

Prayer in Suffering

By Kim Butts

Recently, I have heard the heart cry of several friends and family who have been enduring significant seasons of suffering. Some are dealing with physical and emotional struggles; others, with financial stresses and setbacks or prodigal children. Still others are agonizing over the suffering or loss of family members or friends. Most are in a place where their prayer lives have become paralyzed. I have been in these dark places of despair, and struggled with the "Why me, God?" questions. Yet, it was in these times of desolation and anguish that God spoke most clearly and it was in the hopeless places where I found the most hope...and where I learned without a doubt that the God of all comfort was very present.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 has always held for me the all-important key to enduring difficulties: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ." This passage came to the forefront after experiencing a devastating season of suffering in my own life which I thought might never end.

I began to see something happen that I had never expected, and did not fully comprehend until time had passed. But our grace-filled Father patiently used my painful experiences and trials to minister into the lives of others who were walking through similar circumstances. It was the fulfillment of the

truth from 2 Corinthians taking root in my life. Seeing this promise come to fruition was life-changing for me, and has allowed me to see suffering in an entirely different light. I don't have to like it, but if I patiently endure it, God will be faithful not only in the midst of what I am walking through...He will take it and use it for His kingdom's purposes!

To punctuate this point, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." If God's will for me is to joyfully and prayerfully give thanks in the midst of every circumstance, then I must be an obedient child, even when I am unsure...even when I am angry...and even when I don't feel like praying, trusting that He will make use of every season I am in! I would suggest that it is best when we don't feel like praying to do two things. First, just breathe the name of Jesus into the space around you. His Name keeps the enemy at bay and His Name releases the power of Christ into our situations. Second, play worship music so that your surroundings are permeated by the Presence of the God of Comfort. He is attracted to our worship, so as we focus on Him rather than upon our circumstances, He will reveal Himself in ways we may never expect!

God isn't asking me to do anything He has not done Himself. "Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want" (1 Peter 4:1-2, MSG). Several prayer points jump out at me through this passage:

1. **Remember.** I need to continually pray that I will always remember that Jesus has gone through all I have and will ever suffer and more! Picturing Christ on the cross or being pierced for my transgressions or even bearing the sin of the world should be enough to keep me from

complaining about my own state of affairs. The Father heart of God was broken to experience the suffering of the Son, and I have to believe that He aches over mine as well. 2 Corinthians reminds me that He is the God of comfort and promises that comfort is mine if I will be willing to receive it in place of demanding my own comfort.

2. **Think.** God may be doing something in me that only He knows and which might not be accomplished if I were to get my own way by avoiding or trying to get out of suffering. His ways are higher. I do think it is okay to let God know when I suffer and that I am angry about it as long as I don't dwell there. If I can discipline myself to share the burdens, ask why, and express anger...I will be free to receive His comfort and trust that His purposes in allowing my suffering will be for the benefit of my own spiritual growth and to help others who walk through similar experiences.
3. **Choose.** By becoming free of the tyranny of what I want, I will be able to have the freedom to pursue what God wants – His kingdom purposes rather than the purposes of my own kingdom. Will I receive victory in the hands of Jesus Christ or be defeated at the hands of Satan?

Scripture has many promises and much reassurance for those who endure suffering. There are remarkably powerful graces from the Father to us if we will persevere in the face of trials. May the Word encourage you no matter what you may be facing today:

- “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10).
- “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have

its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4).

- “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4).”
- “I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul” (Psalm 31:7).
- “For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help” (Psalm 22:24).

And the ultimate consideration for believers who are going through trials and suffering is rolled out for us in Romans 8:18: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” This earth is not our home. This body is only a poor reflection of what is to come. Let’s choose to lean into the Presence of Jesus Christ, who loves us with an all-encompassing love. As we continue to trust Him, He will step into suffering with us and bend His ear towards our cries for mercy. We must continue to trust that He will redeem and bring light into situations and circumstances that seem dark and impossible for the sake of His glory.

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New Prayers for a New Year

By Kim Butts

Our creative Father loves to develop newness in and around His people. He is at work to transform us from old to new. By the power of His Spirit, we are continually being made new day by day. As you look to this new year, consider studying these passages prayerfully by yourself, with your family, or with your small group. Take some time to consider the goodness of the Lord, and how He has made provision to transform you into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Talk about how God has, is, and will continue to make you new. See if you can find new things in every passage that you may never have considered before. Is there a promise? Is there something that gives you courage...or hope? Drink deeply from the well of the Father, who is able to make all things...and all people new.

New Birth

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Describe your new birth in Jesus. Why do you think God is so merciful to us?

Pray: Give God praise for the mercy He has shown you through your new birth, and thank Him for the inheritance ybeing kept for you in heaven that will never perish, spoil or fade!

New Life

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom.

6:4).

Why do you think it is necessary for God's people to be buried with Jesus in baptism in order to experience new life?

Pray: Thank God for the new life you have through Christ as your old life was buried so that you could have a fresh beginning.

New Things

*"And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He *said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.' Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son'" (Rev. 21:5-7).*

"I am the LORD; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you" (Isa. 42:8-9).

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland" (Isa. 43:18-19).

How thirsty are you for the water of life? Are you thirsty enough to be overcomers? Are there any idols in your home? What are they? (Keep in mind that they may be "good things.") What are some things in your past that need to be forgotten? How can you keep from dwelling on them? What are the new things that God is doing in your lives?

Pray: Ask the Father to help you to recognize the idols in your life so that you can turn away from them and put your focus on all of the amazing new things God holds for you in

His heart.

New Songs

“I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD” (Psa. 40:1-3).

“Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples” (Psa. 96:1-3).

My friend, Dick Eastman, President of Every Home for Christ, felt the Lord leading him to sing his prayers for several months. At first, he felt self-conscious and a bit silly; however, as he began to be obedient, the Lord began to give him new songs; new ways to express his love to the Lord. Has God ever put a new song in your mouth? Describe the experience. Try to write and/or sing new songs to the Lord as you pay attention to His glory among the nations and His marvelous deeds among all peoples.

Pray: Father, help me to sing the new songs in my heart as an offering to You! May I glorify You among the nations and put all of my trust in You!

New Names

“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow...I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD,

give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth” (Isa. 62:1-2, 6-7).

What do you think God is saying in this passage about Jerusalem’s new name? Talk about others in the Bible to whom God gave a new name like Abraham and Paul. Could the Lord be calling you to be a watchman on the walls in this new year? Could Watchman be your new name?

Pray: Righteous Father, You give new names to people who seek to honor You with their lives. I want to step into my new name as a Watchman on the wall! Train me to be an intercessor for the sake of Your ingdom!

New Heaven and a New Earth

“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (Isa. 65:17).

“But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).

Here is an Old Testament passage with a promise, and a New Testament reminder of that promise. Talk about what a new heaven and a new earth might be like. What are you most looking forward to in this home of righteousness?

Pray: Grace-filled Lord, You have made ALL things new in my life. How I look forward to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth! Teach me to live a righteous life of expectancy, always longing for my new home!

New Compassions

“Because of the LORD’S great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22-23).

What could we be consumed by that God's love and compassion protects us from? What does it mean to you that the Lord's compassions are new every morning?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for Your faithfulness that is new every morning! Thank You that you let me begin again with a fresh start each day because of Your compassion.

New Spirit

"Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.' They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws. They will be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11:17-20).

"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

According to the passage in Ezekiel, what will happen when God puts a new spirit in the people of Israel? Has God put a new spirit in you? If so, how do you know? John 14:26 tells us that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and our Advocate. How have you experienced His presence in your life through His teaching and advocacy for you?

Pray: Holy Spirit, how grateful I am that You have put a new spirit in me that compels me to follow You more completely. I am so glad to have a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone! Most of all, I am thankful to know that you will always be there to teach me and to advocate for me! Holy Father, thank You for this amazing gift!

New Wine and New Wineskins

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (Matt. 9:16-17).

Jesus brings a newness of life that cannot be contained within old habits and lifestyles. Have you prepared a new wineskin to receive the new wine He wants to pour into it? How is your new wineskin different from your old one? Perhaps you are still trying to pour new wine into an old wineskin. What has been the result?

Pray: Lord Jesus, You want to pour newness into my heart continually! Help me to replace all of the old habits and my sinfulness with a new wineskin that will contain all of the amazing life You have for me!

New Covenant

“In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me’” (1 Cor. 11:25).

“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6).

“By calling this covenant ‘new,’ He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear” (Heb. 8:13).

“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb.

9:15).

Talk about how the new covenant of Jesus is different from the old covenant of the law. How does the Holy Spirit give life to you? Consider taking communion as an act of remembrance alone or together as a family. Talk about the new covenant and why it is important to be reminded of the sacrifice Christ made for our sins.

Pray: Father, thank You for revealing God's New Covenant through Jesus. How grateful I am to be free from sin and that I can look forward to the eternal inheritance You have promised!

New Command

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

How do you carry out this "new" command in practical, everyday ways? Why is it important for "all men" to know that you are Jesus' disciples? What new things could you do this year to be obedient to this "new command"?

Pray: Lord Jesus, give me strength each day to carry out this amazing command. May I demonstrate Your love in every relationship and situation every day of my life so that I may bring honor and glory to Your name alone!

New Creation

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

As a family, talk about how you became new creations because of Christ. What old habits and/or lifestyles changed when Jesus came into your lives?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for making me a new creation! Continue to show me how to be made new day by day as I live out the life of Jesus!

New Self

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

What was your former way of life? What does it mean to “be made new in the attitude of your minds”? Do you still struggle with “deceitful desires”? If so, how does Jesus help you? If not, how has Jesus helped you?

Pray: Father, create a new mind and attitude within me as I learn how to step into the newness of desiring only what You want, rather than indulging my own selfish desires.

New and Living Way

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22).

How will Jesus’ “new and living way” help you to live differently in this new year? What does this passage teach you about prayer?

Pray: Father, by the blood of Jesus, You are teaching me day by day to live as He lived. Show me how to step into this new year by drawing near to You with a sincere heart, in full

assurance of faith!

Jesus came to make all things new! Will you and your family choose to honor Him for His sacrifice...this year...and for the rest of your lives? How will this new year be different because of the “*new and living way*” – the way of Christ Jesus?

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Praying God’s Character into Your Children

By Kim Butts

As Christian parents, it is not difficult to discern whom we wish our children to be like. We desire for them to be like Christ, and our greatest hope is that others will be able to see Him in them. However, it is not enough just to “wish” that our children will emulate Jesus. We must be godly examples of Christ to them. And, we must pray His character into their lives.

It is a joyful task to discover the character of God in His Word. Whenever I see what God is like, I want to prayerfully ask Him to place that characteristic in me, and in my children. He is the standard by which all of my behavior and that of my children should be measured. Do people see Jesus in you, in your spouse, in your family? There is no greater act of worship than to be like Christ, for we were created in His image for fellowship with our Creator.

To pray God's character into the lives of our children is simply a matter of studying His Word and praying that specific characteristics will be manifest in us! Let's look at one short passage that gives four distinct characteristics of God: "The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love" (Psalm 145:8). We know that God has many more characteristics; however these particular ones are repeated over and over in Scripture. Here are just a few examples: "But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (Nehemiah 9:17). "But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15). "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love" (Psalm 103:8). "For he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (Joel 2:13).

Now, take these four very important characteristics of the Sovereign Lord's person, and pray that your children will be:

- Gracious
- Compassionate
- Slow to Anger
- Rich in Love

I will give you many examples for each of these characteristics that you can pray for your children. Begin with these, and then begin to pray other characteristics into their lives (and into your own). If you begin with only one of these four character traits at a time, begin with "love." There are more references to "love" in the New Testament than any other characteristic. Do you think the Lord wishes us to be loving? Absolutely!

In the following examples, I have also allowed the first Scripture to reflect how Jesus either displayed the characteristic of His Father, or what He had to say about that particular characteristic. Since Christ lives in us, and since we desire to be Christlike—it is important to know that the

characteristics of God also describe the characteristics of His Son. So, when we pray for our children to display the characteristics of God in their lives, we are praying that they will be like Christ, who showed us the very character of God as He walked on this earth.

Pray for Your Child to Be Gracious (Filled With Grace)

The Graciousness of Jesus:

“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. ‘Isn’t this Joseph’s son?’ they asked” (Luke 4:22).

Prayer: Father, Your Son spoke gracious words and people spoke well of Him. Would you help my child to speak gracious words that minister to others and point them to You?

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

Prayer: Lord, help all of my child’s conversations to be filled with grace and seasoned with salt, so that he/she may always know how to answer everyone.

“He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble” (Proverbs 3:34).

Prayer: Help my child to walk in humility rather than in pride, so that You may fill him/her with Your grace.

“For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that my child is under grace, and that sin will not be his/her master!

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”(2 Corinthians 9:8).

Prayer: Help my child to be filled with Your grace, so that in all things at all times, he/she will have all that he/she

needs and will abound in every good work.

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). Prayer: May my child be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

Prayer: May my child use the gifts you have given to him/her so that he/she may administer Your grace to others.

“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2).

Prayer: May my child have full knowledge of You, Father, and of Jesus Christ our Lord so that grace and peace might belong to him/her in abundance.

Pray for Your Child to Be Compassionate The Compassion of Jesus

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14).

Prayer: Father, build compassion into the character of my child so that he/she sees every person just as Jesus would.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Prayer: Holy Lord, show me how to demonstrate to my child how to be kind and compassionate to others. Help me to be a forgiving person so that he/she will forgive others just as Jesus has forgiven us. Place the compassionate heart of Christ in my child so that others will be drawn to You.

“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble” (1 Peter 3:8).

Prayer: Father, help my child to get along with everyone

he/she comes into contact with. May he/she be a compassionate, humble tool that you can use to bring unity into the body of Christ.

Pray for Your Child to Be Slow to Anger Jesus on Anger

“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

Prayer: Lord, Jesus taught that we should not be angry with anyone. May my child have the strength to be the kind of person Jesus was when He walked this earth—with a heart of forgiveness rather than a heart that desires to harbor anger.

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:25-26).

Prayer: Father, when my child is angry, help him/her to keep his/her anger in check so that he/she is not drawn into sin by the schemes of the enemy. May he/she never allow the sun to go down on his/her anger. Show him/her how to become a peacemaker. Help him/her to be determined not to give the devil a foothold in this area.

“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing” (1 Timothy 2:8).

Prayer: May my child continually lift up holy hands to You, Father, because You have delivered him/her from having an angry heart towards others.

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (James 1:19-20).

Prayer: Father, help my child to be quick to listen and slow to become angry so that he/she can live the righteous life

that You desire.

Pray for Your Child to be Rich in Love The Love of Jesus

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I d you” (John 15:9-12).

Prayer: Lord, Jesus loved us as You loved Him. That’s a powerful love! Help my child to remain in Christ’s love all of his/her life. Give him/her the strength to obey Your commands so that he/she can remain in Your love just as Jesus did, because remaining in Your love brings complete joy. Help my child to love others just as You love him/her.

“‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these’” (Mark 12:29-31).

Prayer: Father, You have given us two commandments that You consider to be the greatest of all of Your commandments. Give my child a burning desire to love You with all of his/her heart and soul and mind and strength. May he/she always love his/her neighbor as much as he/she loves him/herself.

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked”(Luke 6:35).

Prayer: Lord, it’s hard for kids to love their enemies. Give my child Your supernatural love so that he/she can “do good” to those who are unkind or hurtful to him/her, and so that

he/she can become a son/daughter of Yours, Most High God!

“Love must be sincere. what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:9-10).

Prayer: Most High God, help my child to love out of a sincere heart that clings only to what is good. May he/she be continually devoted to others in brotherly love, honoring others above him/herself.

“But the man who loves God is known by God” (1 Corinthians 8:3).

Prayer: Lord, may my child be known by You because he/she truly loves You all the days of his/her life!

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:17-18).

Prayer: Loving God, I pray that my child will never learn to love this world or to love the material possessions it has to offer. May he/she instead take pity on those in need and respond. May he/she love with actions and in truth rather than with just words. Help him/her to have Your love within him/her.

These last two prayers lend themselves to wonderful blessing prayer! The first passage, you will have an example of how to slightly change the pronouns so that the Scripture applies in a very direct way to your child. The second prayer will for you, an actual blessing straight from the Scripture. You can lay hands on your child and pray these prayers over him/her. Actually, you can do this with any of these prayers. Let your children know that you are praying specifically for them to develop the character traits of God.

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11).

Prayer: Lord, this is my prayer for my child: that his/her love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that he/she may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to Your glory and praise!

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Prayer: I pray that out of God’s glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your heart(s) through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Perhaps there are other specific character traits of God that your child needs at this time. Ask God to reveal these to you, if you are not already aware of them. One good additional example is to pray that your child will demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things

there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). Pray them one at a time, as you feel led, keeping in mind those things your child needs in his or her life most right now. Praying the Word of God is powerful, and because it is His Word, such prayers are ALWAYS in His perfect will! And, as you begin to faithfully and expectantly pray for God’s character to be shown in your child, He will be faithful to answer.

Kim Butts is the co-founder and Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries. She has authored several books, some with husband, Dave (1953-2022), including: [The Praying Family](#) and [Pray Like the King](#)

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Living for God in the Last Days (God’s Prayer Plan for the Family)



By Kim Butts

We, of course, do not know the day or the hour of Christ's return. What we do know is that it could happen at any time. This knowledge alone should significantly affect our actions, our attitudes and our relationships with one another. It is difficult to consider the reality of the last days when our children are young, or when we feel that there is so much of life yet to be lived. However, Jesus tells us to be ready: *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come... So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him"* (Matthew 24:42-44).

If we are not spiritually prepared as families, we will be unable to respond to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in our lives during the end times: *"'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams'"* (Acts 2:17). How can we, as individuals and as families be ready to do what God has called us to in the last days? God's Word has much to say in this regard; however, one specific command may indeed be the key to all of the others: *"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray"* (1 Peter 4:7). *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson, translates this passage as, *"Stay wide-awake in prayer."*

Peter emphatically stated, through the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit, that prayer is the key to living effective lives in the last days. It is obvious that the Lord wants our prayer lives to be powerful and effective as we face what lies ahead. Clear minded Christian families should have clearly defined, purpose-filled lives that are characterized by wise choices and mature decisions made from a relationship with Jesus in prayer. However, if the enemy can successfully see to it that our minds are cluttered with the unproductive excesses of our culture, then we can be turned off of the course Christ has set before us. The race cannot be won when the baggage of fuzzy thinking and the uncertainties of right or wrong hinder us. The only right way is the way of Jesus.

To be clear minded requires that Christians pay attention to what the Word of God says: *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does"* (James 1:22-25). It is difficult to pray focused, powerful prayers when our minds are distracted. We are of no use to the Father if our prayers are characterized by uncertainty or double-minded thinking: *"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does"* (James 1:6-8).

Peter said that we must be self-controlled so that we can pray. Self-control is difficult at best! However, if we ask ourselves one simple question we can put this issue into God's perspective: Who is controlling us? Is it God, our Father, who loves us and wants what is best for us ... or Satan, our enemy, who would seek to destroy us? As a family, look at the

activities you are engaged in, the habits you have, and the things that you hold tightly to. Are all of these things bringing honor and glory to God because they are lived out through you under His control? Or, are you trapped by the vise-like grip of the deceiver in things that do not please the Father? *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

If the enemy can dissuade us, distract us, or damage us in some way to keep us from praying – especially in our families – he will! A lack of self-control will allow us to be distracted by worldly things or ungodly pursuits. As a result, we will certainly not be prayer minded, watchful or aware. *“Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control”* (Proverbs 25:28). Walls that are broken down are defenseless and open to attack from the enemy. When we lack clear minded self-control, we open ourselves up for attack.

Are the walls around your family built up and well defended? Are you praying with and for one another? Are you holding one another accountable to behave like Christ, and confessing sin to one another? *“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”* (James 5:13-16).

Without self-control our prayer lives will be weak, erratic,

powerless and useless to the Lord! When we are able, with His help, to bring every area of our lives under control, our prayers will increase in power and effectiveness. *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline”* (2 Timothy 1:7). Listed below are some of the many prayer commands the Lord has given us in His Word. If your family will take the time to study, meditate upon, and obey each of these commands, you will be clear minded and self-controlled, and able to stay “wide-awake” in prayer:

- **Pray so that you might not fall into temptation.** Prayer is the Lord’s way of protecting us from the enemy. If we are not clear minded and self-controlled, we can easily fall into the traps that Satan sets for us. *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak”* (Matthew 26:41). In the last days, it is important that we are prayerfully watchful! Teach your children how easily sins such as anger and unforgiveness (Mark 11:25) can hinder our prayers. Have family members make a list of the things that tempt them. Determine to “watch and pray” about these things. Making a family covenant to pray for one another in these areas will be of great help to avoid temptation, as will the accountability that goes with it!
- **Pray so that all might be saved.** Prayer is the Lord’s strategy for bringing the lost into His kingdom. *“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:1-4). We know without a doubt that this is God’s plan. If our families are not clear minded and self-controlled, then His plan to involve His people in

the ministry of Christ and in the salvation of others will fall short. We must obediently pray for all people – even those who persecute us or mistreat us (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28). And it is critical to pray for those in authority over us! As a family, begin to pray for government leaders, co-workers, teachers, etc. Make a list of neighbors, friends and family members who don't know Christ and begin to intercede for them!

- **Pray with faith, believing that you have what you asked for, so that it will be yours.** If our families are not clear minded and self-controlled, we will pray ineffective, faithless prayers. When we pray prayers of faith that are lined up with the plans and purposes of God as revealed in His Word, then we are being obedient to the Lord's command: "*'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours'*" (Mark 11:22-24). As you read and study the word of God together, ask Him to show you what He wants you to be doing. As you pray through His precious Word, He will give you amazing insights, and show you His perfect plans for you, your family, and for His world! When He does, you will be better equipped to know how to pray what is on His heart, because it will be on yours as well!
- **Pray in the Spirit as you stay alert!** The Holy Spirit is our teacher – our guide. He gives us words to pray when we don't know how. As we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit, our prayers will be powerful and effective. "*But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit*" (Jude 1:20). "*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints*" (Ephesians

6:18). As you teach your family to obey these commands, help them to know that even when we are unable to find the words to pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede on our behalf as we yield ourselves to Him: *“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will”* (Romans 8:26-27). As we seek after the heart of God in the midst of our prayers, desiring to pray His will into being, we will be lining ourselves up with His plans and purposes so that He can use us to the fullest!

- **Devote yourselves to faithful prayer** – *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful”* (Colossians 4:2). When we have thankful hearts, and minds that are alert (watchful) to the enemy’s schemes, we will be better able to maintain the faithful practice of prayer. *“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer”* (Romans 12:12). Your family can determine to obey this command by setting aside time each day to pray individually and together. The Father will reward your faithfulness. If this time is difficult to find, sit down together and plan what activities are taking away opportunities to spend time in prayer together. It may only take a few minor adjustments to find a segment of time to pray together daily. Perhaps all it will take is to turn off the television or give up excess time at the computer, etc. Talk about what being devoted means. Ask yourselves if you are more devoted to other activities than to prayer. Determine to change your priorities if this is the case.
- **Pray continually because it is God’s will for you** – *“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). It is never easy to be

joyful and to give thanks in the midst of circumstances that are difficult. Why would God state that His will is for us to do so? Because He knows that we grow stronger through the rough spots in life. He can give us victory over the darkest circumstance if we will turn it over to Him in prayer. *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7). Teach your family that as we obediently lay every concern, difficulty, frustration and sorrow at his feet, He will bring peace to guard our hearts and minds. Therefore, prayer comes full circle: we pray, and the Lord gives peace to guard our hearts and minds in Christ. Such peace will allow us to be clear minded and self-controlled so that we can pray. What a wondrous plan the Lord has made for us!

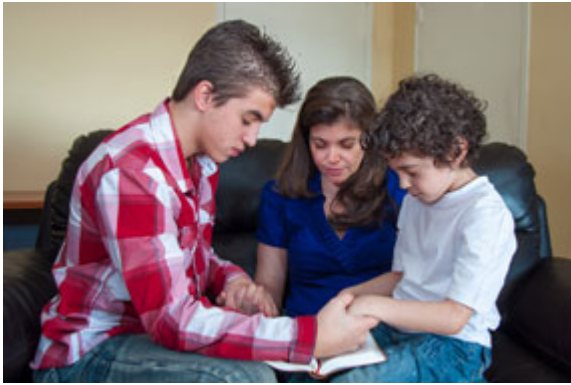
“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray” (1 Peter 4:7).

Family Prayer: Father, enable us to be clear minded in these last days. Help us to live wisely, and with purpose. Show us those things that give us fuzzy thinking instead of clear mindedness. May we be able to focus on Your precious Word to define our thinking and decision-making. Make clear to us the areas where we are lacking in self-control and help us to resist the enemy in these areas so that he will flee from us! Help us to know how to pray what is on Your heart! We desire powerful, Spirit-filled lives of prayer that will bring You glory in these last days! Teach us to pray, dear Lord! In Jesus' Name we ask it and look forward to your answer! Amen!

–Kim Butts is the co-founder of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the author of [*The Praying Family*](#).

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Deepening Your Family's Passion for Prayer



By Kim Butts

"O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and Your glory. Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands" (Psa. 63:1-4).

When King David wrote these words, he demonstrated why the Lord considered him to be a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). He wanted to know the Father better and more intimately. He desired God more than anything else...and, as king, he could certainly have had anything he wanted. David's everyday lifestyle was devoted to the passionate pursuit of

God. How would the lifestyles of our families today be different if we were as focused on seeking the Lord as earnestly as David?

Worldly Passion or Godly Passion?

There are many experiences that cause people to change their behavior in significant ways. Normally quiet people can become loud and excited, those who are usually talkative can be hushed to an awed silence, and those who would never think of doing anything out of the ordinary may suddenly find themselves behaving in unusual ways. Think about the fervent enthusiasm displayed for sports or other events. Consider how some individuals will travel great distances and stand in lines for long periods of time for a special event or to get a glimpse of a famous person. Perhaps you can remember a time when you, or someone in your family displayed the same kind of excitement.

However, when was the last time your family was at least that passionate for an experience with God? When did you last marvel at something the Father created? Did you experience great rejoicing when He answered your fervent prayer? Have you ever sat in silence, in awe of the Lord's glorious majesty or might? When was the last time your family was so excited to join with others in worship that you could hardly wait to get to church? Have you ever experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit so strongly that you couldn't leave His presence until He clearly released you?

It seems that in this earthly realm we have been captivated by things around us that have nothing to do with experiencing the glory and presence of God, but everything to do with the glorification of man and man's experiences. Believers are settling for less than God's best. We are no longer captivated by the things of God, but by the wonders of technology and the ways of the world! When our priorities get turned around, we can certainly find ourselves focusing more and more upon

things that have earthly importance rather than eternal significance. Can it be said of you, or anyone in your family, that you are truly a person after God's own heart? Is He, as David Bryant so succinctly expressed it, "your Monarch, or your mascot?" Is He just there to cheer you on and answer your prayers and protect you from disaster...or is He at the heart of your life?

Christian families, it is time to rend our hearts in repentance and turn our lives back over to the living God. It is time to give Him the honor due His name, and to be thrilled and excited to dwell in His presence and in the company of His people. It is time to "*exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; He is holy*" (Psa. 99:5). In other words, we must regain our passion for Jesus Christ and His kingdom!

How do we get back that which has been lost, and reignite the flame of our first love? We must first allow the Father to break our hearts in confession and repentance. Then, with renewed resolve, we must spend time seeking His face in prayer, and listening to His loving voice. We must delve into the Word in reverence, honor and obedience! The prophet Isaiah spoke about God's willingness to respond to our desperate need to turn from our earthly distractions and passionately go after the face of the living Lord: "*Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him...How gracious He will be when you cry for help! As soon as He hears, He will answer you...Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'*" (Isa. 30:18,19,21). Have you ever longed to hear from God? Perhaps you have never considered spending time listening for His voice.

Passion will follow obedience, as we earnestly seek after His holy presence to fill our lives, to restore our families, and to lead us toward finishing our time on earth well! Here are some prayers from Scripture and some action steps to help you

and your family to turn ordinary lives focused on worldly pleasures and experiences into extraordinary lives lived with passion and faith because our hearts are fixed on Jesus! Read each Scripture and pray together as a family that God will develop in all of you, a passionate desire for Jesus Christ.

The Israelites Re-ignite Their Passion

“They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God” (Neh. 9:3). When was the last time you spent time reading the Word of God together as a family for six hours? And then spent another six hours in confession and worship?

Action: Take a family retreat together (even at home with the phone off the hook). Talk about who God is as you read the passages below. Spend time in confession and worship as you pray. As you talk about who God is, continue to ask Him to reveal more of Himself to you. As you get to know His heart better, and as He has an opportunity to search your hearts and speak into your lives, see if your passion for Him begins to grow in significant and real ways.

Prayer: Lord, help us to have passion for and delight in Your Word!

Action: Read these passages together and talk about why God’s Word is so important:

- *“I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your Word”* (Psa. 119:16).
 - *“Direct me in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight”* (Psa. 119:35).
 - *“...for I delight in Your commands because I love them”* (Psa. 119:47).
 - *“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night”* (Psa. 1:2).

Prayer: Lord, help us to worship You!

- *“You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship You”* (Neh. 9:6).
- *“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness...”* (Psa. 29:2).
- *“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker...”* (Psa. 95:6). You might want to try bowing down together, and/or kneeling before Him.
- *“Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs”* (Psa. 100:2). Sing joyous songs of worship to the Father together!
- *“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks”* (John 4:23). Talk about what it means to worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Prayer: Father, forgive us!

- *“For the sake of Your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great”* (Psa. 25:11).
- *“Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of Your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name’s sake”* (Psa. 79:9).
- *“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”* (Matt. 6:12).

Prayer: Lord, help us to thirst for You. We need You desperately! Give us time and places to meet with You face to face. Forgive us for placing our dependence upon the things of this earth that will fade away.

- *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”* (Psa. 42:2).

Action: Take some time to confess sins privately and/or to one another. Lift up your hands to the Lord and ask Him to fill your thirsty heart and spirit. *“I spread out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land”* (Psa. 143:6).

Jesus responds to the thirsty, blessing and filling them: *“...for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things”* (Psa. 107:9). *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”* (Matt. 5:6).

Prayer: Father, we seek Your face. We look to You and Your strength. Help us to devote our hearts and souls to seeking You always!

- *“Look to the LORD and His strength; seek His face always”* (1 Chron. 16:11).
- *“Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God...”* (1 Chron. 22:19).
- *“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in His temple”* (Psa. 27:4).

Action: Think about what the house of the Lord must look like...share this with one another, or draw it! Imagine that you could gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. What does His house look like? Again, share and/or draw together. Read, reflect and pray after reading these passages:

- *“My heart says of You, ‘Seek His face!’ Your face, LORD, I will seek”* (Psa. 27:8).
- *“I seek You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commands”* (Psa. 119:10).
- *“Look to the LORD and His strength; seek His face always”* (Psa. 105:4).

As you seek God individually and as a family, you will soon see that there are certain things He will do to draw you closer into a more passionate love relationship with Him:

If you seek Him, You will find Him!

- *“But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 4:29).*
 - *“I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me find Me” (Prov. 8:17).*
 - *“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).*
 - *“Come near to God and He will come near to you...” (Jas. 4:8).*

If you seek Him, you will rejoice!

- *“But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation always say, ‘The LORD be exalted’” (Psa. 40:16).*
 - *“Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice” (1 Chron. 16:10).*

If you seek Him He will never forsake you!

- *“Those who know Your name will trust in You, for You, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek You” (Psa. 9:10).*

If you seek Him you will lack no good thing!

- *“The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing” (Psa. 34:10).*

If you seek Him you will be blessed!

- *“Blessed are they who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart” (Psa. 119:2).*

He rewards those who seek Him!

- *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him”*

(Heb. 11:6).

- *“The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him...”* (Lam. 3:25).
- *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matt. 6:33).

Seek His kingdom and righteousness first – then everything else in your lives will fall into place. Your passion will be a red-hot fire, your joy will be contagious and your worship will be pleasing to the Father. *“Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart”* (Psa. 37:4). As your family delights in the Lord first, you will quickly see that what you desire will be in harmony with what He desires! May *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done”* be your family’s most earnest prayer!

Kim Butts is the co-founder and Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries. She has authored several books, some with husband, Dave (1953-2022), including: [The Praying Family](#) and [Pray Like the King](#)