, Bunyan had a point. It is certainly true that we are all born in sin and need to recognize and confess this before we can enjoy a Spirit-filled relationship with God. But whether these things are so mutually exclusive that we cannot teach children to pray before they have made a personal commitment of faith is more questionable, and few of us today would go as far down that road as Bunyan did. To our minds, those who do not know the Spirit of God will not pray even if they know how to, whereas for those who come to faith, what they have known all along will suddenly fall into place and make sense.

The kind of prayer that Bunyan is talking about is really the second of the three kinds defined by Bishop Jewel. It is the articulated prayer of the converted individual, and if we understand it like that, there is no conflict between Jewel and Bunyan, and no conflict between either of them and us today. It is Jewel's third kind of prayer, the public or common prayer of the people of God, that Bunyan takes issue with and whose validity we must consider. In any assembly of worshippers, there are really only two forms of prayer that are possible. One person, usually (though not necessarily or invariably) the worship leader,

prays and everyone else listens, presumably with what we might call "attentive assent." This kind of prayer is mentioned in the *Homilies* and would have been acceptable to Bunyan, as long as the person doing the praying was filled with the Spirit and was using his own words, and not a set form of words. This is what happens in most Protestant churches today and is acceptable to everyone, including those who are used to a formal liturgy. As long as the person praying means what he says, there is no reason to inquire too deeply into the thoughts of those listening, which would be impossible in any case. As to the form and content of the prayer, the worship leader can say what he likes as long as he can claim to be filled with the Spirit and speaking according to the will of God, which can be tested against the witness of Holy Scripture.

Common prayer, if it is to be justified, cannot be regarded in this light. This is what Bunyan tried to do and it is not surprising that he found it wanting. If everyone is praying together, then there has to be a set form of words like the Lord's Prayer because otherwise there will be chaos. Whether everyone mouthing the words understands what they mean or feels them personally is impossible to say, but it seems unlikely. Even those of us who know the words by heart are not always immediately conscious of their significance, and so it would be rash to assume that others are. If common prayer is judged as an expression of personal experience it is bound to fail, both because it is too general to embrace the feelings of every individual and because not everybody will participate in it or share its spirit to the same degree.

Common prayer will always have a strong

didactic component, which the early Reformers understood and regarded as an essential part of their Reformation. One of its functions is to teach us how to pray – not to limit us to its particular forms, but to launch us on the right path for our own private prayers. But the main purpose of common prayer is to bring glory to God by acting as a public standard of what we should be praying for and how. It is a witness both to the wider world and to those in the Church who do not understand what our faith is all about. By participating in it we are submitting to its discipline and identifying ourselves with the people of God wherever they may be found and whatever their particular circumstances may be. It cannot stand alone; as the *Homilies* remind us, the forms of private prayer are equally necessary and here we have much to learn from the Puritans. But there is room for public witness, too, and it is at that level that common prayer comes into its own.

John Bunyan lived and wrote at a time of great spiritual and political conflict, when things that should have been held together were driven apart and people were forced to declare themselves on

one side or the other. If we see matters from his perspective, we must surely agree with him that the prayer of the heart is better than mere lip service, and grieve with him that those who practiced the former were often persecuted by those who could not get past the latter. Today, our circumstances have changed and we are free to reconcile things that should never have been separated. We do not have to choose one or the other, but can hold both together, each in its proper place. This is what the first Reformers wanted, and if we honor them then we should make our practice conform to their intentions as far as we can. To learn from both is a blessing that we are free to enjoy, and we must pray that God will open our hearts so that we can truly appreciate and claim that blessing for ourselves today.

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THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

BY JUAN R. SANCHEZ JR.

Let's face it, prayer is not easy. In fact, if we are honest, sometimes it feels obligatory, oftentimes we're distracted, and in some cases it may even seem boring. If you were raised in a Christian home and attended church regularly you've likely heard lots of people pray. Hopefully they modeled prayer well, but then again, perhaps not. It's likely you heard lofty prayers and assumed you would never be able to pray like that, so you struggle even to pray. Consequently, you will never pray publicly because you just can't – at least not like those “great prayer warriors” at church. Or maybe you've been in situations where prayer is trivialized, where people seem to be praying for the silliest of things. It may even be the case that you grew up in a prayerless home or church, so prayer has never been modeled for you.

If you are a new Christian you enter into a Christian subculture where people have their own language and traditions, and you have likely wondered, “Why do people talk to God like that?” Never mind the fact that if you came to faith in Christ from another religious tradition, you have to work through some of your own problematic prayer practices.

Then there is the reality of life. As Christians, when our circumstances overwhelm us, we intuitively cry out to God for help. But if we've been prayerless, we feel guilty because it seems we only go to God

when we need something or when our world is falling apart. As I said, prayer is not easy, is it?

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PROBLEMATIC PRAYER: HYPOCRISY AND PAGANISM

Jesus acknowledges the difficulty of prayer and warns against two wrong approaches. To those who love to pray publicly in order to impress others, Jesus warns that the only reward you will receive is the praises of men, for hypocrites “will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 6:1, 5-6). To those who simply heap up countless words and phrases over and over again, thinking that the more words they offer the more obligated God is to hear and answer, Jesus warns, “do not be like [the pagans], for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matt. 6:7-8). How then are we to pray?

THE BASIS FOR PRAYER: THE SONSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST AND OUR UNION WITH HIM

If we are to delight in the practice of prayer, we first need to understand that prayer is a privilege. On what basis do we dare think that we can approach the almighty God who created all things and dwells in unapproachable light? The Bible reminds us that because of our union with Adam we have inherited

his guilt, corruption, and condemnation (Rom. 5:12-21). In Adam, we belong to the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13), “alienated and hostile [to God] in mind, doing evil deeds” (Col. 1:21). Why would a holy God listen to such rebels?

However, the Father in heaven does love his Son, Jesus, because Jesus pleases him in all things (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Because the Father loves him, Jesus may approach his Father and receive a hearing. And the beloved Son, himself fully God, came from heaven to earth as a man in order to rescue rebellious sinners. Jesus lived the life required of all humanity, a life of perfect obedience to God’s commands. But he also died the death all sinners deserve for their

rebellion. And God raised him from the dead on the third day, indicating that the Father received Jesus’ life and death on behalf of sinners, and that now all who turn away from their rebellion and turn to

**IF WE ARE TO DELIGHT
IN THE PRACTICE OF
PRAYER, WE FIRST NEED
TO UNDERSTAND THAT
PRAYER IS A PRIVILEGE.**

Christ in faith will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). This is the gospel we Christians believe (Matt. 20:17-19). This gospel reminds us that the basis for prayer is the Sonship of Jesus Christ and our union with him.

Through repentance from sin and faith in Christ, we are united to Christ by his Spirit and are received as adopted sons and daughters of the Father in heaven who share in the beloved Son’s inheritance (Rom. 8:12-17; Gal. 4:3-7). Reminding ourselves of our standing in Christ before a holy God should alleviate any temptations we have toward religious hypocrisy. We are not trying to impress God or

man with our words, for in Christ we are sons and daughters approaching our Father in heaven.

Only when we understand the basis for prayer can we truly pray, “our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9), for in Christ God is our Father and we are his children. Only when we understand the basis for prayer can we draw near to our heavenly Father in prayer with confidence and ask for the blessings of sonship that are ours in Christ (Heb. 10:19-23). Only then can we confidently pray, “forgive us our debts” (6:12), for our debt has been paid by Christ. It is this gospel that empowers us to forgive others’ sins against us (6:14-15; see Matt. 18:23-35). As sons and daughters of the heavenly Father in Christ, we can pray, “give us this day our daily bread” (6:11), for we know that he will provide everything we need for sustenance (Matt. 7:7-11). We can also confidently pray, “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil” (6:13), for we know that our heavenly Father who saved us will sustain, guide, and protect us (1 Pet. 1:3-9). Such confidence delivers us from the anxiety of the pagans.

**THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF PRAYER:
THE WILL OF GOD IN THE CONSUMMATION
OF THE KINGDOM THROUGH CHRIST**

But is prayer just about us and our needs? As we read the Bible, we see that God has a plan to restore what Adam lost in his rebellion (Gen. 3). Throughout the Old Testament God promised to raise up another Adam who would rule with justice, righteousness, and peace. This Adam would establish God’s kingdom on the earth, populating it with godly offspring and filling the earth with

the glory of God. The New Testament reveals that the long-awaited Adamic king is Jesus, the Son of David, son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). It is God's will to place all things under the rule of his beloved Son, Jesus (Eph. 1:7-10, 19-23; cf. Ps. 2). At the end of the age, Christ will deliver the kingdom back to his Father (1 Cor. 15:24-27).

The primary focus of our prayer life is the will of God in the consummation of the kingdom through Christ. In other words, we are to pray that our Father in heaven would be greatly glorified as humanity embraces his will here on earth as in heaven. We are to pray that the kingdom of God would expand as more and more people submit to the Lordship of Christ through repentance and faith until Jesus returns once again to consummate the kingdom (Matt. 6:9-10). It is no accident that the Lord's model prayer emphasizes this Godward priority.

When we understand that the focus of prayer is the consummation of the kingdom, then we will seek God's kingdom and righteousness (instead of this world) until Christ returns or until we breathe no more (Matt. 6:31-33). We will eagerly pray for the return of Christ. We will tirelessly pray for the expansion of the kingdom through the spread of the gospel to all nations. We will focus our prayer life in light of God's will in Christ and ask our Father how he might use us to accomplish his will.

THE PARADIGM FOR PRAYER: THE LORD'S MODEL PRAYER

In this light, we can see why Jesus taught his

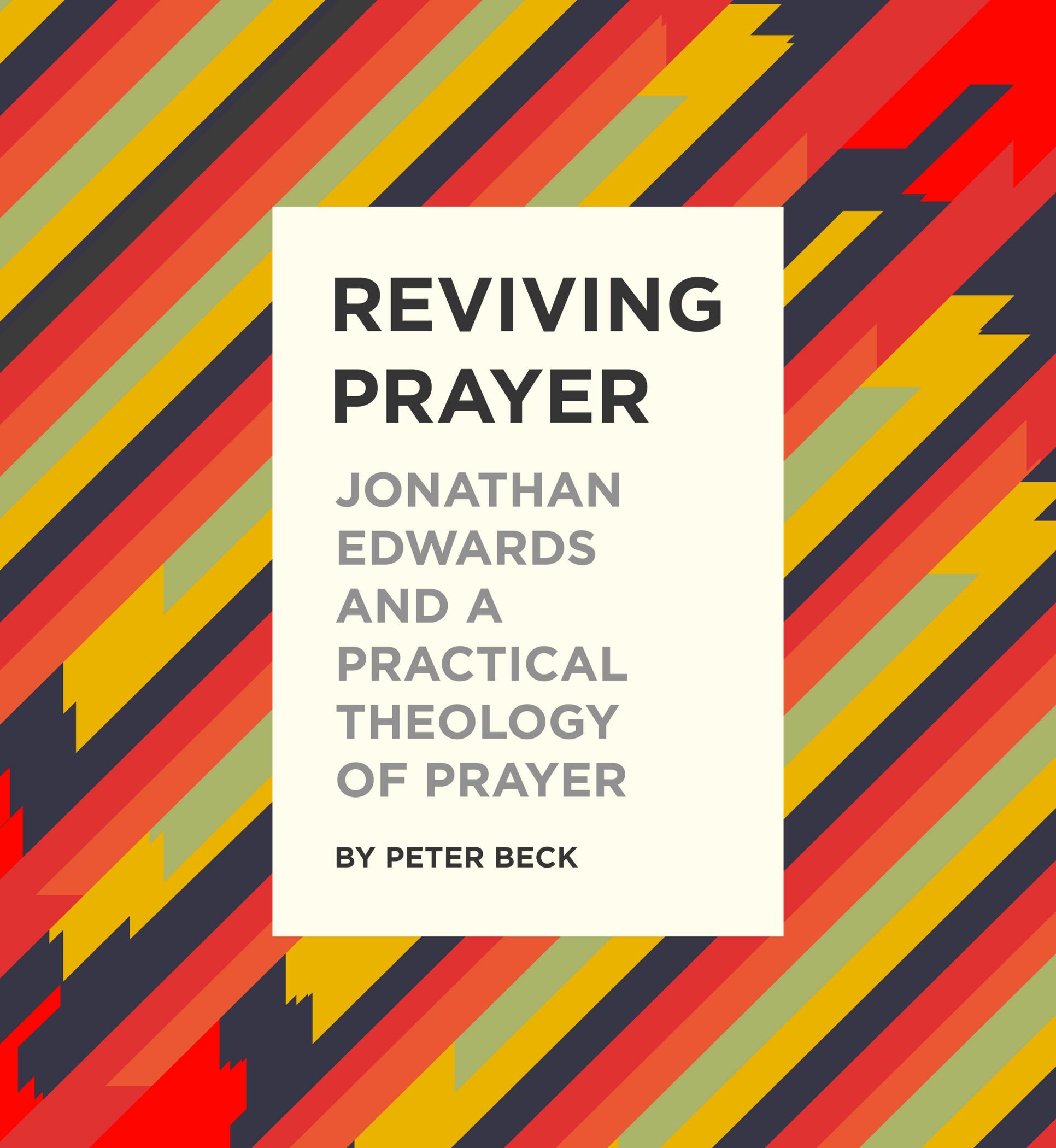
disciples to pray in the manner that he did. The Lord's model prayer teaches us the Godward priority of prayer (Matt. 6:9-10). We are to pray that God's name would be exalted in this world, in his church, through his people as we live our lives as strangers and aliens on this earth. We are to pray that God's kingdom would expand through the proclamation of the gospel, and we are to ask the Father to send Jesus again soon to consummate the kingdom. Until that time, we are to pray that God's will would be embraced here on earth as it is even now embraced in heaven.

But notice that even though there is a Godward priority to prayer, our Father in heaven does not neglect human need. Jesus teaches us to pray that God would provide for our needs, that he would pardon our sin, and that he would protect us from evil (Matt. 6:11-13). These are the things we are to be praying together as a church – “our Father,” “give us,” “forgive us,” “lead us,” “deliver us.”

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

When we understand that the almighty, holy God who is sovereign over all things has adopted us as his sons and daughters in Christ and that he uses us as a means to accomplish his will through prayer, only then will we begin to see what an exciting privilege prayer is. Armed with this foundational understanding, we no longer need to approach God as religious hypocrites or as anxious pagans, but as children of the heavenly Father.

Juan R. Sanchez, Jr. is Senior Pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas 



REVIVING PRAYER

**JONATHAN
EDWARDS
AND A
PRACTICAL
THEOLOGY
OF PRAYER**

BY PETER BECK

Prayer “is one of the greatest and most excellent means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to flourish and prosper,” Jonathan Edwards told his congregation in the mid-1700s. “It is an excellent means of keeping up an acquaintance with God, and of growing in knowledge of God.”

That Edwards (1703-58) valued the importance of prayer is clear. From his earliest years he sought communion with God, first as a way to please God and then as a way to know God. As a child he would pray five times per day in secret. He and several childhood friends would steal away into the swamps near his colonial Connecticut home to a prayer booth they had constructed. Years later as a teen attending what would become known as Yale University, Edwards finally came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Immediately he turned to prayer that he might “enjoy” God. He could imagine Christianity in no other way. As he wrote in his autobiographical “Personal Narrative” years later,

And it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. And was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me; as the breath, by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent.

All of this betrays Edwards’ conviction that for the Christian, prayer is a “great duty,” for he who does not pray refuses this means of communing with God, and is no Christian at all.

A THEOLOGY OF PRAYER

Historian Stephen Nichols rightly argues that Jonathan Edwards based “his thoughts on prayer in good theology.” So to better understand his intent we need to consider his ideas.

Edwards’ entire theology of prayer was theocentric—God-centered and Trinitarian. One prays to God the Father through God the Son with the aid of God the Holy Spirit. As he preached in one of his classic sermons on prayer, “The Most High a Prayer-Hearing God,” Edwards believed,

While they are praying, he gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty; and enables them with great quietness, to rest in him, to leave themselves and their prayers with him, submitting to his will, and trusting in his grace and faithfulness.

As such, true prayer takes the believer to the foot of the throne and leaves him there basking in the glory of God.

GOD THE FATHER

According to Edwards, any theology of prayer must begin with the person of God. One must pray to the right God, he contended. “The true God,” he said, is the only one that “heareth prayer.”

Of particular concern to Edwards was the majesty and holiness of God. He once remarked, God’s holiness is the “most lovely” of all His attributes. Because of God’s holiness He can do no wrong. Therefore, those who pray to this God enjoy the confidence that comes with knowing that their prayers will be answered not according to our worldly wants but according to God’s heavenly perfection.

God’s goodness comes into play in prayer as well. God’s love, Edwards believed, drives God’s response to prayer. He loves his people so much that he desires only the best for them.

And therefore nothing that [Christians] need, nothing that they ask of God, nothing that their desires can extend themselves to, nothing that their capacity can contain, no good that can be enjoyed by them, is so great, so excellent that God begrudges it to them.

Also connected to God’s love is God’s knowledge and sovereignty, his ability to answer prayer exactly as it needs to be answered. Edwards noted, “He is able to do everything that we need.”

Therefore, true prayer begins and ends with God. As Edwards told his congregation, God is a God “of infinite grace and mercy; a God full of compassion to the miserable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and sorrows, to hear our cries, and to give

us all the relief which we need; a God who delights in mercy, and is rich unto all that call upon him!”

GOD THE SON

If God is the object of our prayer, Christ is the conduit, the means by which we are able to approach such a God. Without the person and work of Christ, there would be no prayer. “We have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may be heard consistently with the honour of God’s justice and majesty,” Edwards exclaimed.

In Jesus, God revealed himself so that man might be reconciled to him. Christ possesses all of the infinite attributes of God that make Him so worthy of our affections. Without Christ, Edwards argued, man cannot fully know God. In Christ all the heavenly Father’s attributes – his holiness, knowledge, love – exist. Yet, He became man so that fallen man might yet rise to heaven, in prayer now, in glory later.

Through His humanly endeavors Jesus paved the way back to the Father. He has “made the way to the throne of grace open.” In union with Christ, fallen man may approach God with confidence and joy for “it is He who clothes them with robes of glory and satisfies the soul with rivers of pleasure.” Because of the completed work of Christ on the cross and his present intercession for the saints, we “have advantage for a far more intimate union and conversation with [God].”

GOD THE SPIRIT

In prayer the fullness of the Trinity is at work. All three Persons of the Godhead play equal, vital roles. This,

said Edwards, is because they “are all the same God, and it is impossible there should be any [inferiority].” Therefore, any thoroughgoing theology of prayer must include a healthy understanding of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, Edwards once said, is “the true spirit of prayer” because He bridges the gap between the Creator and the creature. The Spirit dwells within the believer and lifts him up to the Father. Those who have the Spirit living in them “naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings” as the Spirit is drawn to the Father and brings the believer with him. In this way, the Spirit facilitates prayer.

For these reasons the Holy Spirit plays a central part in prayer. Yet for the same reasons, Edwards contended, the Spirit is also the end of prayer, the grand subject of prayer. That is, the Spirit, as God also, should be the great request of our prayers. “The good that shall be sought by prayer,” Edwards noted, “is God himself.” This, Edwards felt, is the one prayer God always answers in the affirmative. When the believer seeks to be filled with God, God gives the believer more of himself. The Spirit is the “sum of all blessings,” the filling of God and the greatest gift we can ever seek.

A LIFE OF PRAYER

Edwards did more than talk about prayer. He took the biblical admonition to pray without ceasing seriously. At the age of nineteen he penned a list of

seventy-two “resolutions,” spiritual intentions by which he sought to live his life. Of these he wrote,

Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God’s help, I do humbly entreat him by his grace to enable me to keep these Resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to his will, for Christ’s sake.

Among these was this “resolution” regarding prayer: “Resolved, very much to exercise myself in this [open and honest prayer before God] all my life long.” Edwards took this very seriously. As he added a few “resolutions” later, he was “Resolved, never to count

that a prayer, nor to let that pass as a prayer, which is so made, that I cannot hope that God will answer it.”

He maintained this commitment throughout his life, from the days before he became a professing Christian until his last days on earth. Three instances provide insight into the personal application of Edwards’ theology of prayer.

THE PRAYING PASTOR

Upon graduating from Yale, Edwards found himself called to the booming city of New York. Only twenty years old, he filled the pulpit of a church recently separated from another. During his brief time there, his spiritual journey waxed hot and cold. A journal entry from January 1723 reveals Edwards’ dependence upon prayer during this season of his

life.

And I pray God, for the sake of Christ, to look upon it as a self-dedication; and to receive me now as entirely his own, and deal with me in all respects as such; whether he afflicts me or prospers me, or whatever he pleases to do with me, who am his.

Similar prayers litter his journal from this era. Repeatedly he diagnosed a lack of prayer as the cause of his recurrent spiritual malaise. Edwards knew that prayer was the only hope. To prayer he always returned.

REVIVING PRAYER

As Edwards wrote in one early description of the Great Awakening, God uses prayer to effect his great redemptive will.

So [it] is God's will, through his wonderful grace, that the prayers of his saints should be one great and principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ's kingdom in the world. When God has something great to accomplish for his church, 'tis his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people.

Nearly twenty years later Edwards turned once more to prayer for strength and wisdom.

“RESOLVED, NEVER TO COUNT THAT A PRAYER, NOR TO LET THAT PASS AS A PRAYER, WHICH IS SO MADE, THAT I CANNOT HOPE THAT GOD WILL ANSWER IT.”

- JONATHAN EDWARDS

When the revival fires of the late 1730s and early 1740s subsided, much of the spiritual momentum of those years was quickly lost. Edwards found himself having to defend the reality of the Awakening and explain its limited impact. In doing so, he turned the attention of his people back to prayer:

You must in your meditations and holy exercises be much in conversing with heavenly persons and enjoyments. You cannot earnestly and constantly seek heaven without having your thoughts much there. Therefore turn the current of your thoughts and meditations towards that world of love, and that God of love who dwells there, and towards Christ who is ascended and sits there at the right hand of God; and towards the blessed enjoyments of that world. And be much in conversation with [God and Christ,] without which heaven is no heaven.

Further, he reminded them, God often withholds the outpouring of his saving grace until his people cry to God in prayer. As he wrote in his appeal for united, concerted prayer for revival among Christians, “God speaks of himself as standing ready to be gracious to his church, and to appear for its restoration, and only waiting for such an opportunity to bestow this mercy, when he shall hear the cries of his people for it, that he may bestow it in answer to their prayers.”

THE PASTOR PRAYS AGAIN

Not many years after the end of the Great Awakening, Edwards' congregation grew tired of his constant cries for renewal and commitment. In short order they called for his dismissal.

During this season of pastoral disappointment, Edwards never lost sight of the importance of prayer. In an appeal to a friend he wrote, "I need the prayers of my fathers and brethren who are friendly to me, that I may have wisdom given me by my great master, and that I may be enabled to conduct with a steady faithfulness to him, under all trials and whatever may be the issue of this affair."

With his firing imminent, Edwards sought the prayers of friends. His requests were poignant and specific.

I desire your prayers that I may take notice of the frowns of heaven on me and this people (between whom was once so great a union), in the bringing to pass such a separation between us; and that these troubles may be sanctified to me; that God would overrule this event for his own glory (which doubtless many adversaries will rejoice and triumph in), that God would open a door for my future usefulness, and provide for me and my numerous family, and take a fatherly care of us in our present unsettled, uncertain circumstances, being cast on the wide world.

Upon the final, negative resolution of the matter, Edwards continued to request prayer, even for his

former congregation. As he noted, "Ministers should imitate their great Master in his fervent prayers for the good of the souls of [all] men."

THEOLOGY DRIVES PRACTICE

Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said that "the spiritual always controlled the intellectual in [Edwards]." That was true of his preaching and his writing, and it was true of his praying. His theological convictions informed and drove his spiritual practice. This intersection of theology and practice can be seen clearly in one of Jonathan Edwards' sermons.

Thus prayer is a duty incumbent on all mankind but 'tis a duty especially becoming saints. [It] becomes the acquaintance they have with God. [It] becomes that peculiar relation they have to God. [It] becomes that peculiar concern they have with God. . . . [It] becomes the ends for which they are made saints: To glorify God.

If Edwards was correct, modern Christians would do well to study his thoughts and follow his example. To do so would be to the benefit of the one who prays, and much to the glory of God.

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THE REFORMED PASTOR

THE INTEGRITY OF PRAYER BY TIM KELLER

If we give priority to the outer life, our inner life will be a dark, scary room. We will not know what to do with solitude. We will be deeply uncomfortable with self-examination, and we will have an increasingly short attention span for any kind of reflection. Even more seriously, our lives will lack integrity. Outwardly, we will need to project confidence, spiritual and emotional health and wholeness, while inwardly we may be filled with self-doubts, anxieties, self-pity, and old grudges. Yet we won't know how to go into the inner rooms of the heart, see clearly what is there, and deal with it. In short, without

putting a priority on the inner life, we turn ourselves into hypocrites. The seventeenth-century English theologian John Owen wrote a warning to popular and successful ministers.

A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more.

Please take seriously the challenge that, without a rich prayer life, you will live as a hypocrite. To discover the real you, look at

what you spend time thinking about and doing especially when no one is looking, when nothing is forcing you to think about anything in particular. When you have that freedom, do your thoughts go toward God? You may want to be seen as a humble, unassuming person, but do you take the initiative to confess sins before God? You wish to be perceived as a positive, cheerful person, but do you habitually thank God for everything you have and praise him for who he is? You may speak a great deal about what a “blessing” your faith is and how you “just really love the Lord,” but if you are prayerless—is that really true? If you aren’t joyful, humble, and faithful in private before God, then what you appear to be on the outside won’t match what you truly are.

Just prior to giving his disciples his famous model, the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus offered some preliminary ideas on prayer, including this one. “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. . . . But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen . . . in secret” (Matt. 6:5-6). The acid test of spiritual integrity, Jesus says, is your private prayer life. Many people will pray when they have to because of cultural or social expectations, or perhaps because of troubling circumstances. The person with a genuine relationship with God as Father, however, will want to pray and therefore will pray even though nothing is pressing them to do so. For such a person prayer is not putting

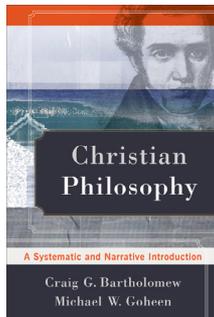
a message in a bottle—it is the way to know the One who is life itself. It is their passion, which they pursue even during times of spiritual dryness where there is no social or experiential pay off.

Giving priority to the inner life doesn’t mean an individualistic life, of course. Knowing the God of the Bible better can’t be achieved all alone. It entails the community of the church, participating in corporate worship as well as private devotion, and instruction in the Bible as well as silent meditation. At the heart of all the various ways of knowing God—is public and private prayer.

A late pastor and friend of mine, Jack Miller, once said he could tell a great deal about a person’s relationship with God by listening to him or her pray. “You can tell if a man or woman is really on speaking terms with God,” he said. My first response was to make a mental note to never pray aloud near Jack again. I’ve had years to test out Jack’s thesis. It is quite possible to become florid, theologically sound, and earnest in your public prayers without cultivating a rich, private prayer life. Nevertheless, you can’t manufacture the unmistakable note of reality that only comes from speaking not toward God but with him.

Tim Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. He is the author of numerous books, including *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (Dutton Adult). 

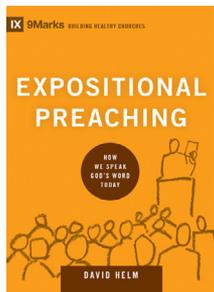
BOOK REVIEWS



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CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY: A SYSTEMATIC AND NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION

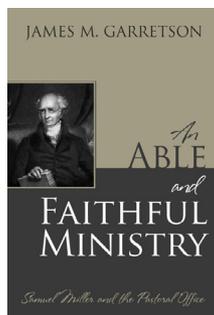
*by Craig Bartholomew
and Michael Goheen*



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EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING: HOW WE SPEAK GOD'S WORD TODAY

by David Helm



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THE ABLE AND FAITHFUL MINISTRY: SAMUEL MILLER AND THE PASTORAL OFFICE

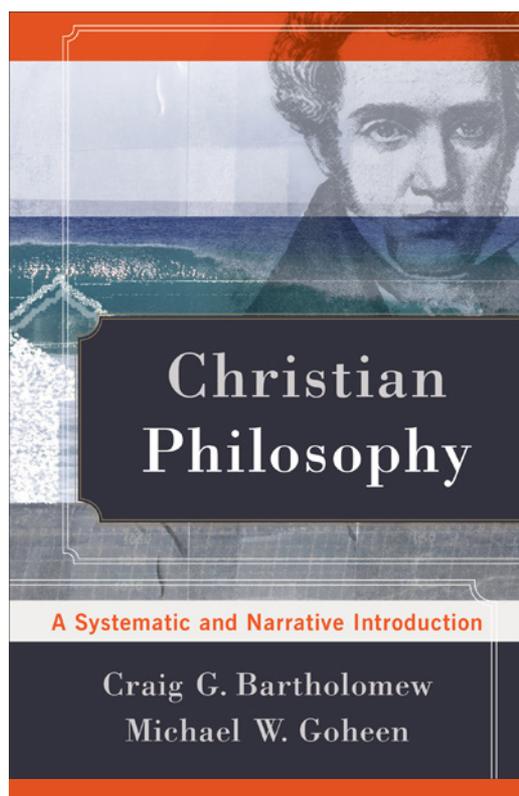
by James Garretson



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WHAT'S BEST NEXT: HOW THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS THE WAY YOU GET THINGS DONE

by Matt Perman



PHILOSOPHY MEETS NEO-CALVINISM: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND PHILOSOPHY

by Luke Stamps

Christians have long debated the proper role of philosophy in the theological task. One tendency, represented by the second-century theologian Tertullian, has been to diminish philosophy's significance because of its allegedly anti-Christian assumptions. Another tendency, exemplified by another second-century theologian, Justin Martyr, has been to engage the categories of pagan philosophy in an attempt to make the Christian faith intelligible and defensible. Still others have allowed certain prevailing philosophical commitments to exercise control over their theological formulations, sometimes at the expense of biblical considerations.

Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen recognize the dangers attendant to any Christian engagement with philosophy, but they consider it a vital aspect

of the Christian mission regardless. Following up on their previous books on the biblical storyline (*The Drama of Scripture*, Baker Academic, 2004) and the Christian worldview (*Living at the Crossroads*, Baker Academic, 2008), Bartholomew and Goheen tackle the major categories, figures, and movements one must master in the development of a Christian philosophy, as they understand it, in their new book, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Baker Academic, 2013).

THE OUTLINE

The book is divided into three major sections. The first section, comprising the first two chapters, introduces

the authors' approach to the task of Christian philosophy. In chapter 1, they answer the question, "Why Philosophy?" They show how philosophy is integral to the Christian mission on several fronts: apologetics, cultural engagement, scholarship, and the Christian life. Bartholomew and Goheen understand the task of philosophy as providing a "detailed analysis of the order of creation" in a whole host of endeavors including history, art, politics, economics, and so forth.

In chapter 2, the authors address the relationship between faith and philosophy and argue for a worldview approach to philosophy grounded in faith and the biblical revelation. For Bartholomew and Goheen the Christian worldview *yields* a philosophy, which in turn influences Christian engagement with the various academic and cultural endeavors to which Christians are called. The authors approach the task of Christian philosophy from a self-professed Augustinian and Kuyperian perspective, maintaining that the scope of Christ's redeeming work extends to the entirety of the created-but-fallen order (24).

The second and longest section of the book traces the history of Western philosophy from the ancient Greek era to the postmodern era (chs. 3–11). In these chapters, Bartholomew and Goheen treat, in turn, the pre-Socratic philosophers (ch. 3); the classical Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and their legacy in Greco-Roman philosophy (ch. 4); early medieval Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Abelard (ch. 5); the Christian theologians of the high medieval period such as Thomas Aquinas (ch. 6); Renaissance and Reformation philosophy (ch. 7); modern philosophy from its beginnings to the twentieth century (chs. 8–10); and postmodern philosophy (ch. 11). These chapters offer a combination of description and evaluation, as the authors seek to bring their Christian presuppositions to bear on these important figures and movements.

The final section of the book provides several sketches of "Christian Philosophy Today." In chapter 13, Bartholomew and Goheen survey the works of some prominent Roman Catholic philosophers, including Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Jean-Luc Marion, among others. They conclude this chapter by introducing Neo-Calvinist philosophy, which they spend the remainder of the book examining. The authors treat two different developments within Neo-Calvinism: the Reformed epistemology of Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and others (chs. 13–14), and the Reformational philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd and Dirk Vollenhoven (ch. 15). Reformed epistemology is more analytic in orientation and has sought to carve out space for a broader set of "properly basic beliefs" than that prescribed by modernism's narrowly construed foundationalism. Reformational philosophy is more continental in orientation and has sought to provide a transcendental critique of non-Christian worldviews and to develop a philosophical framework on explicitly Christian presuppositions.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Bartholomew and Goheen's volume exhibits several notable strengths. Their explanations of difficult concepts and important historical developments were clear. Their selection of material was judicious. They often provide enumerated summaries and critiques of the various philosophies that they discuss. Furthermore, while historical surveys can sometimes oversimplify complex issues, Bartholomew and Goheen demonstrate an ability to provide nuanced treatments of debated topics. For example, while they identify with a particular version of Dutch Calvinism, they are careful not to read their own views back into the writings of John Calvin but instead note the ambiguities and tensions in the Reformer's works.

Still, Bartholomew and Goheen's volume is not without its weaknesses. On a minor note, readers not familiar with *The Drama of Scripture* could be confused or put off by the references to Abby and Percy, the fictitious young pair whose correspondence carries the story along in each chapter's introduction and conclusion. On another structural note, the book would have benefited from a more textbook-oriented format, with illustrations, photographs, and sidebars helping to deliver the content.

More substantively, several issues are either omitted or underdeveloped in the book. For example, the authors curiously make no mention of Cornelius Van Til, the prominent Dutch-American philosopher and theologian, who developed his own Dooyeweerdian approach to philosophy in an American context. Additionally, the authors spend little space on important developments within "analytic theology," a relatively recent movement that seeks to bring the tools and sensibilities of analytic philosophy to bear upon Christian doctrine. To be sure, Bartholomew and Goheen do spend two chapters on Reformed epistemology, which has developed within the analytic tradition, but little space is dedicated to the work of analytic philosophers of religion on such important doctrinal topics as the Trinity, the incarnation, and the atonement.

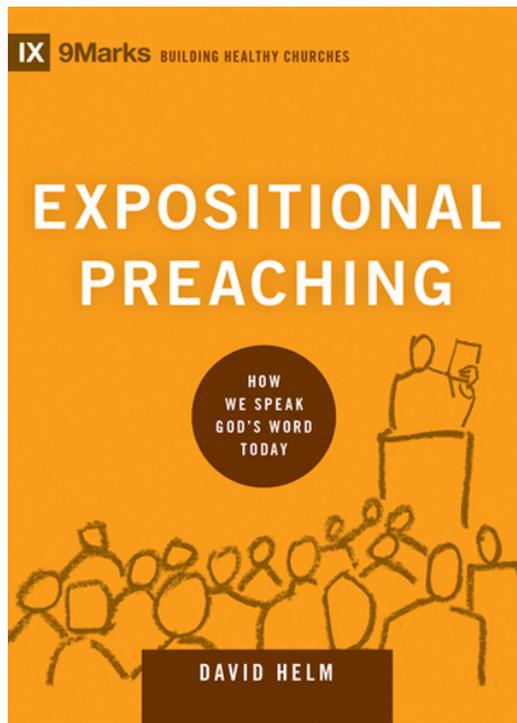
Perhaps this last omission is explainable in terms of the authors' own stated preference for a more continental version of Neo-Calvinism that they call "Reformational philosophy." At points, Bartholomew and Goheen seem to suggest that a truly "Christian philosophy" is synonymous with this Kuyperian tradition. For example, they argue that Johann Georg Hamann was "an early exponent" of Christian philosophy, implying that the full flowering of "Christian" philosophy was as yet unrealized from the perspective of the eighteenth-century German philosopher (150). The authors also seem to suggest

that earlier attempts to develop a Christian philosophy were compromised by capitulations to pagan concepts (see, for example, their critique of Augustine's reliance upon Neo-Platonism).

But not all readers will agree with the authors' Neo-Calvinist perspective on these issues. Is a Dooyeweerdian approach the most consistently Christian engagement with philosophy? Is it true that the task of philosophy is to provide a "detailed analysis" of every human endeavor from a Christian perspective (5)? Is it true that the Christian gospel yields, for example, a particular understanding of aesthetic norms, global capitalism, or labor policy? Is it true that every cultural collaboration that Christians have with non-Christians must be characterized by "anti-thesis" and "spiritual warfare" (253)? Is there not space for a common public realm where Christians can appeal to non-Christians from the perspective of natural law? Readers who identify more with the two-kingdoms theology developed by the Reformers will find their perspectives underrepresented in Bartholomew and Goheen's account.

Despite these reservations, Bartholomew and Goheen have provided an impressive introduction to philosophy from their own Neo-Calvinist perspective. They introduce their readers to the major concepts and movements in the history of philosophy and do so from clearly stated Christian presuppositions. For these reasons, their book provides an important voice in the ongoing conversation over the place of philosophy for Christian thought in the twenty-first century.

Luke Stamps, *California Baptist University* 



ARE YOU AN EXPOSITIONAL PREACHER? DAVID HELM CAN HELP

by Joey Cochran

Like personified Wisdom, expositional preachers call far and wide for others to adopt their philosophy of homiletics. These days it's *en vogue* for pastors to label themselves as “expositional preachers.” Labels are one thing; practicing the art is another.

Are you an expositional preacher? There's a big difference between commenting verse-by-verse and drawing out the original text's main point by theologically bridging to today's context. Can you confidently say that the latter is your method?

If there is a lingering doubt—and even otherwise—then a refresher in expositional

preaching will have inestimable worth. To do so, look no further than *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today* (Crossway, 2014). The author David Helm chairs the Charles Simeon Trust organization, which promotes expositional preaching. He's a practitioner, too: Pastor Emeritus at Holy Trinity Church in Chicago. It's Helm's passion to promote expositional preaching.

Expositional Preaching accomplishes four aims in four succinct chapters covering the big problem and three steps to correct it: exegesis, theology, and contextualization.

A BIG PICTURE OF THE PROBLEM

Chapter one walks through how we get it wrong. The big problem is blind adherence: this is when cultural context gains control over how we read and preach Scripture. Doing this makes us impressionistic—our preoccupation is the world rather than the Word. We also become inebriated—intoxicated by our plans and purposes for the text rather than God’s. Last, we become inspired—our reading becomes God’s rather than God’s becoming ours. These are big problems!

You’ve probably seen these offenses to expositional preaching committed often in your history of ministry, either by yourself or another. So what are you to do? How are you to go about getting the text right and getting it across to your audience?

A FAITHFUL SOLUTION

Helm presents a three-step process of exegesis, theology, and contextualization to alleviate blind adherence. Nothing surprising here, right? The remarkable quality of *Expositional Preaching* is not found in ostentatious, well-rehearsed principles but in the micro-outworking of each of these processes.

Chapter two on exegesis involves three

steps: looking to the biblical context, listening to the melodic line of the text, and locating the structure and emphasis of the text. Helm reminds us: “If you want to be a good biblical expositor, you need to discipline yourself to put your eye on the original hearers first” (44). But you can’t stop there! Helm concludes this chapter by baiting us into chapters three and four: “Done in isolation, exegesis alone can lead to preaching that is either overly intellectual or merely imperatival” (57).

Chapter three’s focus is on theological reflection—a prayerful discipline of meditating on the text and relating it to God’s redemptive plan (62). The overall emphasis is toward biblical theology (61-82); still, Helm reserves a place for systematic theology’s role as well (82-86). I liked how Helm instructed preachers to read with the instincts of Jesus—revealing the gospel from the Old Testament, Paul—revealing the gospel through reason, and Spurgeon—connecting the immediate text to the gospel. I think he might have strengthened the section on systematic theology by unpacking how each discipline of systematic theology relates to the gospel.

Chapter four of *Expositional Preaching* covers contextualizing the text to today’s people by considering the audience, a clear and textually conformed sermon arrangement, and heart-affecting application. I loved how Helm concluded this chapter and the book with an eschatological nod. “The best biblical expositors, while immensely

concerned with today, nevertheless do all their sermon work (whether it be exegesis, theological reflection, or contextualization) in light of the day—that day when Jesus returns” (109-10).

REMARKABLE MERITS

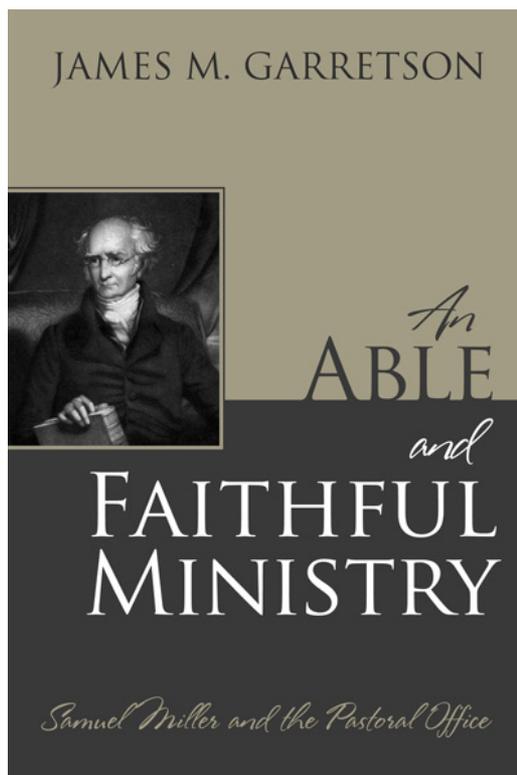
I found a handful of distinctive merits—no doubt there’s more—in *Expositional Preaching*. I appreciate Helm’s treatment and warning on the dangers of *Lectio Divina*, an ancient practice of devotional study that casts aside prayerful study for mystical revelation. Helm balances this critique of *Lectio Divina* with an emphasis on prayer’s role in exegesis throughout this book. Not a chapter passes without an exhortation reminding would-be preachers to pour over the text in meditation and prayer.

Helm’s discussion on the historical/critical method is an informative reminder for preachers to not get lost in scholastic minutiae that does not connect with ninety-

eight percent of the audience and distracts from the main aim of affecting hearts toward gospel-rich devotion.

His commitment to teaching expositional preaching has also proven gainful for developing memorable ways to illustrate exegetical techniques. Helpful word pictures—dry bones, melodic line, staying on the line, text and framework, bone and marrow—anchor exegetical methods into the mind for future use in preaching preparation. If you want to learn what each of these is, you’ll just have to read the book, which is my suggestion, because *Expositional Preaching* is a distinctive contribution to the arsenal of biblical preaching resources available today.

Joey Cochran, Redeemer Fellowship, St. Charles, IL 



BE A FAITHFUL PASTOR LEARNING FROM THE MINISTRY OF SAMUEL MILLER

by Gary Steward

An *Able and Faithful Ministry: Samuel Miller and the Pastoral Office* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2014) is the first full-length treatment of Samuel Miller (1769-1850) since the two-volume *Life of Samuel Miller* written by Miller's son appeared in 1869. James Garretson's work, therefore, is long overdue and will likely introduce Miller to many for the first time. Garretson's study of Miller is partly biographical and deals mostly with Miller's conception of preaching and pastoral ministry. Garretson has also written *Princeton and Preaching: Archibald Alexander and the Christian Ministry* (Banner of Truth, 2005), another appreciative study

of a leading nineteenth-century Princeton theologian. This volume on Miller can be considered as a companion volume to his book on Alexander, given that both deal with the Old Princeton understanding of preaching and pastoral ministry in general.

Samuel Miller has not been appreciated in the way that he deserves, being eclipsed in the minds of many by Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge, his two most prominent contemporaries at Princeton Seminary. Even those who appreciate Old Princeton tend to undervalue his contribution to the Princeton school of thought, and yet it was largely at Miller's instigation (along with Ashbel Green

and Archibald Alexander) that the Presbyterian Church was moved to establish a denominational seminary at Princeton in the first place. Miller has often been undervalued as a historian and theologian as well, and yet Miller's *Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, which in spite of its name is a monumental and wide-sweeping intellectual survey of the eighteenth-century, earned him two honorary doctorates at the almost unprecedented age of thirty-four.

Instead of focusing on Miller's work as an intellectual historian and theologian, *An Able and Faithful Ministry* explores Miller's "understanding of the pastoral ministry and the approach he took to ministerial instruction" (3). Garretson's study begins with a biographical survey, tracing Miller's life story from his father's manse in Dover, Delaware, to his pastoral call to New York City in 1793, his arrival at Princeton Seminary in 1813, and his death in Princeton in 1850. This opening section also expands on Miller's denominational involvement, preaching style, and thoughts on missions. Garretson relies heavily upon the nineteenth-century biographical volumes compiled by Miller's son.

The second part of the book covers Miller's understanding of the "theological foundations for the gospel ministry" (157). Each chapter in this section summarizes and quotes extensively from one of Miller's shorter writings, including his *The Importance of the Gospel Ministry* (1827), *The Importance of a Mature Preparatory Study for the Ministry* (1829), *Holding Fast the Faithful Word* (1829), *Christian Weapons*

not Carnal, but Spiritual (1826), and *The Difficulties and Temptations which Attend the Preaching of the Gospel in Great Cities* (1820). In four of these chapters, Garretson also discusses and summarizes four sets of Miller's lectures notes housed in manuscript form in the archives of Princeton Seminary: "Preparation for Sermonizing," "Choice of Texts," "Style," and "Parts of a Discourse." These lecture notes have not been published, so Garretson's use of them puts fresh material from Miller in print for the first time. Altogether this section contains a wide-ranging wealth of rich material on preaching and pastoral ministry.

In the third part of *An Able and Faithful Ministry*, Garretson summarizes one of Miller's most fascinating works entitled *Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits* (1827). This work of Miller's addresses all sorts of practical matters that pastors need to consider in dealing with their church members and in the regular routine of being a pastor. Miller's chief concern is whether or not the pastor conducts himself with the appropriate dignity and demeanor that is befitting of the office of a minister. Garretson summarizes and distills Miller's work nicely, weaving in lots of quotations from Miller's work itself. Garretson closes the book by recounting Miller's final days in the winter of 1849-1850. Miller's death in January 1850 elicited a number of tributes from Miller's colleagues, and Garretson's narrative quotes large portions of these so one can read firsthand how deeply Miller was admired by those who knew him.

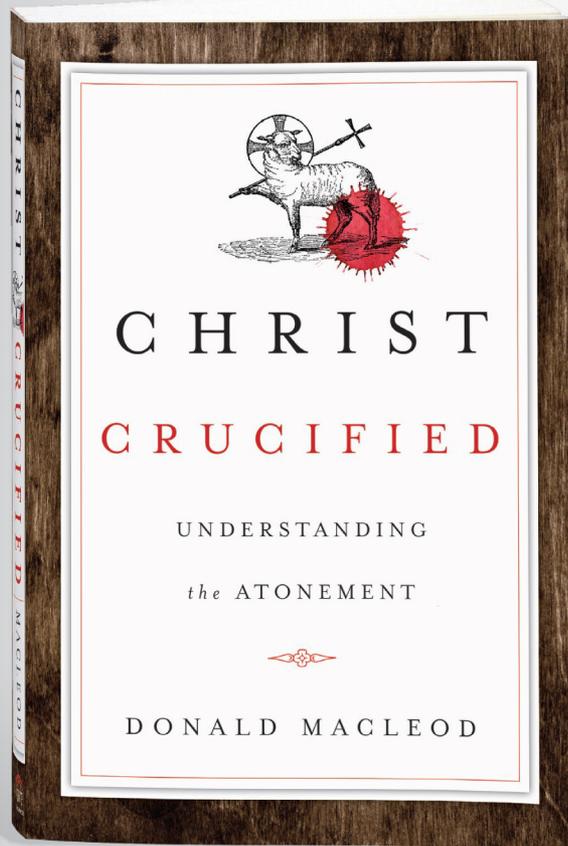
Garretson's work on Miller is a fine distillation

of the thought and teaching of a conscientious, godly, and gifted pastor on the subject of pastoral ministry. Miller's discussion of what it means to be a pastor is both convicting and profoundly inspiring. In an age where both pastors and churches are often confused about what the role of a pastor entails, Miller's biblical, historical, and personal reflections on the ministry provide a much-needed perspective. Being a pastor, for Miller, is a profoundly spiritual work involving the whole person and necessitating much self-denial, self-discipline, sacrifice, and warm-hearted devotion to Christ. The church desperately needs pastors who share Miller's understanding.

Garretson has done pastors and the church a great service by resurrecting Miller. This is a spiritually-rich book, and it deserves a wide reading, especially by pastors and pastors-in-training. Hopefully, readers of *An Able and Faithful Ministry* will not be content with what they read in this volume but will go on to read the Princeton theologians for themselves and mine the riches of the Old Princeton tradition.

Gary Steward, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* 

272 pages, paperback, 978-0-8308-4061-8, \$22.00



UNDERSTANDING THE ATONEMENT

How could the life, let alone the death, of one man two thousand years ago be the salvation of the human race? Donald Macleod explains the centrality of the atonement in Christian faith and experience, using seven key words to describe what happened on the cross: *substitution, expiation, propitiation, reconciliation, satisfaction, redemption and victory.*



"Donald Macleod's work is always stimulating, sometimes provocative and never less than excellent. This is a contribution to thought on the atonement that is both timely and incisive. It should be required reading for students, theologians, ministers and anyone interested in learning more about the stupendous atoning work of Christ."

ROBERT LETHAM, Wales Evangelical School of Theology, author of *The Work of Christ*

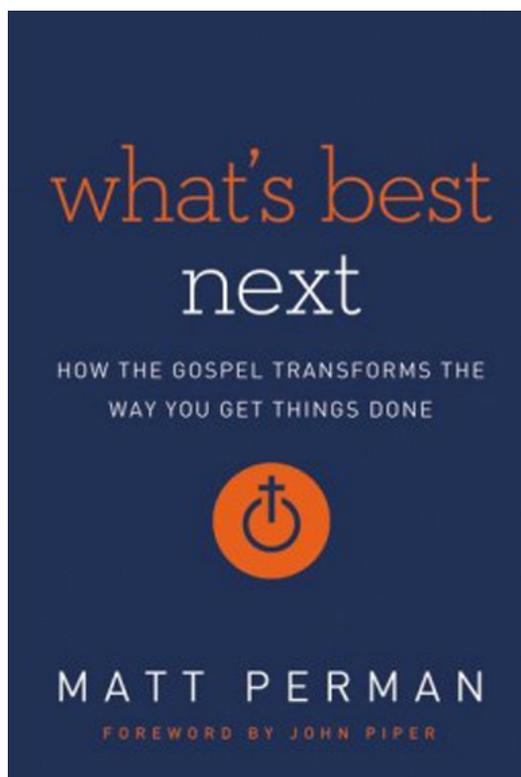
"[Donald Macleod] has dazzling insight matched by a way with words that together serve to bring out aspects of the person and work of Christ with memorable beauty. . . . If you are familiar with Donald's work, you know what to expect and know that you will be challenged and edified. If you have never read him before, you are in for a treat."

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CAN PRODUCTIVITY REALLY BE GOSPEL DRIVEN? MATT PERMAN SAYS IT IS

by Mike Mobley

“Gospel-centered” or “Gospel-driven” strategies over the last several years have been innumerable. Gospel-centered churches, discipleship, parenting, marriage, dating, work, prayer, conversations, relationships... and the list goes on and on.

Certainly there are pros and cons to having the Gospel be the center of attention in everything. While the message of the Gospel is the most important thing we can share with others, there’s danger in just calling *everything* the Gospel, when that’s not really the case.

In his book, *What’s Best Next: How The Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done* (Zondervan, 2014), Matt Perman attempts to talk about productivity from a Gospel perspective. More specifically, he talks about how the Gospel can transform the way we get our responsibilities completed. This seems like a

difficult task, but I believe that Matt *nails* it!

EFFICIENCY DOESN'T EQUAL EFFECTIVENESS

Right out of the gate, Perman discusses efficiency – which is probably what comes to mind for most of us (including myself) when we think about being productive. I was immediately convicted by the thought that just because I’m doing tons of things, that doesn’t necessarily mean I’m being productive. In fact, if I’ve lost sight of what the *Lord* is doing with *his* work while I’m getting things done, I won’t be glorifying God in anything I am actually doing. What a waste! It’s about getting the *right* things done, not about getting everything done.

EVERYTHING WE DO MATTERS

Have you ever been checking an email or just running a quick errand and thought to yourself, “Does this really matter?” Perman discusses what most of us would call mundane tasks that we do on a daily basis and makes a great point about how those tasks are not only part of our sanctification and growth as followers of Christ, but are absolutely fundamental to it.

I was refreshed by being reminded that every single thing we do matters. If we don’t take the smallest things seriously for the Lord, we are kidding ourselves to think we will take the large matters seriously.

CHAPTER 8 WAS NOT A COINCIDENCE

I’m almost wondering when Perman wrote Chapter 8 if he was thinking of Romans 8 and how that chapter is a huge turning point in the Bible going from just how sinful we are to how there is no longer condemnation for those who have trusted in Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Maybe he didn’t realize this was going to be such an impactful chapter, but honestly it was for me. I love getting things done and when I have a lot on my to-do list, I want to knock those tasks out as fast as possible so I can experience the pleasure of relief and calmness that comes from being organized and productive. I didn’t realize I was wrong until I got to this chapter. Perman writes, “With gospel-centered productivity, peace comes first, not second. The mistake we often make is to make peace of mind the result of things we do rather than the source.”

And there it is: The *gospel* is to be my source of peace and *Jesus* is supposed to dictate how I go about my to-do list, not myself, and certainly not the nice and cozy organized feeling that takes place afterwards.

WHY SHOULD YOU READ THIS BOOK?

So why should you read this book? Maybe you think there’s nothing else to learn about productivity? First, you should read this book because each and every one of us is prideful. If you are a follower of Christ, be *really* careful to not let pride come into play when it comes to how you get things done. Humble yourself and take the opportunity to learn more about this topic from a gospel-centered perspective.

Second, perhaps you are overwhelmed with so much to do and have no idea how to do it? Perman outlines so many practical applications in this book that you will benefit tremendously by reading through them. It shouldn’t be a surprise that a guy who is wired in a productivity sort of way would provide tools necessary for someone to be productive. Whether it’s clarifying what your role really is, setting up your week, making the best use of time, or managing email and projects, it’s all in there.

Third, maybe you are thinking that there’s no point to any of the things you’re getting done? If this is you, be encouraged. There’s so much more to this book than just how to get things done. You have purpose. You have value. God is not a God who just has people do things for no reason at all. God didn’t send his Son Jesus to come live a perfect life, die on the cross, and rise again for no reason. God knew exactly what he was doing and still knows exactly what he is doing. You can find tremendous purpose and value in every single thing you do because of what Jesus has done for you. Do you recognize this?

At the end of the day, we get amazing opportunities to glorify God in how we get so many things done, and thanks to Matt’s help our productivity can *really* be Gospel-driven.

Mike Mobley, 121 Community Church 

FIRST PRINCIPLES

PRAY THE BIBLE

BY MATTHEW BARRETT

I will be the first one to admit that sometimes my prayers can become stagnant. When this happens I find myself babbling words that I don't really mean. To make matters worse, there are times when I frankly just don't know what to pray. While I can always think of many personal problems or requests to bring before the Lord, I know I should be exalting God himself in my prayers but fail to do so. If you can relate, then allow me to give you some very practical advice: Pray the Bible. That's right, pray passages you read in Scripture. This takes some hermeneutical wisdom as not every text is meant to be prayed. But so many passages in Scripture can be prayed, or at least the truth and intended application of those passages can be engaged by the believer as he goes before the Lord.

So where should you start? The first, and most obvious, place to start is with the Lord's Prayer itself (Matt. 6:9-13). It is not an accident that so many of the confessions and catechisms from the Reformation focus on the Lord's Prayer. The reason is because in this prayer Jesus is teaching his disciples how to approach their heavenly Father. Notice, Jesus begins by exalting the Father ("hallowed be your name") and his kingdom ("Your kingdom come, your will be done"). Only then does he move to the believer's needs and petitions ("Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts"). In an effort not to pray selfish prayers (treating God like my personal Santa Claus!), I try to follow this pattern too. But having done so, we cannot miss the fact that the Lord's Prayer does address our needs and encourages us to bring our needs to the Father. What is the most important

need we have? Answer: mercy. Jesus gets right down to the heart of our problem, which is our need for forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15). So the Lord's Prayer in many ways is a gospel prayer, addressing our dependence upon God for grace.

Because the prayer is short, I have taught it to my children, one of whom is as young as three years old. Most likely, your children have no idea how to pray. Well, have them memorize the Lord's Prayer and recite it before bed each night. What a great way to fill their minds and hearts with theology from Jesus himself.

Next, turn to a psalm, and I would recommend Psalm 23, written by King David. This psalm is truly a treasure for the Christian, especially in times of temptation and hardship. I would recommend praying this psalm when you are struggling to trust the Lord. David reminds us that God is a shepherd protecting, guiding, and leading his people or sheep. Again, notice that the prayer roots who we are in who God is and what he does. We do not want because he is our shepherd (23:1). We do not fear evil because God is present and his staff protects us (23:4). We can rest eternally secure because God is merciful (23:6). After you finish praying and memorizing Psalm 23, go for Psalm 25 as well. It seems that the latter only elaborates upon the former.

My last suggestion does not come from any one particular text but from the whole tenor of Scripture. Personally, as I read through Scripture each year I find my heart crying out to God as the Holy Spirit convicts me through a particular passage. Let me give you some examples. When I come to Peter's great confession (Mark 8:29), I too

say to Jesus that I believe he is the Christ. When Jesus tells his listeners not to become anxious for if God so meticulously cares for the lilies of the field he will take care of those made in his own image, I then confess to God that I worry far too much and am a man of so little faith (Matt. 6:30). I then renew my trust in his sovereignty, omnipotence, wisdom, and tender care, and seek his kingdom and righteousness first (Matt. 6:33). And when I hear Paul exhort Timothy to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), I pray that God would give me the strength and boldness to do the same, being ready in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting. The point is this: Don't just read your Bible, but seek to pray its truths, applying them and living them out.

So, pray Scripture. Put the words of God in your mouth. You will find them to be sweet, refreshing, and nurturing to your soul. As David found to be true, the law of the Lord is sweeter than honey, and in keeping it there is great reward (Ps. 19:10, 11).

Matthew Barrett, *Executive Editor* 



MAGAZINE