

“Despite its importance, very few Christians would say they are satisfied with their prayer life. But instead of accepting that apathy, Daniel urges the reader to seek the face of the Lord in a way that will challenge and transform him. He lays out a practical and doable plan for Christians to take their prayer life from ordinary to extraordinary. Filled with personal stories and biblical examples, *Transforming Prayer* is a clear call for a more compelling prayer life.”

—John MacArthur, Grace Community Church

“*Transforming Prayer* is a transforming message. Calling us out of self-involved, wish-list praying and into a passionate pursuit of the Present Jesus, Daniel Henderson has gifted the body of Christ with this treasure. A message distilled from his own journey, developed in his faithful ministry, and delivered with clarity and precision.”

—Jennifer Kennedy Dean, The Praying Life Foundation

“As I work with pastors and counselors who serve multiplied thousands of believers all around the world, I am more convinced than ever about the desperate longing of the human heart to experience positive, permanent change. Nothing is more essential for this kind of transformation than the power of prayer. No one knows how to equip believers in prayer better than Daniel Henderson. I’ve experienced the relevance of his ministry and seen the impact of his teaching. I hope you will embrace the power of change available in this timely book.”

—Tim Clinton, President, American Association
of Christian Counselors

“When we change the way we pray, God changes the way we live. Unfortunately, many Christians get stuck in a rut of dry, dead praying that leaves them discouraged and confused. Daniel has spent his entire ministry equipping the church for a life of powerful prayer. I am confident the message of this book will awaken your heart and clarify a path to a new level of spiritual intimacy and transformation.”

—Jonathan Falwell, Senior Pastor,
Thomas Road Baptist Church

“*Transforming Prayer* is a well written, motivational, and a practical guide for us to pursue God together through worship-based prayer. Great movements of God are fueled by prayer, and this book is fuel for that fire. For those longing to see God move, this is a must-read.”

—R. Scott Weatherford, Lead Pastor,
First Alliance Church, Calgary

“*Transforming Prayer* is a must-read for not only pastors and church leaders but for everyone who wants to experience the power of prayer. I’ve known Daniel Henderson for many years and I know that he lives out what he writes. As a pastor we can easily get caught up in the ‘doing of the ministry’ and leave out the passion of prayer for the ministry. This book will inspire you to go to the next level in your walk with God.”

—Matt Fry, Lead Pastor, C3 Church

“The secret of prayer is not what we ‘move’ God to do for us. Rather, the secret of prayer is how it moves us to become like God. Daniel Henderson has touched a spiritual nerve in the body of Christ, and all of us should respond. We should not be concerned when our prayers are not answered; we should be concerned when we are not transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. May you read this book and be changed accordingly.”

—Elmer L. Towns, Co-Founder and Vice President,
Liberty University

“The unique contribution of *Transforming Prayer* by my good friend Daniel Henderson is that it unveils the keys to *prayer that transforms*.”

—Luis Bush, International Facilitator,
Transform World Connections



TRANSFORMING
PRAYER

*Everything Changes
When You Seek God's Face*

by DANIEL HENDERSON



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to D. JUSTIN HENDERSON

. . . my firstborn son, treasured friend,
and colleague in ministry.
Thank you for your help with this project.

to PASTOR PETER LORD

. . . whose teaching first inspired my heart
with a vision to seek God's face.



About the Author

As a pastor for more than twenty-five years, Daniel Henderson brought prayer-based revitalization to several large churches and is now dedicating most of his energy to help congregations across the United States experience renewal and turnaround. He is president of Strategic Renewal, which exists to ignite the heart of the church through personal renewal, congregational revival, and leadership restoration for Christ's glory. In that role he travels extensively, leading churches in renewal experiences, equipping church leaders, and speaking at conferences. He models his renewal focus as Pastor of Prayer and Renewal at Thomas Road Baptist Church and teaches at Liberty University in the areas of prayer, Christian living, and church leadership.

The author of several books, Daniel was on the editorial review team for *Pray!* magazine and serves on the board of the National Association of Evangelicals. He and his wife, Rosemary, have three grown children and live near Lynchburg, Virginia.

For more information, visit www.strategicrenewal.com.

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Foreword

At this critical point in church history, there is little time for Christians to be distracted over secondary issues. The challenges of a growing secularization that disparages the gospel of Christ are all too evident to every believer. The Christian church must be stirred to arise and live out the calling Jesus gave us as salt and light.

But how can we see a radical change in the spiritual landscape without a radical return to prayer and the Word by the body of Christ? Human resources and church growth novelties that lead us away from these essentials always prove ineffective at best—and spiritually destructive at worst. Only something sent from heaven itself will overcome the darkness around us so Christ can be seen as the world's only hope.

Every believer knows that the Bible is clear about prayer. God's house will be called a house of prayer. Preaching is essential. Praise, worship, and fellowship are important component parts of the work of the Lord, but His house will be called a house of prayer. Why? Because when believers come to the throne of grace and start seeking God with all their hearts, God has promised—and He can never fail this promise. He has said, "When you call I will answer. Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you." When this happens we are going to see God come and give a

renewal of the spirit of prayer, the burden of prayer, and strategies so that all our churches can be houses of prayer.

Then something excellent happens in our lives, our families, and our congregations. Suddenly people are drawn into our churches and needing the Lord. There is a new sense of God in the services, which make them more edifying. And this is always going to happen when people pray.

Every time I set my face to seeking God in a fresh way, God begins to change my heart, my mind, my preaching, and my leadership skills. When any believer commits his or her heart to seeking the Lord, everything is going to change.

It is to be remembered that all revivals in the history of the Christian church that have shaken towns, cities, and countries have all begun with people saying, “We can’t take the status quo anymore. We must seek God for something fresh. Let’s pray.” And then He answers.

Daniel Henderson has been commissioned by God to inspire pastors and churches across the nation to reconsider and commit to Acts 6:4: “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (ESV). God is wonderfully using Daniel to bring believers together around the country, across denominational lines, to pray for one another and to encourage prayer in our individual churches. This is one of those vital things happening in the body of Christ that is going to bring more of God’s blessing in our lives and that will mean the name of Christ will be glorified more than ever before.

As you read *Transforming Prayer*, open your heart to God’s voice. You will be both encouraged and inspired to believe again that with God, nothing is impossible.

Jim Cymbala
The Brooklyn Tabernacle Church



A NOTE

For more inspiration related to this book, please go to *www.transformingprayerbook.com* where you will find video introductions to each chapter and many additional resources.

For additional information on Daniel Henderson's renewal ministry, visit *www.strategicrenewal.com*.



HIMSELF

Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling,
Now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted,
Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing,
Now Himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying,
Now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation,
Now the uttermost.
Once 'twas ceaseless holding,
Now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting,
Now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning,
Now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring,
Now He has the care.
Once 'twas what I wanted
Now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking,
Now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working,
His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him,
Now He uses me.
Once the power I wanted,
Now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored,
Now for Him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus,
Now I know He's mine;
Once my lamps were dying,
Now they brightly shine.
Once for death I waited,
Now His coming hail;
And my hopes are anchored
Safe within the veil.¹

—A. B. SIMPSON

Introduction: The Road to Real Change

*Man is at his greatest and highest
when upon his knees
he comes face to face with God.*

D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

*So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face,
as a man speaks to his friend.*

EXODUS 33:11

Praying Christians never forget the first time they sought the face of God and experienced the power of a transforming spiritual intimacy. For me, it occurred during my college years. It was a Friday night. I was alone in my dorm room, which was highly unusual as I was typically busy in school activities and dating.

Looking back, I realize the Holy Spirit had been preparing my heart for this moment, as is the case for most believers. The account of Moses speaking to God in deep intimacy “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11) had recently captivated my heart. One of my professors had been speaking of those times in his life when the presence of God felt so real that if he had opened his eyes it seemed he would be staring God in the face. Honestly, I had never experienced that kind of moment.

I began to thumb through a journal I had maintained over the past year, reading various entries that spoke of my struggles

and victories. I reflected on Bible verses that had moved my heart and answers to prayer that were apparent along the way. I was meditating specifically on Philippians 3:7–10 and the message of counting all things as loss in order to know Christ.

That night, as I sat in my simple dorm room, these realities converged as the Holy Spirit stirred my heart with a strange and new spiritual hunger. Without calculation, I found myself flat on my face, pouring out my passionate gratitude and worship to the Savior who knew me, walked with me, guided me, taught me, and loved me with a tender and attentive heart. In those moments, the presence, provision, and power of God in my life became real. Truly, I felt that if I had opened my eyes, I would have been looking at the Holy One . . . face to face.

When I finally got up from the tearstained carpet, over an hour had passed. I had experienced something of His presence and grace that changed me. My heart treasured Christ as never before. A “new normal” had occurred and my soul was re-calibrated to move beyond perfunctory prayer lists and to set my heart to seek His face.

Since this simple encounter I have known the grace of similar intimacy, not only in my personal prayer life but in corporate settings as well. I wish I could say it is a daily experience. One thing I know—once you have tasted this kind of prayer experience, nothing else satisfies and everything else is seen in a new light. But like a caterpillar trying to break out of its cocoon to discover the flight of a butterfly, our goal to make this kind of experience the normal reality of our prayer life does not come easily.

My Confessional

Even though I am writing this book on prayer, I need to confess up front that I am not a natural “prayer guy.” I have met plenty of those folks. They come across very spiritual, contemplative, and apparently quite deep. It seems they have emerged from their denominational monastery and should be wearing a robe, swinging an incense censer, and glowing in the dark

with the glory of the Almighty. My response to them is a mix of admiration, intimidation, and mystery.

That is not me. You see, prayer is essentially depending on God—and I am a fiercely independent personality. My friends tell me I could be stranded on a deserted island for a week and never realize I am the only one there. Completely absorbed in collecting coconuts, building huts, fishing during the day, playing with fire at night—I would suddenly realize, days later, that no one else was around.

I say often that prayerlessness is our declaration of independence from God. I get that. It is very easy for me to forge ahead on Christian autopilot, relying on the reserves of previous learning and last week's worship, and not abiding in Christ in a constant, moment-by-moment reliance. Beyond this, it is easy to ignore the opportunities for community prayer, thinking I do not need it, or viewing it as a gathering of folks who have nothing else more productive to do with their time.

Longing for More

There must be a lot of people out there sharing my struggle. One of the greater surprises from my almost thirty years of pastoral ministry is how secretly discouraged most Christians are with prayer. We look around church and assume everyone else must be praying more and better than we are. With rare exception, they are not. We hear inspiring sermons from the pulpit on the magnificence of prayer and assume our pastors and church staff members must enjoy extraordinary experiences of prayer together. With rare exception, they do not. We see extensive lists of prayer needs pouring in from broken and desperate people, assuming that someone will engage the power of God in intercessory support for those needs. Too often, they will not.

According to George Barna, the majority of born-again Christians admit that their bi-weekly attendance at worship services is generally the only time they worship God. Eight out of ten believers do not feel they have entered into the presence of God or experienced a connection with Him during the worship service. Half of all believers say they do not

feel they have entered the presence of God or experienced a genuine connection with Him in the past year.¹ Whether we are in a church service or going about our weekly routines, it seems that our longings for transformation in Christ's presence remain unsatisfied.

In spite of our common environment of spiritual superficiality, religious routines, and massive distraction, I am convinced that true believers carry an

*Deep within we know
there is another
dimension of Christian
living beyond a cultural
faith that simply checks
in with God at church
or in times of crisis.*

unquenchable appetite for legitimate life change. We hunger for worship encounters with His holy presence that mark us and make us more like Jesus. Deep within we know there is another dimension of Christian living beyond a cultural faith that simply checks in with God at church or in times of crisis. We are tired of feeling bored, inept, confused, frustrated, or weary, in any sense, with the idea of prayer. We envision

the power of the living Christ and His gospel inflaming our hearts to serve as agents of real transformation in this society. We yearn for real change but know that somehow it must begin within us.

Testimony, Teaching, and Trophy Case

I admit much has been written on prayer—perhaps too much. On one hand, I feel a bit convicted by adding more information to the pile of prayer material that is already available, whether through great devotional classics, contemporary authors, or online resources. However, I am passionate about helping you discover what I have seen thousands experience as they have learned the power of an approach to prayer that is truly transformational.

As a result, this book is part testimony, part teaching, and part trophy case. You will experience the power of testimony because this subject, other than the truth of the gospel, has

transformed my life more than any other in my four decades of following Christ. You will enjoy helpful teaching as biblical truth unfolds in order to transform your own prayer life. You will find yourself exploring a trophy case of changed lives as I share the stories of those who have also experienced a fresh approach to prayer.

As I write, I can imagine a Spirit-instigated tidal wave of engaging and enduring prayer that changes our lives as “times of refreshing” come from the presence of the Lord. I hope you will imagine with me as we journey together into a renewed understanding of the power of Christ who can still transform our lives and our world through the reality of prayer.

PART ONE



THE VISION *for a*
TRANSFORMED LIFE



CHAPTER 1

Beyond a “Grocery List” of Needs

*Prayer [is] intimacy with God
that leads to the fulfillment of his purposes.*

ALVIN REID

*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.
For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

JESUS—MATTHEW 6:7

My dad taught me how to play golf. He was the classic old duffer. I am not sure he ever took lessons—but growing up, golf gave us quality time together, so we played quite often, just not well. Today, I am advancing my father’s legacy of mediocre golf. It is what I learned from his example.

My son Jordan is a worship pastor, and very good at what he does. His skills in worship did not occur because he was standing under a tree one day and a “worship apple” fell on his head, causing him to suddenly start singing Chris Tomlin songs. He learned to worship through observing others. He was exposed to some great worship pastors and profound worship experiences in his early years. He went on to earn his degree in worship ministries. Much of what he does today is a result of those personal and corporate models that he experienced growing up.

We all learn many of the essential skills of life through the

model of others we love and respect. Some skills allow us to excel and become contributors to others. However, we can also learn ineptitude through the repetition of mindless tradition or dysfunction.

This leads to a core inquiry. Who taught you to pray? Has anyone provided a positive and life-changing model of prayer for you? Do you feel that you even know how to pray effectively? What is the purpose behind your praying? Is it working for you? Are you sure it is a biblical approach? On the other hand, are you simply doing what you have seen others do, wondering if there might be more to the reality of prayer than you have experienced so far in your life?

Unlearning Prayer

Theologian D. A. Carson makes the observation: “Christians learn to pray by listening to those around them.”¹ I must admit that I had to unlearn prayer. While I was grateful for some of the faithful Christians I knew during my early years, I am not sure their model of prayer really hit the mark or made much of a difference in helping me learn a biblical, life-transforming way to pray.

The earliest memories of my struggle with prayer go back to my elementary school days. I had a serious “drug problem.” My parents drug me to the old-fashioned Wednesday night prayer meeting almost every week—especially when I had misbehaved. Perhaps they viewed it as a tool to reform me. To me, it was punishment.

Every Wednesday evening at seven, very sincere and devoted (mostly senior) saints would gather. The song leader would try to stir the group with some familiar hymns—four or five meaty verses each. Eventually, another man would share a devotion of sorts. Seldom did it relate to prayer, and I suspected he threw it together on the way to the prayer meeting in his pickup truck.

Then the leader would ask the dreaded question: “Does anyone have any prayer requests?” On cue, almost everyone pulled out their yellow pads and blue Bic pens to capture the finer details of each request. They were fully devoted to this

ritual with good hearts and a genuine willingness to intercede for one another.

Unfortunately, for me, it seemed like everyone in the country must have had an ingrown toenail, a slipped disc, a cousin with cancer, or a friend in financial crisis. The requests went on and on. I got more depressed and sleepy as this part of the meeting dragged out, often for forty-five minutes or more.

Occasionally, some juicy gossip made its way into the conversation. Someone would suggest an “unspoken prayer request” for Deacon Charlie. Upon further review, we discovered that Charlie had separated from his wife, Matilda. Soon the discussion uncovered the shocking news that Matilda was having an

affair with the piano player’s husband. The piano player was on the verge of suicide (another prayer request). No surprise, Charlie and Matilda were struggling—because we then learned that their oldest son was a drug addict, their daughter was pregnant out of wedlock, and a third cousin on Charlie’s side was a convicted car thief. Someone even suggested that their dog had rabies.

The exhaustive requests continued until someone happened to glance at their watch and exclaim, “Oh, we’re almost out of time! We’d better pray.” Hurriedly, we would slide our folding chairs into smaller circles, yellow pads in hand, and start praying for the myriad of documented needs.

Beyond “Bless” and “Be With”

I hate to say it, but it seemed to me that if you took the words *bless* and *be with* out of their prayer vocabulary, no one would have had anything to say. The prayers commenced in systematic fashion as we went down the list: “Bless this, bless that—be with him, be with her. . . .” And they seemed to pick up the pace as the final minutes of the allotted time ticked away.

As we finished this flurry of *blesses* and *be withs*, the group

It seemed like everyone in the country must have had an ingrown toenail, a slipped disc, a cousin with cancer, or a friend in financial crisis. The requests went on and on.

would break out in a rousing round of “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” Today I love this classic hymn, but back then it sounded like a sanctified version of “Ninety-Nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall”—and seemed to drag on just as long.

The leader would then announce, “Thanks for coming. We’ll see you next week!” In my immature, confused, and quite bored mind, I thought, *No thanks, I hope to stay home and watch Hogan’s Heroes.*

Sincere but Stuck

In spite of my skewed view of these old-fashioned prayer times, I know these dear saints were sincere and committed. At least they were at a prayer meeting. Most of the flock was at the softball league, the PTA meetings, out to eat at the local Mexican restaurant, or home watching *Hogan’s Heroes*.

This praying minority would seldom miss a week. As much as I did not appreciate their pattern of prayer, I loved their hearts and willingness to persevere. These prayer warriors really did make prayer a priority. They saw some wonderful answers to prayer and were careful to thank the Lord for it all. It did seem, however, that they were inadvertently stuck in a long, deep prayer rut.

Of course, our prayer requests are a vital part of prayer. The Bible is clear about the need to ask God for things and share our burdens with one another. The rut occurs when we allow requests to serve as the foundation of our praying: focusing on our problems rather than actually engaging with God in a multifaceted biblical prayer experience.

Clearly, the request-based approach just did not work for me. I have learned that it has not worked for many seeking Christians. This dissatisfaction led me to a growing and life-changing understanding of what I call worship-based prayer. It was not a new discovery but a simple revelation of what is clear in the Scriptures as a positive alternative to “grocery-list” praying. This approach has transformed my life and the lives of thousands I have encountered who have made this vital discovery.

What Is Worship-Based Prayer?

Worship is the response of all we are to the revelation of all God is. J. Oswald Sanders describes worship as “the loving ascription of praise to God for what He is, both in Himself and in His ways. It is the bowing of the innermost spirit in deep humility and reverence before Him.”²

Worship-based prayer seeks the face of God before the hand of God. God’s face is the essence of who He is. God’s hand is the blessing of what He does. God’s face represents His person and presence. God’s hand expresses His provision for needs in our lives. I have learned that if all we ever do is seek God’s hand, we may miss His face; but if we seek His face, He will be glad to open His hand and satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts.

If all we ever do is seek God’s hand, we may miss His face; but if we seek His face, He will be glad to open His hand and satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts.

This approach to prayer always begins with a focus on biblical, Spirit-empowered worship. It is distinctively different from the traditional approach that emphasizes prayer requests and long lists of needs as the foundation of prayer. Christ taught a worship-based approach to prayer. It is modeled by many biblical personalities. It is fueled by scriptural truth in every case. Worship-based prayer ignites a desire for spiritual intimacy and personal transformation. In the discovery of these realities, a Christian is then empowered and enlightened to pray about issues and needs in a whole new way.

What Worship-Based Prayer Is Not

As you prepare for this journey of discovery about the principles and practices of worship-based prayer, let me tell you what worship-based prayer is NOT.

- **It is not a new method of prayer.** While the discovery has been fresh for many in this generation, it is an approach to prayer that is as old as the Scriptures.

- **It is not worship-ONLY prayer.** Biblical, balanced prayer has many expressions. This is not about restricting your prayer life only to worship, but about rekindling your prayer life from a foundation of worship to more fully enjoy and experience confession, requests, intercession, and warfare prayers.
- **It does not eliminate requests.** Our Father commands and compels us to call on Him—and He promises to answer. Requests are a vital part of prayer. However, requests without the proper foundation and framework can miss the mark. Worship-based prayer helps us understand the context, conditions, and ultimate conclusion of all our prayer requests.
- **It is not complicated.** While the term may sound a bit different, the approach is not difficult. Ultimately, it is as pure as opening the Scriptures and your soul in Spirit-led communion with Christ and allowing Him to set the agenda for every prayer time you enjoy. By the time you finish this book, I hope to inspire and equip you to experience the power of seeking God’s face in ways that will truly transform your prayers and your life.

Stories of Transformation

As a pastor, I have seen firsthand the power of worship-based prayer to bring healing and restoration to hurting congregations. I have watched it reinvent a staid, traditional church into a church-planting, mission-oriented force. Most thrilling is the fact that thousands of believers have experienced a revived love for Christ and a renewed passion for Spirit-empowered ministry.

In October 1995, Lori gave her life to Jesus Christ. A few months later, she signed up to attend a prayer event sponsored by the women of our church. They were going away to pray for three days, with no agenda. This was a big stretch for a baby Christian.

At the time, her song repertoire consisted of the chorus of “Amazing Grace” and “Jesus Loves Me.” She writes, “I wouldn’t have been able to find a book of the Bible other than Genesis

if you’d paid me. And as you might imagine, I would never dream of lifting up my hands as I had seen once in one of those ‘weird churches.’ ”

However, God used that weekend to transform her life. She learned how to open the Bible and worship God as the majestic, sovereign, and mighty One who is worthy of praise. She saw Him take hurting people and give them peace, hope, and joy. After experiencing the deep, deep love of Christ that weekend, her life has never been the same.

In the ensuing years, Lori became the ministry director of Strategic Renewal, the nonprofit organization I founded, teaching the principles of worship-based prayer to hundreds of churches around the nation. Today she leads the prayer ministry at a growing congregation in Northern California. God is using her in profound ways. Blessings continue to pour into her life, family, and ministry all because one day, as a new believer, she stepped into a praying church and encountered a life-transforming moment in His presence.³

Randy, a doctor from California, was intrigued by the idea of learning to pray a new way. Like Lori, he also decided to attend a prayer retreat that would feature extended time with opened Bibles, spontaneous singing, and free-flowing worship. Prior to the retreat, he was asking, “What am I going to talk to God about for three days?” Afterward he noted, “I was asking the wrong question. What I should have said was, ‘What was God going to talk to me about for three days?’ ” Although an established Christian, he learned that prayer is a two-way conversation, and God wanted to start the conversation from His Word, initiating a deep and rich experience of worship as the foundation of prayer. Randy’s prayer life has never been the same.

Dixie was a long-time staff member at her Baptist church. Through teaching, modeling, and her willingness to learn, she moved from a request-based to a worship-based approach to prayer. She elaborates on the first time she made the discovery: “What I experienced was fresh and new to me. I became very aware of the Lord’s presence in the midst of the worship. He filled me so full of himself and loved on me. He caused me to hunger for more of Him. I knew I wanted to be clean in His presence

because He shone light on the places I needed to confess. I gladly gave myself up, and He just continued to pour into me joy, peace, contentment, and eagerness to worship Him more.”

Dixie testifies, “I have not been the same since. My personal and corporate times of worship are much richer and sweeter. I now know the real meaning of a romance with Jesus. I don’t just love Him; I am *in* love with Him. How amazing to know that my worship and praying are pleasing to Him. As I praise Him for who He is, all the concerns and questions of my life are laid to rest.”

Let the Adventure Begin

Peter Lord, one of my personal mentors and a pastor for over five decades, states, “Most Christians pray out of crisis or from a grocery list—period.” His point is that God has much

“Most Christians pray out of crisis or from a grocery list—period.”

more for us in our walk with Him when we learn to seek His face, not just His hand. This is the discovery so many are making today in their relationship with Christ.

Like Lori, Randy, and Dixie, perhaps you are eager to move beyond a grocery-list approach to prayer. Maybe you have felt the stirring of a deep dissatisfaction over your attempts to learn to pray. As you read these pages with an open heart, perhaps your soul resonates with the hope of new possibilities in your walk with God.

Join me as we hear the call of God to our hearts—“Seek My face” (Psalm 27:8)—and readily respond, “Your face, Lord, I will seek.” When this becomes the passion and pattern of our lives, transformation occurs.



CHAPTER 2

The Potential for Transformation

*Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.*

LEO TOLSTOY

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John,
and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men,
they marveled.
And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

ACTS 4:13

Years ago, I remember hearing the story of a father who was relaxing as he read the newspaper in the den after dinner. All the while, his young son persisted in interrupting him, wanting the father to play. After numerous attempts to occupy the boy with something else, the father experienced what he considered a stroke of genius. Discovering a page from the newspaper with a full-size map of the world, he tore it into small pieces. Handing them to his son, he made the challenge, “When you put this map of the world back together, we will go out and play.”

Assuming he had occupied his son for a long while, he resumed his reading. However, a few minutes later, the boy returned with the map taped together. Shocked that his son

knew this much about geography, he asked how the boy had recreated the map so quickly.

The little boy replied, “It was easy. There is a picture of a man on the back. When I got the man right, I got the world right.”

Too many times we become preoccupied with the tools, techniques, and even the finer points of theology when it comes to prayer. All of these are helpful, but prayer is not so much an issue of fine-tuning the regimens but of enjoying the relationship. It is not so much about fixing all the peripheral issues of our lives through prayer, but allowing God to change us through prayer. When we get the man right, by His transforming grace, it is amazing how so many other things seem to line up and make sense.

Imagine What God Could Do!

For several years, the church I pastored in Northern California hosted a conference called “Imagine What God Could Do!” Hundreds of pastors and parishioners came every year from dozens of states to learn more about the transforming power of prayer in individual lives, homes, and churches. The worship at these conferences was powerful. The teaching from our guest speakers and local workshop leaders proved to be very helpful. The prayer times, which were a core element of the conference, proved to be a distinctive feature and real highlight.

Yet the most frequent feedback we received from conference attendees had nothing to do with the details or activities of the conference. The most positive comments always related to the lives of the church members hosting the conference. In the course of interacting with the people of our church, others saw the changes, heard the stories, and left hungry for the same kind of transformation. I was the “paid salesman” for worship-based prayer. They were the “satisfied customers.” The living out of the message made more of a lasting impact than words from the pulpit. It is hard to ignore the reality of a transformed life.

This change was manifested in contagious spiritual passion for Christ, healed marriages, restored families, deliverance from

habitual sin, divine calling to greater ministry, deeper compassion for non-believers, and a fresh zeal for world missions. What created this spiritual movement? Not a program. Not a pastor. Not some new church-growth strategy. All of these blessings came because people learned to seek the face of God in prayer.

During my eleven years as the pastor, we enjoyed thirty-three three-day prayer summits, going away to a camp or retreat center with no agenda but to pray.

These gatherings involved a guided approach to spontaneous Scripture reading, singing, and responsive prayer in a variety of large-group, small-group, and individual settings.

These summits spawned dozens of weekly small-group prayer gatherings, a World Prayer Center, and a weekly church-wide prayer experience called Fresh Encounter that attracted hundreds. Personal prayer lives were ignited and changed as well. Ultimately things changed because people changed.

*Ultimately things
changed because
people changed.*

The Fruit of Transforming Prayer

In recent years, I have enjoyed the privilege of friendship and shared ministry with Jim Cymbala, pastor of The Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn, New York. We are working together to encourage pastors and help them embrace a greater sense of their calling to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).¹

I have heard Pastor Cymbala say many times that we will not one day stand before Christ to announce the *size* of our ministry, but to give an account of the *substance* of our ministry. Christ's evaluation, both now and in eternity, is based upon the fruit evidenced in the lives of the people to whom we minister.

As I have watched the power of worship-based prayer transform hundreds of lives, I have seen some very specific fruit. I long for more of this fruit in my life and the lives of everyone I influence. I grieve when I fall short of this fruit. I pray for a greater vision and passion for fruit in my life and the lives of others.

What does this fruit look like? Here is a summary of what I have seen occur as people learn to seek God's face:

God is glorified!—One of the great results of transforming prayer is that people recognize God at work because they have joined Him in that work through their prayers. Their hearts are sensitized to His presence, His power, and His purposes. Their lips are free to recognize Him as the source of all good things. Their hearts are eager to cry out, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory!” (Psalm 115:1).

For people who fail to pray, everything is a coincidence that has little recognition of God at work. For those who pray, everything is a co-incident, as they have joined the Lord in His work through the privilege of prayer. The principle is simple. When we pray, God gets the thanks and the credit for what happens.

We are sanctified!—*Sanctified*. Did you notice that word in the morning paper today? Of course not. It is not a word in common use, but it packs a powerful meaning. It means to be “set apart” to God. It means God is working in me, around me, and through me to make me holy, more like Jesus.

*Praying Christians,
while not perfect, are
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the point that they
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serve like Jesus.*

The great fruit of transforming prayer is that praying Christians, while not perfect, are growing every day to the point that they act, think, speak, and serve like Jesus.

The church is edified!—When I first came to the church in Northern California, I followed a godly predecessor who served for forty years as their senior pastor.

This left a great heritage, for which I was very grateful. It also left a very traditional and older church. These wonderful saints cherished the days of the past and felt trepidation as they faced the inevitability of change in the future.

Five years later, at one of our conferences, a visiting pastor from New York commented, “These are the youngest old people I have ever seen.” This was evidence that when transformation

occurs within hearts, ignited by the truth and presence of Christ, everything else begins to change for the sake of the health of the church and the fulfillment of the mission.

Jude 20 says, “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. . . .” The Amplified version elaborates, “But you, beloved, build yourselves up [founded] on your most holy faith [make progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], praying in the Holy Spirit.” To say that the church is “edified” means that the lives, marriages, families, and ministries of the church are built up, made strong and healthy—through biblical prayer, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The world is mystified!—Over the years, we have heard significant debate about the best way to reach the unchurched and what influences the hearts of unbelievers who attend our church services. First Corinthians 14:25 is the only verse in the New Testament that speaks specifically to the experience of an unbeliever coming into a church service. In essence, when the Spirit is working among God’s people and the truth is honored in their midst, it says that the unbeliever sees this in the lives of believers and “the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” I believe this is a clear description of the glory (manifest presence) of Christ among His people.

The early disciples, who “filled Jerusalem” with their doctrine and “turned the world upside down” (Acts 5:28; 17:6), truly mystified the religious people of the day. When the Jewish leaders interrogated Peter and John, it was said, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

The world is not transformed by relevant Christians, strategic Christians, visionary Christians, leadership-savvy Christians, wealthy Christians, attractive Christians, educated Christians, active Christians, or articulate Christians. These are all interesting qualities, and might be helpful on occasion—especially in building big religious organizations and selling books.

Ultimately, the world is transformed by sanctified Christians

through whom the life of Jesus becomes a mystifying manifestation. As Paul said, “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:6–7). People changed by Jesus cannot help but change the world.

The enemy is notified!—This is not a book on spiritual warfare, but at this point I want to remind you that Satan is not omniscient. He is supernatural and powerful, and supported by myriads of demonic forces, but he cannot read our thoughts. The best he can do is observe our behavior, eavesdrop on our conversations, and implement a strategy to send his fiery darts against our minds—based on his understanding of our vulnerabilities and habits.

When we are in the habit of experiencing transformation as we seek God’s face, the enemy’s efforts to defeat, discourage, distract, or destroy us are met with the reality of our Christ-ward focus and the victory that comes from intimacy with Jesus. To Satan’s dismay, he sees us praying, trusting God, and becoming more like our Lord as we do so. He is notified that we are engaged in a pursuit of the promises of transformation and impact for the Savior.

Make Us Right!

So many times, we are like the little boy with cut-up newspaper pieces strewn around him. The nature of life, the manipulations of other people, and the spiritual attacks on our souls leave us feeling like we are holding a jumbled pile of nonsense that has no rhyme or reason to it. But when our Savior “puts the man together” to make us right first, then in so many ways the world comes together.

God is glorified. We are sanctified. The church is edified. The world is mystified. The enemy is notified.

I Stopped Praying for Four Years: A Trophy of Transformation

by BILL L.—MISSIONARY, SPAIN

Part of me died on December 10, 2001, when my lifelong friend passed away. In my grief, I viewed God as good but distant. I had no intimacy with Him and did not feel His love; therefore, I had little love for anyone else. I concluded that God was going to do whatever He wanted to do with no regard for my prayers. Since there was absolutely zero reason to pray, I stopped praying for four years.

At the core of my prayerlessness was a mix of pride and lies. Pride caused me to refuse to ask God for His help until I had exhausted all of my own capacities. I studied, ministered, and pursued life-change by the sweat of my brow. The lies I believed about God were based on my personal experience rather than believing the truth about God as revealed in Scripture. I saw Him as vindictive, not as a loving Father. But God used worship-based prayer as a catalyst to bring me back to himself.

Worship-based prayer did more than teach me to pray; it revealed who God is. As I spent time seeing God and learning what it meant to seek His face, I experienced His powerful presence and was transformed. While in the presence of God, the Holy Spirit reveals to a heart in five seconds that which can never be accomplished through years of human effort. Strangely, I began to *enjoy* prayer. As God changed my view of prayer, He also changed my view of himself. The more I learned about God's true character, the more I wanted to pray. I longed to trust in God, have greater faith, and to know Him better. Prayer became a cycle of growth in the pursuit of God.

Now when I pray, I intercede on the basis of God's character; and when I doubt, I cling to one of His attributes. By the time I get around to talking to God about my situation, He has already given me a peace that transcends all understanding. Prayer malfunctions when the worship aspects are removed, but worship-based prayer is effective because it takes our eyes off of ourselves or our situations and focuses them where they should be—on the Most High God.



CHAPTER 3

What Is Blocking the Breakthrough?

*All true prayer
Exists for the glory of God
And is
Based in the worship of God
Focused on the face of God
Shaped by the Word of God
Inspired by the Spirit of God
Offered through the Son of God
Aimed for the Will of God
Experienced by true children of God*

DANIEL HENDERSON

*Whom have I in heaven but You?
And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.
My flesh and my heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

PSALM 73:25-26

Connie knew many of the great truths about prayer from childhood. Growing up in a pastor's home, she attended virtually every church service and countless prayer meetings. She saw evidence of the blessings of prayer in the lives of some of the people in the church, but personally never really felt anything transformational from her experiences with prayer.

“Prayer was simply asking, pleading, seeking action from God on one’s own behalf or on the behalf of others,” Connie says. “I participated dutifully but did not recognize the hole in my heart as the lack of a truly personal, intimate relationship with God. He was there, but distant, and I did not know life could be any different. I did not know God’s purpose for prayer.”

She elaborates, “I had become a robot-like Christian—doing what was expected, regularly attending church, taking notes on the sermon, serving where asked, saying the right things, quoting someone else’s experiences, attending fill-in-the-blank Bible studies, and witnessing from someone else’s prepared material. In short, I looked okay—but inside I felt a vast empty, consuming unrest. No matter what I did, nothing was enough or took away the fear of being unloved or rejected.”

Later in this chapter, Connie will describe how her life was transformed. But why is her experience common for so many who attend church and seek to develop an authentic walk with God? What barriers exist that keep us from the transformational power of prayer the Lord intended for us?

Let’s be honest. Most of us struggle to feel satisfied in our prayer lives. The great promises of prayer are true, but many don’t experience them. Even pastors are trying to find their way when it comes to prayer. One study found that only 16 percent of Protestant ministers across the country are very satisfied with their personal prayer life. Another 47 percent are somewhat satisfied; 30 percent are somewhat dissatisfied; and 7 percent are very dissatisfied with their prayer lives.¹

Barriers to Blessing

If prayer is such a vital tool for transformation, why is it so difficult for so many people? Why does this divinely intended blessing remain a burden for many believers? As J. Oswald Sanders noted, “We sometimes pay lip service to the delight and power of prayer. We call it indispensable, we know the Scriptures call for it. Yet we often fail to pray.”²

Spiritual Warfare

Clearly, prayer is an area where believers experience spiritual warfare. Our spiritual enemy is fully aware of the power and promises available to us in prayer. He knows that every major spiritual revival began with prayer. He knows we are all called to be “praying menaces” to his cause. Therefore, he fights us from every angle to keep us from praying effectively. The devil launches his weapons of mass distraction to keep us too preoccupied with other things to take time to really connect with God. He bombards us with his fiery darts of doubt to keep us from praying in faith to the One who is “a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Our enemy seeks to discourage us at every turn because he is threatened by believers and congregations that take prayer seriously and pursue Christ passionately.

Fear of Intimacy

Some falter in prayer because of a fear of intimacy. I often say that we live in a culture of spiritual AIDS (Acute Intimacy Deficiency Syndrome). Some of us still carry the baggage from parents or other authority figures in our childhood who were distant, negligent, or even abusive. These experiences can leave us with distaste for emotional vulnerability and transparency. We protect ourselves from getting too close to anyone, even God.

We live in a culture of spiritual AIDS (Acute Intimacy Deficiency Syndrome).

Others simply embrace erroneous views of God’s character that keep them at a distance from their self-styled deity who is mysteriously remote, unpredictably angry, and impossible to please. We read the biblical texts that tell us that “it is good for me to draw near to God” (Psalm 73:28) and that we should “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:22). We read the promise that if we draw near to God He will draw near to us (James 4:8). Yet the reality of this seems threatening and unachievable.

Misguided Focus

Many of us maintain a misguided focus in our prayers and miss the life-giving reality God intended. Instead of our first resolve, we view prayer as our last resort. We see prayer as our spiritual e-mail sent to God, with instructions as to how He should manage the affairs of our life each day. We attempt to use prayer to get our will done in heaven rather than His will done on earth. When one tries to use a hammer to baste a turkey or a light bulb to brush our hair, the result is frustration and failure. It is imperative that we have a clear understanding of the foundation and focus of prayer as found in the “owners’ manual”: Scripture.

Instead of our first resolve, we view prayer as our last resort.

When this focus becomes clear and correct, God works powerfully for new believers, established Christians, and even respected spiritual leaders. R. A. Torrey, who was God’s instrument to bring revival to many parts of the world in the early 1900s, testified that an utter transformation came into his experience when he learned not only to pray and return thanks, but to worship—asking nothing of God, seeking nothing from Him, occupied with himself, and satisfied with himself.³ At any point in our lives, the Lord can refocus our prayers with powerful results.

Counterproductive Tradition

Countless believers have learned to pray, from a counterproductive tradition, forms of prayer passed down through the generations without much critical evaluation and biblical investigation. Some traditions in prayer rely mainly on “prayer lists” and others on rote expressions, rather than upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. The primary content of many prayer gatherings is juicy information about other people rather than the foundation of God’s Word. We tend more toward discussions about the problems of people than the real experiences of the presence of the Problem Solver. Most believers know that something is amiss in these gatherings, even if they cannot put their finger on

it. As a result, individuals and congregations flounder in their commitment and enjoyment of prayer. My friend David Butts, chairperson of America's National Prayer Committee, says, "The reason most people do not attend prayer meetings at their church is that they have been to prayer meetings at their church."

Boredom

All of these factors can fuel a deep-seated feeling of boredom. As a Christ-follower for over forty years, I am resolute to banish boredom from my prayer life. As a pastor for almost thirty years, having led multiple weekly prayer times, I have declared war on sleepy prayer meetings. I wrote an entire book on the need for creativity in prayer and the reality that God is not the author of boredom, especially when we are conversing with Him.⁴ Yet many of us have all but given up our high expectations about prayer. For many, prayer has become a real yawner—and that has to change before transformation can occur.

Lack of Positive Models

One colossal reason we have not experienced transforming prayer is the lack of positive models. I have learned that people do not arrive at a new, powerful, and life-changing place in their prayer life through information. It happens more by "infection." It is not accomplished through explanation, but by experience.

D. A. Carson confirms this truth when he writes, "Many facets of Christian discipleship, not the least prayer, are more effectively passed on by modeling than by formal teaching. Good praying is more easily caught than taught. . . . We should choose models from whom we can learn."⁵ Choosing models is one thing. Finding a biblical one is another. It seems the venues and opportunities for the kind of praying that leaves us forever changed are few and far between. Yet if we have a hunger to learn, ask God to open the doors, and seek a mentoring opportunity in prayer, I believe God will show us how we can connect with a context for deeper motivation and growth. In my own journey, I've had to be very proactive and even creative to find models and mentors.

Contexts for Breakthrough

For the past decade, I have taken hundreds of fellow leaders, church members, and students to the Tuesday night prayer meetings at The Brooklyn Tabernacle. It is not the only model, but probably the most compelling example of a church in the United States where believers really know how to pray. (Alternatively, there are countless models in other countries like South Korea and in areas of the world where Christians face persecution, like China.) Under the leadership of Pastor Jim Cymbala, four thousand gather every Tuesday night, simply to seek the Lord and enjoy the abundance of His presence. Prayer is the engine

that drives all the ministries of this high-impact church.

*“The heart cannot
taste what the eyes
have not seen.”*

I heard a Brazilian proverb years ago: “The heart cannot taste what the eyes have not seen.” This experience of praying with a pastor, church, and congregation that authentically value the priority and

power of prayer has accomplished much to help me and many other believers understand a truly biblical paradigm.

Today, my passion is to serve as a “spiritual pyromaniac,” traveling to churches and conferences, demonstrating the power of seeking God’s face, and leading prayer experiences that establish a fresh, life-transforming approach to prayer. This is my small way of serving others with some modeling and mentoring experiences. It is exhilarating beyond words, week after week, to see the lights come on for people who discover that the promises and power of prayer can be real—and that prayer can change things, starting with our own hearts.

Changed Forever

In spite of the frustrations and fears she shared earlier in this chapter, Connie took a radical step in the early nineties and attended a three-day event hosted by her local church at a nearby Christian campground. There would be no agenda, no lists, no speakers, and no special music. This experience of Scripture-fed,

Spirit-led, worship-based prayer was scary at first but has been the secret to personal transformation for her ever since.

In her own words, she testifies of this first encounter: “I learned that true prayer and worship involves the whole being—spirit, soul, and body. My spirit was soaring and experiencing God’s presence. My soul was receiving the love of God in new ways; peace and well-being were welling up in me as a flood. My eyes were weeping, my hands were lifted. I sang with abandon as I knelt before God—in public. My heart felt it would burst with the love of God, both received and given. This was worship-based prayer. All this was new to me, and it was wonderful!”

In describing her Christian life today, she says, “My ‘walk’ was changed forever. Actually, my whole being and attitude was changed. I did not want to go back to a casual relationship with God. I had discovered that prayer truly has only two purposes. First, it is the means to developing a true love relationship with God by communication with Him, not to get His ‘stuff’ but to get to know Him more deeply. Prayer is intended to develop a *two-way* love relationship. Second, it is to receive His assignments for me, both daily and long term—by listening to Him—then acting, not only in how I live but also in how I pray for myself and others.”

She concludes, “God loves me and will take care of all my needs but only *I* can develop my love for Him. That will be done only as I am determined to know who He is, His character, His desires, and to concentrate on Him, not on what I want or think I need. As I commune with Him based and grounded in worship, He reveals himself to me in new and wonderful ways.”

God has used Connie to organize a variety of prayer events and gatherings since those early days of personal transformation. Her prayer conferences have attracted hundreds. It all began when she learned to seek His face, not just His hand.

Perhaps like Connie, you are longing for lasting alterations in your spiritual journey and life direction as you learn to seek the face of God. The promises are real. The potential is unfathomable. The principles are proven. Christ is extending the invitation to your heart. Right here. Right now.

A Changed Life and Vocation: A Trophy of Transformation

Jeff was raised in the church—and confesses that he was at the building every time the doors were opened, including the midweek prayer times. By his early thirties, Jeff became a rising star as a financial planner. Like many believers, Jeff loved Bible study and conservative values but felt a void in his intimacy with Christ.

In 2002, Jeff and his wife, Holly, visited a weekly worship-based prayer service at a church in their area. In describing this encounter, he writes, “We were blown away that prayer times could be that exciting and remarkable. It was life-giving and we could not wait to come back the following week. It changed my perspective about God and how to pray to Him.” He began to sense an awakening in his heart, not just to know about the Lord at an intellectual level, but to know the Lord in a transforming intimacy.

But more changes were to come. Jeff testifies, “It turned my family inside out as we began to pray in a new way. In fact, worship-based prayer quickly turned the direction of my life, with a desire to change vocations. I had experienced earthly success, but I wanted to experience significance. Eventually, that led to moving across the country and serving as an executive pastor. In all of these decisions, the driving force is that I want to have others encounter Jesus in a different way and one that will allow people to see Him for who He really is—His face and not just His hand. I have seen pastors, missionaries, marriages, and many individual lives turned around by the reality of seeking Christ in prayer.”



CHAPTER 4

Face Time!

God thirsts to be thirsted after.

ST. AUGUSTINE

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.*

NUMBERS 6:24–26

I love “face time”—with certain people. When I get face time with my wife, children, family members, and good friends, it is always meaningful and enriching.

Of course, I also dread face time with certain people. This category would include self-important and insecure people who always talk about themselves. I avoid face time with chronically negative people. I prefer not to have face time with police officers who have pulled me over for speeding. I don’t look forward to face time with the doctor someday when he has to give me some bad news about my body or the health of a loved one.

Face time can be good or bad, depending on whom we are facing and the nature of the encounter. People far from God avoid face time with the Almighty—at least on this earth. Someday,

everyone—the righteous and the unrighteous—will have some personal face time with the risen and reigning Christ.

The idea of God's face is one of the most powerful, life-changing themes in the Bible.

The idea of God's face is one of the most powerful, life-changing themes in the Bible. Still, many live their entire lives with minimal emphasis on face time with God. Perhaps they don't understand the incredible opportunity because they've never experienced it. Maybe they don't feel the need.

Maybe prayer time is just too rushed. But face time with God is the refreshment the human soul so desperately needs. And like temperature, pulse, and blood pressure tests we encounter when we visit the doctor, face time tells us how we are really doing. If we get nothing else from this book, we must get this.

What's in a Face?

What is meant by *face*? It is the representation of the real essence and character of a person. It is the unique identifying characteristic of an individual. It is also the key to really getting to know someone. Proverbs 15:13 says, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful" (NIV). Just as the eyes are the windows to the soul, so a face is the canvas of the heart and personality. Oscar Wilde said, "A man's face is his autobiography."

In the Scriptures, we are encouraged to seek God's face. Certainly the Bible says that God is Spirit (John 4:24). He is "eternal, immortal, invisible" (1 Timothy 1:17). He dwells in "unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:16). Yet the Bible calls us to an intimate encounter and speaks of those who have communed with Almighty God face-to-face.

God's face refers to His holy, intimate presence manifested to humans on earth. In the ultimate sense, we cannot experience His full, unrestrained presence and live to tell about it. Yet He reveals himself to us to the degree that we have the capacity—because He wants us to know and experience Him, and He created us for this very purpose.

If you have ever been away from someone you love for an extended period, you know the exhilaration of seeing that person again. While you may notice his clothes or hair or cologne—your real joy is to look again into his eyes and gaze upon his face. This image of a joyful eye-to-eye reunion reminds us again of the spiritual longings of our heart toward God.

As early as Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, it says that because of their sin they “hid themselves from the presence [literally, *face*] of the Lord God” (Genesis 3:8). They had previously communed with His holy presence, and their consciences alerted them immediately that their behavior had violated the intimacy God created them to enjoy.

Jacob encountered the presence of God as he wrestled with the Lord all night long. By morning his name (core identity) was changed to *Israel* and he limped from that moment on. He said of that experience, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30). As we will see, the Bible speaks much of God’s face and the reality of this spiritual experience in our lives.

The New Testament explains that God’s presence and glory have now been revealed fully in the face, or the person, of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), the full revelation of God’s person and heart. Christ is the fullness of God, revealed to humanity to bring reconciliation and peace, that we might know God.

Someday, all the perplexities and pain we encounter while living in this fallen world will be over. The Bible says, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12). On this side of eternity, God has created us to know Him intimately, even though there are limitations. Someday, all the hindrances and earthly barriers will be gone and we will realize our ultimate face-to-face encounter—eternity in His holy presence.

An Intimate Encounter

God’s face really speaks of His intimate, manifest presence. I like to speak of the teaching about God’s presence as His *general*

presence, His *indwelling* presence, and His *intimate* presence. Psalm 139 speaks of His general, invisible presence in this world. While unseen, He is present everywhere.

In the Old Testament, certain prophets, priests, and kings would know His indwelling presence, empowering them to serve, lead, speak, and pen Scripture. That presence could and would be lost due to sin. After Pentecost (Acts 2), all true believers enjoyed the indwelling presence of God because of the power of the finished work of Christ in redeeming and sanctifying human

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hearts. We are now sealed by the Holy Spirit with that presence until the day of our final redemption from this world (Ephesians 4:30).

Yet God calls us to an intimate encounter as we pursue Him with all our hearts. In my understanding, to seek His face today means to set our hearts to seek Him in worship with biblical understanding, submitting completely to the control of His Spirit with a longing to know and enjoy Him more. Again, it is not about rehearsing a quick list of needs

with God, but seeking Him because of who He is, with a passion for a deeper intimacy and experience of His presence.

Paul spoke of his desire not just to “be a Christian,” but also to know Him more intimately (Philippians 3:10). He prayed for this kind of intimacy for the Ephesian believers, asking that they would have a “spirit of wisdom and revelation” in order to know Christ more and to experience the “exceeding greatness of His power” (Ephesians 1:17–20). He prayed similarly for the followers in Colossae, that they would be ever “increasing in the knowledge of God” and grow in their experience of His power (Colossians 1:10–11). This would be the fruit of a commitment to seek God’s face.

Other New Testament texts tell us to worship Him in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24), “abide” in intimate connection with Christ (John 15:4), and to “grow in the grace and knowledge

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). When we seek His face, we do all of these things. In fact, none of these is ultimately accomplished if we fail to seek His face.

The Original Facebook

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, a former Harvard student, in 2004. Initially, the membership was restricted to students at Ivy League universities but soon spread to other colleges and high schools. In 2006, it became available to anyone thirteen or older. As I write, the company says over five hundred million people are active Facebook users.

To me it is interesting that Facebook is not called Handbook, Backbook, or Footbook. The popularity of this site reminds me of our great desire to connect with a face that represents the life of a good friend, a work associate, or an acquaintance from days gone by. In fact, I really dislike it when Facebook members put some generic image or obscure picture on their profile page. I want to see a face, leading to an informed and authentic connection.

The original “Facebook” is the Bible. We see various pictures in many places of people desiring intimate connection with God’s face. We also see their angst when something prevents them from experiencing the intimacy and benefits of His face.

The Old Testament followers spoke of God “hiding His face” or even setting His face against people. This reflected those times when His intimate presence and favor was hindered because of sin (Deuteronomy 32:20; Job 34:29; Psalm 13:1; 30:7; 143:7; Isaiah 54:8; Jeremiah 33:5; Ezekiel 39:23–24; Micah 3:4).

The writers of the Psalms prayed earnestly during those times when God’s face was hidden. These were seasons of great distress. They felt fear of being overtaken by their enemies (Psalm 13:1–2), emotionally troubled, and even close to death (104:29; 143:7). As a result, the writers cried out for a restoration of intimacy and favor.

Psalm 80 reflects a time of God’s chastisement of His people. Three times we find the prayer: “Restore us, O (Lord) God (of

hosts); cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!” (vv. 3, 7, 19). God’s face was the lifeline to these followers. Without that intimacy and blessing, they were doomed.

First Peter 3:12 says, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face

Intimacy with God means life and blessing. For His face to be withdrawn or set against someone (Psalm 34:16) is misery of the worst kind.

of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Clearly we understand that intimacy with God means life and blessing. For His face to be withdrawn or set against someone (Psalm 34:16) is misery of the worst kind.

In 1978, pediatric researchers coined a term known as the still-face effect. Through extensive experiments, experts have discovered that the normal feedback infants receive

from their mothers in face-to-face interaction is distorted by having the mothers face their infants but remain facially unresponsive. The negative impact of an unresponsive face was significant. The infants studied reacted with intense wariness and eventual withdrawal, demonstrating the innate need of a child for an interactive encounter with the enlivened face of a caregiving parent.¹

Like an infant needing a mother’s responsive attention and love, we are desperate for a life-giving encounter with the face of our Creator and heavenly Father.

God’s Invitation

The Scriptures are clear that God desires that His people know and enjoy Him. He is ready and responsive to restore His people, if they will again seek His face. We know the familiar call of 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” In a similar way, God made the offer through the prophet Hosea: “I will return again

to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me” (Hosea 5:15).

God wants His children to know the blessing of seeking His face along with the intimacy and favor that comes with it: “Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore!” (1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 105:4). The blessings of seeking His face are reflected in Psalm 4:6–8: “Many people say, ‘Who will show us better times?’ Let your face smile on us, Lord. You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine. In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe” (NLT).

Psalm 89:15–16 also reflects these blessings: “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long.”

Psalm 67 is a great missionary psalm reflecting on the many ways God blessed Israel so that they could be a blessing to the nations. At the source of all these blessings is this vital recognition: “God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us” (v. 1).

We need His face to shine upon, bless, and envelop us—because all that we are and all that we do in obedience to His commands and commission is the overflow of intimacy and the fruit of His blessing.

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Face to Face With the Transformer

Sadly, too many times we engage in prayer with little thought for the reality that we are in the presence of the Almighty and that we are invited, even commanded, to seek His face. We can be encouraged by the examples in the Scriptures of those who clearly comprehended the meaning of being

in His presence and carried the marks of a changed life from that moment on. (See appendix 2.)

Even the business world knows that nothing can replace the benefit of face-to-face interaction. As I write, we are in the midst of a devastating global recession. According to *Forbes* magazine, businesses have drastically reduced travel budgets and resorted to a greater use of technology in utilizing “virtual” meetings in order to save money. While 59 percent of executives said their use of technology-driven meetings had increased during the recession, eight out of ten expressed an overwhelming preference for face-to-face meetings with business associates. Executives report that face-to-face encounters are essential for “building deeper, more profitable bonds with clients and business partners and maintaining productive relationships with co-workers.”² Just as a shortage of funds and reliance on virtual tools has diluted relationships in business, our shortage of time and distraction with technology has undermined our experience of His face. We miss the joy of the promised biblical transformation and countless blessings.

The Divine Invitation

There are countless stories, in Scripture and in history, of people who were blessed and changed by a face-to-face encounter with God. But this book is not about them. It is about us.

Here is the good news: The invitation to seek His face is offered to you, right now. I love the divine initiative of Psalm 27:8: “When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, Lord, I will seek.’ ” He is saying to us, “Seek My face.” Now we must hear the call—and answer.

One of the greatest expressions of God’s heart is found in the well-known Aaronic blessing. It was the benediction pronounced by the priest after every morning and evening sacrifice with uplifted hands. It was also the blessing regularly pronounced at the close of all services in the synagogues. The people always responded to it with a united “Amen.”

Face Time!

Here is what God wanted everyone to understand, from His heart to ours, every time His people worshiped:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make *His face* shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up *His countenance* upon you,
And give you peace.

NUMBERS 6:24–26

Face time with the Almighty was the key to blessing, protection, grace, and peace. It is still true today. Let us join our voices and say, “Amen!”



CHAPTER 5

Glowin' Moses and a Transformed You

*Everything in our life finds proper value
once we have properly valued Him.
We take time for what we value.
And we behold what we love.
It is not the duty of beholding that changes us, though,
but rather the beauty of the one we behold.*

KEN GIRE

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,
so that you may know him better.*

THE APOSTLE PAUL—EPHESIANS 1:17 (NIV)

When I was a boy, my parents and I would visit my older brother and his new wife in Missouri, where they attended Bible college. My fondest memory of those trips can be summarized in one word: fireflies. At dusk, no one needed to ask where I was. Chasing those flashing fluorescent-green insects captivated my imagination. Growing up in New Mexico, I had never seen those curious little neons of the night. We had loads of lizards, road-runners, and tarantulas—but nothing that actually glowed.

In the ensuing years, I spent most of my adult life on the West Coast, where I never saw any fireflies. When we moved

to the Twin Cities, my fascination was sparked once again. Even in my late forties you could find me in the evening hours of a muggy Minnesota June, risking my life among the myriad of mosquitoes, just to nab an occasional firefly. Now, living in Virginia, I still look forward to the invasion of these blazing bugs that consistently attract me to the backyard for a childhood re-adventure.

Scientists say that the luminosity of these little guys occurs when the enzyme luciferase acts on luciferin in the presence of magnesium ion, ATP (adenosine triphosphate), and oxygen to produce light.¹ Now, isn't that inspiring? Maybe not. However, there is one story of a luminous creature that stands above them all. I call it *The Chronicle of Glowin' Moses*. The explanation of his brightness is not technical but miraculous and captivating.

Reflecting a Holy Presence

Let us go back about thirty-five hundred years to a scene described in Exodus 34:29–35. Moses had just spent his second forty days on the holy mountain, meeting with God, receiving the Law from the Almighty. God left no doubt that He was speaking to Moses about His plans for His people and their worship. Think of the combination of a huge earthquake, a smoking volcano, and the roar of thunder—all wrapped up in one sensory experience. It was an unnerving display of God's holiness, truth, and power.

Without food and water for forty days (don't try this at home!), Moses met with God in intimate interchange and descended the mountain once again. With a second copy of the Decalogue (commonly known as the Ten Commandments) in hand, Moses arrived in camp—GLOWING! God's presence was so real that it left its mark on Moses' face. The brightness was so overwhelming that it frightened the people. Moses had to put a veil over his face. Every time he went back to meet with God, experiencing His intimate presence and receiving His truth for the people, Moses would remove the veil in unhindered divine fellowship. Moses knew the glory of God's presence,

open-faced—only to return to speak to the people with the protection of the veil.

Matt Redman writes, “That passage gives us insight into two things: the deep revelation of God, and the change it brings to those who experience it. The greater the revelation, the greater the transformation. Unveiled in his worship and given incredible access to the presence of God, Moses also became a changed worshipper who glowed with the glory of God.”²

Our Taste of the Glory

Call my family twisted, but one of our favorite movies is *Nacho Libre*. If you hang out with us for long you will find us quoting *Nacho Libre* lines with a cheesy Spanish accent. It is a clean comedy about a Catholic friar who is responsible for the food in a Mexican orphanage. Since childhood, Nacho has dreamed of being a famous wrestler, but it is against his religion to pursue fame and fortune through vanity and violence. He converges his dream for fame in the ring with his desire to provide better food for the children through the money from his winnings.

“The greater the revelation, the greater the transformation.”

To enter the fights, he needs a tag-team partner. In a scene early in the movie, he accosts a skinny street guy named Stephen, who had previously stolen the chips Nacho had collected for the orphans. In seeking to persuade Stephen to be his partner, Nacho urges, “Aren’t you tired of getting dirt kicked in your face? Don’t you want a taste of the glory? See what it tastes like?”

Stephen concedes, and the rest of the movie is a hilarious journey of two ragtag wrestlers seeking the glory and the riches of the wrestling ring. All the while, Nacho carefully conceals his exploits from the nuns, priests, and children at the orphanage using his cheap but colorful *Nacho Libre* costume. The movie ends, predictably, with Nacho winning the champion fight, collecting the big bucks, providing abundantly for the orphans, and capturing the heart of the beautiful nun.

Sometimes I get tired of the devil kicking dirt in my face when it comes to my Christian life and my endeavors in prayer. I want a taste of the glory—but not my glory. I want to taste something of what Glowin’ Moses experienced.

With that inspiration in mind, stay with me because this story of Moses’ glow and glory culminates in your prayer life. Let’s fast-forward fifteen hundred years, from Moses to approximately AD 55. Here we find Paul comparing the scenario of Moses’ Old Testament glory-glow with our own New Testament experience of the presence of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6). Paul says that Moses’ radiance was a temporary, fading exhibit of the lesser and passing power of the Law, written on stone, and ultimately bringing condemnation because of our sin. Conversely, His Spirit has called us into a new agreement with God, with truth written on our hearts, not on slabs of rock. Because of Christ, we are made

The glory is within us now. It is not found in a law or temple, but in the face of Jesus who invites us into an intimate encounter with himself.

righteous and now experience a glory far beyond the slow-fading glow of Moses. The glory is within us now. It is not found in a law or temple, but in the face of Jesus who invites us into an intimate encounter with himself.

At the core of this astounding presentation, Paul makes this potent declaration, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart” (2 Corinthians 3:17–4:1). I urge you to read that passage again, because I believe it is the core of effective, enduring Christian ministry and the source of daily transformation.³

Any Moment, Any Place

These days I travel often, speaking at churches and conferences, leading prayer-energized renewal events. On the road

I am always looking to get online to accomplish my work and stay in touch with family and friends. I dislike paying for Internet access. Of course, the best connection is the free, security-enabled access—assuming someone has given me the password.

As Christians, we have free, security-enabled access to the transforming presence of God. Of course, it was costly beyond measure for Christ. Now, by His sacrifice, we enjoy free access, and the security-enabled password is *Jesus is Lord*. Again, as Paul writes, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

This liberty is the free, intimate, 24/7 access we have to the very Holy of Holies through our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not need a smoking mountain, a set of laws, or Moses' veil. We have all we need in the truth of Christ's redemption, the presence of His Spirit, and the invitation to seek Him at any moment and in any place.

All Inclusive!

Early in our marriage, Rosemary and I bought a time-share vacation week. Although we immediately had buyer's remorse after caving in to the high-pressured sales presentation, we have actually enjoyed it over the years, trading our week for many unique and relaxing venues. We have also learned that before you trade, you need to read the fine print about a factor known as “all-inclusive.” This means that for a set fee for the week, you can eat, drink, and be merry to your heart's content. For those who spend a lot of money on alcohol, I suppose it is a good deal. For us, it is a waste of money.

When it comes to our access to the throne of Christ's grace, there is a very positive and powerful “all-inclusive” offer.

When it comes to our access to the throne of Christ's grace, there is a very positive and powerful “all-inclusive” offer. Paul writes, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror

the glory of the Lord, are being transformed” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Every believer, all inclusive, now has the privilege of “beholding” through an intimate encounter with the glory (presence and person) of Jesus Christ. We can enjoy this reality individually and collectively every time we pray.

Granted, it is like looking in a mirror—but not a modern mirror. My wife has one of those makeup mirrors with powerful magnification. It helps her finish her beautiful face to perfection. When I use the mirror, I see what looks like craters of the moon on my nose and even a little peach fuzz hanging on for dear life atop my beautiful bald head. In contrast, the mirrors of biblical times were pieces of rough polished metal. Paul’s point is this: we can enjoy the life-changing gaze of prayer as we commune with our incredible Savior. In eternity, we know it will be face-to-face and, as the hymn writer says, it will be ultimate glory for us.⁴

The Power to Become

So what is the result? At the core of credible ministry, authentic faith, and life-changing spiritual communion—what do we find? Paul says that we “are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Yes, God uses prayer to change things. Yet at the core of Paul’s theology of life and ministry is this amazing truth that communion with Christ changes us! This is no superficial rearranging of the activities, approaches, and attitudes of life. This is inside-out change. Transformation.

The English pronunciation of this Greek word is *metamorphoumetha*—very similar to our idea of a metamorphosis. It is the same word used to describe the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:2), and in Romans 12:2, we are similarly challenged to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This is a progressive, continuous change of heart and character from one level of glory to another.

We have used this word *glory* often in these pages. It really speaks of the manifestation of God’s presence, in the person of

Christ. I like to describe it as the magnification of the person of Christ on the lips of His people and the manifestation of the presence of Christ in the lives of His people. To change from “glory to glory” really speaks of an ever-advancing life of Christ-centered focus and Christlike fruitfulness. This all occurs by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ in our lives. We are captivated by Christ, changed by Christ, and conformed to Christ.

Calvin Miller is compelling in his description of Paul’s desire to be changed to the glory of Christ’s image: “This is Narcissus in reverse. The poor Greek lad! He looked into a pond, saw himself, and drowned struggling to embrace his own ego. On the other hand, we look into a glass and see Jesus and are given life by our desire to become the Christ in our mirror.”⁵

First Encounter!

This idea of transforming prayer was more than theory to Paul. He had been looking for glory in the Old Covenant. He was a model Pharisee, striving with all his religious might to keep the law and prove his spiritual prowess, even to the point of chasing down the newfangled fanatics known as Christians and throwing them in the slammer, or worse (see Philippians 3:4–6).

As you know, everything changed for Paul (formerly Saul) one day on the dirt road to Damascus when the living Christ appeared in radiance and drove Paul to his face. In his very first prayer response to the living Christ, Paul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). In his second prayer, he uttered, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (9:6). Then for three days, this blind, radically converted Jew fasted in solitude—probably experiencing the answer to his first two prayer questions.

At the same time, Christ tells a man named Ananias to go find Paul and baptize him. Reluctant because of Paul’s reputation as a relentless persecutor, Ananias appeals. Jesus assures Ananias of Paul’s change of heart with these simple and profound words: “Behold, he is praying” (Acts 9:11).

We do not know with certainty what Paul prayed about for those three days. We know his heart was immediately touched on that Damascus road with a desire to know Christ and His will for Paul's life. We do know that in the course of all of his writings, Paul never requested prayer for an arthritic knee, hair loss, or quick healing of his many back wounds inflicted by his persecutors. He often prayed for a greater knowledge of Jesus, a deeper joy in suffering, a fuller experience of His love, an enduring boldness in preaching Christ, and an ultimate revelation of His glory (Philippians 1:19–26; 3:10; Ephesians 3:14–19; 6:19–20).

Paul understood transforming prayer from the moment of his first encounter with Christ. He never got over it and never stopped growing in it. He saw it as the core of his credibility and the life-source of all Christian living.

Time to Go for the Glory

Fireflies are entertaining. Glowin' Moses was truly amazing. Paul was changed in a moment. Still, there is nothing so attractive and captivating in this sin-darkened world as a Christian who experiences and exhibits the glory of Jesus through the power of face-to-face intimacy.

Now it is time to begin to understand the core truths and practices that make prayer so transformational. It's time to go for the glory.

Free for Life! A Trophy of Transformation

A dozen years ago, my friend Bob took the challenge of going away for three days to pray with a group of about eighty men from our church. It seemed crazy that busy men would take vacation time, drive a couple hours to a run-down camp, sleep on worn-out beds, eat lousy food, and do nothing but pray for three days. Yet I've seen it happen dozens of times—with life-changing results.

On the second afternoon, Bob sat with a group of about twenty-five men. The brothers all participated, as they felt prompted, through spontaneous Scripture reading, songs, and heartfelt response. The Word, the Spirit, and the prayers of the men were creating an environment of fresh spiritual hunger and unprecedented transparency. Overwhelmed by a sense of God's presence and compelled by his desperation for a breakthrough, Bob stepped to the middle of this circle of praying men, sat down in a chair, and began to weep.

With unedited brokenness, Bob confessed to God and the men listened in on this holy moment. He wept over the loss of his first marriage, recalling the departure of his wife and young daughter due to his addiction to pornography. He thanked the Lord for his subsequent salvation and marriage to a godly Christian woman. His heartache then accelerated as he confessed his ongoing secret struggle with porn. He cried out with pleas for God's forgiveness, healing, and restoration in his life.

This holy moment was not prompted by a long prayer list. It did not spring from any human pressure or peer manipulation. Bob was transformed because he took time to behold Christ's glory with an open Bible, a yielded heart, and an expectant faith.

Today, Bob is in heaven. Yet through the remaining years of his life, he walked in consistent victory. He shared his story with other men. He enjoyed healthy accountability with his Christian brothers and his wife. God used him to help others—and to draw more men to that place of transforming prayer.