

A Man in the Gap

By Lois E Callaway



**A Pilgrim Ponders Prayer
Book #5 (of 7)**

A Pilgrim Ponders Prayer

A Missionary's Reflections - in a 7-book series

Book # 5

A Man in the Gap

By

Lois E. Callaway

Dedicated to

My Mother:

Lura Groves Elkerton

who first taught me to pray the prayer of faith.

And to

My Grandparents:

Elmer and Netta Groves.

who taught her.

Cover composition by Joyce Callaway Nicholson.

All Poems not attributed to others
were written by Lois Callaway

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Acknowledgement

It has now been well over 20 years since my wife, Lois, wrote these seven studies on the subject of PRAYER. I want to express my appreciation to our children and their spouses for all they have done in the editing, checking of quotations, etc. Four who have done most are: Joyce Callaway Nicholson (covers, pictures, formatting), David Callaway (researching book and Bible references), Mark Callaway (art work on book 3 cover), and Cinda Lott Callaway (proofreading).

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C W Callaway, March 20, 2017

About the Author

Lois Nadine Elkerton Callaway served with her husband, C W Callaway, in Thailand among the Mien mountain tribespeople from 1949 to 1985. From then on they served Mien refugees from Laos in U.S.A. In 1996 at age of 75 she died in an automobile accident near Napa, California. She had a deep reverent love for God and for His Word. And she loved those whom she served so faithfully. She was an avid reader, a gifted poet, and a skilled writer in Mien as well as English. She was a woman of prayer as revealed in this series.

For more information about her see:
<http://www.mothersite.org/>



Lois E. Callaway
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"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. .
Ezekiel 22:30 NIV

He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him... and his own righteousness sustained him.
Isaiah 59:16 NIV

O Jerusalem, I have set intercessors on your walls who shall cry to God all day and all night for the fulfillment of his promises. Take no rest, all you who pray, and give God no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her respected and admired throughout the earth.

Isaiah 62:6-7 TLB

"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."
Esther 4:16 NIV

Jesus told His disciples that there was a great gulf fixed between the living and the lost dead. There is also a great gulf dividing the living lost from the Savior. God stands on the mountain above the gulf, looking, searching for a man to stand in the gap, interceding for the lost so that He will not have to destroy them.

Picture God on the mount surveying His world, grieving for the lost, for it is not His will that any should perish, but that all should come to eternal life. He sees the great throngs going down the broad way that leads to destruction right down to the valley to the shadow of death. His loving heart cries, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for me? Is there no man that will even stand in that gap, that great gulf, and intercede for the lost?" He is appalled for there is no one!

Intercessory prayer is hard work. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, "Join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." (Romans 15:30 NIV) He reminded the Colossians, "I want you to know how much I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally." (Colossians 2:1 NIV) Paul was praying, struggling. He compared his prayerful anguish over the floundering Galatians Christians to the pains of childbirth, praying until Christ should be formed in them. (Galatians 4:19)

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Epaphras had perhaps learned this labor of intercessory prayer from Paul. Paul told the Colossians that Epaphras "is always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured." (Colossians 4:12 NIV)

Like lazy schoolboys we neglect our homework. Activists that we are, we forget that the real labor of soul winning and disciplining is not the frenetic activity that characterizes so many churches, and so many Christians, but the agonizing travail that goes on in the prayer closet.

God looked down from the mountain of God and was amazed! "...He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene." (Isaiah 59:16 NIV) "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none." (Ezekiel 22:30 NIV).

How could it be that no one cared enough to stand in the gap? We might well cry out with Job, "O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." (Job 16:21,22 KJV) Life is fleeting! In only a few years the lost round about us will have gone, to, "whence they cannot return". Oh that we might plead with God for them!

God said, "Moses, get out of the way. I'm going to destroy those wicked people." The people, repentant, fell on their faces. "And Moses said to Aaron, 'Quick, take a censer and place fire in it from the altar lay incense on it. And carry it quickly among the people and make atonement for them for God's anger has gone out among them – the plague has already begun.' "

Aaron did as Moses had told him to do, and ran among the people – "he stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stopped." (Numbers 16:46-48 NIV; Psalms 106:23)

Today there is a plague on the earth. AIDS is running rampant. Sin is making virulent attacks on believers as well as unbelievers – where are the men and women who will stand – kneel – in the gap – holding up the censer of prayer between the living and the dead to stop the plague?

Oh Jerusalem, I have set intercessors on your walls who shall cry to God all day and all night for the fulfillment of His promises. Take no rest, all you who pray, and give God no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes her respected and admired throughout the earth."
(Isaiah 62:6-7 TLB)

Jerusalem, a type of the church, with intercessors on its walls, brings us a timely message. Where are the intercessors "on the walls of the church" Are you one of

them? Am I? Or is most of our praying done inside the church and for those who are also inside the church?

1 Melting Tigers

And we, who with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord... when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. 7Ezekiel 36:23 KJV

"There's only one way to eat tigers," mused small Robert to himself. **"You can't just eat them you have to wait for them to melt."**

Robert's text was his picture book, "Little Black Sambo" and his eyes were fixed on the tiger melting into a pool of butter as it chased its tail round and round the tree.

"Right!" Thought Robert's missionary father. "In our job there's a lot of waiting for men to melt under the power of prayer. You don't just eat tigers; you wait for them to melt. Neither do you just win men to the Lord. You wait for the Spirit to melt their hearts."¹

The trouble with too many of us is that we just don't wait to melt. We are like Hosea's "cake not turned" – half baked! (Hosea 7:8 KJV) Someone has remarked that too many of us are half-baked Christians because we don't wait long enough before the consuming fire of God to be well turned – to have our souls melted and molded and made into His likeness. It takes some melting for us human beings before we "reflect the glory of the Lord".

There are thrilling stories in the Bible of men who tarried long enough to be melted. Jacob was one. (Genesis 32:9-12, 24-32) One thought of the Almighty's grace when Jacob came into vital contact with Him, immediately melting all his subtlety and carnality. Up to this time Jacob's chief supplication was, "Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother." But the Lord led him to see that his greatest need was to be delivered from his own deceitful self – Jacob, the supplanter, the schemer.²

¹ (Lockhart n.d. in reference to The Story of Little Black Sambo by Helen Bannerman, Stokes, 1900).

² (Murray, The Prayer Life 1899)

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It is interesting to note that up until the night Jacob wrestled with the Lord and was "melted" he called on God as "God of my grandfather, Abraham, and of my father Jacob". Then he met God in hand to hand struggle. God wounded him so that every time he went limping off he would remember that, though he had wrestled with God and prevailed, which was of course the meaning of his new name, Israel, he had first to confess to his own self name, Jacob, the cheater. Then God said, "You are no longer Jacob,! From now on you have a new name, you are no longer the cheater." From then Jacob would limp on his crippled hip and remember and know that now he could call on Jehovah God, his very own God.

"Aforetime the crafty shuffler, always bargaining and calculating, unlovely in almost every respect, yet one night in prayer turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince and robed him with celestial grandeur."³

Think of the disciples – melted in a prayer meeting that culminated in Pentecost. Impetuous Peter, Doubting Thomas, James and John, sons of Thunder all melted and made useful for their Master's service.

"We talk about our battles of Waterloo, Sebastopol, Mons, the Sonne, etc., but the spiritual battles won at Jabbok, Mt. Carmel, Gethsemane and other places like the upper room prayer meeting or in the home of Mary, Mother of John Mark, have done and will do infinitely more to change the destiny of nations and to bring about universal peace and righteousness than all the battles ever won by carnal weapons."⁴

The record of melting souls continues where ever new chapters of the Acts of the Apostles is being written. The story is told of the great spiritual victories among the Lisu of West China when British prayer bands reinforced the evangelistic ministry of J.O Fraser. Village after village turned to the Lord until converts were coming by the thousands. Yet Fraser testified to another melting that may well have been basic to all else. "As the prayer circle grew, Fraser was distinctly conscious of a change both in himself and in his surroundings. A new spirit of expectancy began to stir within him and there seemed new power with his messages. This made him long for more such prayer help."⁵

For me one of the joys of heaven will be finding out who melted me through prayer. As I look back at the "me" who originally came to the mission field, I know someone – probably many someones – must have said, "Lord melt her!"

Are you critical of some young worker in the Lord's vineyard? Remember you "can't just eat tigers – you have to melt them first." How often we criticize – scorch – when we had better be melting through prayer.

³ (Spurgeon 2013)

⁴ (Murray, The Prayer Life 1899)

⁵ (Mrs.Howard Taylor 1963)

"Alone with Jesus! How different a front would Christianity present to the world if the Lord's people were oftener there! What humility, and gentleness and love would characterize all their dealings! What holiness stamped on the very brow that all might read! What few judgments passed on others, how many more on ourselves! What calmness and resignation and joyful submission to all the Lord's dealings."⁶

Carmichael was the minister at the Free Kirk of Drumtochty. This was a village congregation, famous for having had a long line of preachers who had gone on up to fill the most commanding pulpits in all of Scotland. Carmichael was very young, and his ministry was, as it should be, the passion of his life. Every sermon was a high adventure, and he was very sensitive as to pulpit failures. Of late he was low of spirit for he realized his sermons had not been up to the high standard he had set for them. Once or twice his memory had played him false and there had been places where he halted and stumbled. He imagined, too, that the people of the Kirk were fully aware of the plight of their minister and were saying among themselves, "He will nae do".

On this particular Sabbath day Carmichael, following the worship, had come to the vestry, flung himself in a chair, the picture of dejections He had had a hard time with the sermon. He had been nervous, his memory had again proved treacherous, and as he reflected upon the sermon there were portions of it that seemed a jumble of ideas, the whole lacking unity. He thought, too, that he had detected an uneasiness on the part of the congregation and that some of the worshipers had exchanged glances as if to say, "He is far below his best". He put his head in his hands and agonized.

There was a knock at the door of the vestry, and when he opened it, lo, it was the Elder of the Session, who was chiefly loved and respected, one Angus Sutherland. Carmichael greeted him courteously, but he knew by instinct that this respected Elder was there on an important errand, and he readily guessed what it might be. Carmichael bade him take a seat and assumed a cheerfulness which he did not feel.

The good Elder began with a remark as to the pleasant weather they were having and that there was a hint of spring in the air. The young preacher, despite his dejection, could not but admire the manner of approach to what he felt could only be a disagreeable subject. Deep in his heart he wished that Angus would get at the heart of the matter at once and bring the miserable business to an end.

Now the Elder addressed himself directly to the minister: "It is six months since you entered upon your ministry among us, and you will not be angry with me if I am saying that you are very young to have so heavy a weight upon you, for there is no burden like the burden of souls."

⁶. Carmichael of Drumtochty, Scotland as told by F. Whitefield (printed source unknown)

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Still sunk in his suffering, Carmichael marveled at the courtesy and consideration with which Angus presented the petition of the Session, and steeling himself to receive the shock, he bade the Elder to declare at once what he had to say.

“We are thankful unto God that He sent you to be our minister, and we are all wondering at the treasures of truth and grace which you will be bringing to us every Sabbath, for we are being fed with the finest of the wheat.”

What did this mean? Carmichael felt himself beginning to crumple, there was a lump rising in his throat.

Angus went on: “There was one other thing that the brethren laid upon me to say...you are never to be troubled in the pulpit, or be thinking about anything but the Word of the Lord and the souls of the people of which you are the shepherd. We will ask you to remember when you stand in your place to speak to us in the name of the Lord, that as smoke goeth up from the homes of the people in the morning, so will their prayers be ascending for their minister and as you look down upon us, before you begin to speak, maybe you will say to yourself next Sabbath, ‘They are all loving me.’ Oh, yes, and it will be true, from the oldest to the youngest. We will all be loving you very much.”

Angus Sutherland, like the perfect Gentleman he was, left immediately and so gently that Carmichael did not hear his going. That young minister sat, no longer rigid in his chair. He sank back, weak and broken but with a vast peace flooding his soul.⁷

Did you ever talk to your pastor like that? If you pray for him, tell him so – he may not suspect it! A preacher under fire from his congregation said, “I don’t care how much you talk about me so long as you do it on your knees.” More churches could, like the Kirk, produce more great preachers by praying for them as the Kirk did for Carmichael.

Melting is an effective method, not only for those committed to the Lord’s service, but for some of the really hard souls we are called upon to minister to. Some souls, of course, melt easily. However, some of the stalwart souls who eventually make the best Christians, take a lot of melting. Such a one was Granny Bet. Granny Bet had rightfully earned the title (in our family parlance) of “The Matriarch”. Mother of the village headman, she ruled him, and with him, the whole village. She was cool and calculating and at one point seemed determined to make life so miserable for us that we would be forced to leave the village.

She wasn’t easy to love, but God loved her and we had better learn to love her, too! God showed us Granny Bet as one who needed Him, and one who perhaps held the key to the door of the entrance to the tribe as well as to that village. We began

⁷ (Jones 1938 pp 45-46)

focusing prayer on Granny and saw her melt before our eyes. We melted toward her, too! First she became friendly, then interested in the Gospel and finally a believer, the only one in the village during the seven years we lived there!

Her grandson-in-law lay in our home near the point of death after having been mauled by a bear. Everyone was afraid to be near him for fear that the evil spirit which they thought had prompted the bear to maul him, would attack any who helped him escape the destruction of the bear. It was Granny Bet who came to stay nights with his terrified young wife, and to urge her – even to demonstrate to her – how to care for her helpless husband.

Granny Bet, melted, was beautiful! Recreated in the image of her loving Savior!

I was once describing Granny Bet's melting to a friend who worked in another Mien area. "That sounds just like Big Sister," she remarked. I could hardly believe her for I had met Big Sister after she had melted and she was such an eager, loving Christian I could scarcely stretch my imagination to see her in her hard, unmelted condition.

One weekend an American friend had visited us, and had gone with me to worship in the hut of a weak young Mien Christian, Goy Quan. Goy was married to a Chinese refugee who strongly opposed her faith. She was illiterate and so often in danger of losing her first love for her Lord.

Goy's husband got caught in an opium deal and they had to make a quick move back to the hills to hide until the scare was over. The marriage seemed on very shaky ground even then, so imagine our surprise when after a year of no Christian fellowship, Goy once again emerged – and came eagerly for teaching, urging others to come with her.

"Pray for my husband," she said. "I've been witnessing to him."

How did this happen. The American friend!

"Dear Roz," I wrote, "have you been praying for God...?"

"Yes," came the reply. "I'll never forget her. I do pray for her."

Roz in America was melting Goy in Thailand!

So many need to be melted. Where are those who have the patience for melting prayer? So many challenging thrilling stories have been told and written about melting

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experiences in prayer. The stories of George Mueller and Hudson Taylor are old and familiar ones, but worth rereading when the fire of melting faith needs rekindling.

If one doubts that such things still happen read "L'Abri" by Edith Schaeffer⁸ and thrill as hearts of agnostics and atheists are melted and won, and hearts of government officials and potential financial contributors are being melted to the Lord's purposes through prayer.

Paul told Timothy to pray "for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence toward God and with proper conduct." (1 Timothy 2:2 GNT). We might be surprised if we took his advice. We have underestimated the power of prayer in this area.

"John Knox in Scotland fasted and waited on God 'til intervening Providence drove Mary Queen of Scots into exile in Protestant England, and finally to the block. It is said that the queen 'feared John Knox and his prayers more than the armies of Elizabeth, Queen of Scotland.' "

I wonder what would happen if every Christian made the morning paper a prayer list, praying God daily to move leaders of nations, calling for God's over ruling in the crisis situations that headline our daily papers. Surely we would find that even kings and dictators are meltable!

Again, I wonder what would happen if each of us Christians waited before the Lord, who is a consuming fire, until each of us was fully melted – until each of us "reflect the glory of the Lord, and that same glory ... transforms us into his likeness." (2 Corinthians 3:18 GNT)

2 (SIGNED) PAUL

We always thank God for you all, and always mention you in our prayers.

1Thessalonians 1:2 GNT

I thank my God for you all every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all ,
I pray with joy.

Philippians 1:3-4 GNT

⁸ (Schaeffer 1969)

The Hands of Prayer

I reached across the miles today
And touched him with the hand of prayer
Were this not God's appointed way,
To part – we scarce would dare.

But this I know: His Father love
Links us, through Him, o'er every mile,
The lengthless arms of God above
Encircle him – and me.

O Precious Father, You are good
To bind the parting hurt with care
And love! 'Tis only You who could
Reach out and link the hands of prayer.

Imagine yourself a member of the Corinthian church. The word has gone around that a letter has been received from Paul. It will be read when the believers gather for the Lord's Supper this Lord's Day.

You are a bit apprehensive. There have been some pretty ugly things going on in the church at Corinth. Of course, you haven't been involved in those terrible things, so you don't have too much to fear personally from Paul's letter, even though it's bound to be a scorcher. You're clear, of course, but you can't help wondering how those involved in sin are going to take this letter. Maybe it would have been better just to pass the letter around discreetly and skip the public reading. But then the elders have decided on a public reading today – so that's that!

"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way – with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge."
(1 Corinthians 1:4-5 NIV)

What's this? Didn't Paul get that letter from the brethren who had decided to write him about the problems in the church? Maybe it's better that way. Just as well to let Paul think everything is going fine here. He'd be pretty upset if he knew...

"He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:8 NIV)

Of course, before the reading of the letter is finished you know that Paul does know all about the terrible sin in the church. What's more he knows that you, yourself, have been a bit over proud that you were an actual convert of the Apostle Peter, that rugged man who had actually walked and talked with the Lord.

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Paul seems to know the hearts of all the believers in Corinth. He knows not only about the sexual sins you have been so upset about, but also all the compromise with idolatry and the proud holier-than-thou-ness of those who didn't compromise; the shallowness of the observance of the Lord's Supper; the quarrels about spiritual gifts; the whole bit. Paul knows it all!

Yet Paul can pray and thank God for the Corinthians saying "I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way... He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Corinthians 1:4-8 NIV)

By the time the presiding elder had gotten down to that bit about love, you are pretty well melted – and so are a lot of the other believers. "Thank You, Lord that Paul had faith to believe that Your grace will overcome in this sinful place. Thank You, Lord, that he is praying for us!" and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him. (Ephesians 1:16, 17)

"That is why we always pray for you. We ask our God to make you worthy of the life he has called you to live. May he fulfill by his power all your desire for goodness and complete your work of faith. In this way the name of our Lord Jesus will receive glory from you, and you from him, by the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 GNT)

Knowing Paul, you would have known that these were not easily mouthed prayers – more promised than prayed. You would have known that Paul was enduring pain as he wrote to the Galatians.

"My dear children! Once again, just like a mother in childbirth, I feel the same kind of pain for you, until Christ's nature is formed in you." (Galatians 4:19 GNT)

Again imagine yourself a Christian among the believers at Laodicea, Colosse or Rome. You have never even seen Paul. Or course, you had heard about this great man of God – this valiant preacher of the Word, this great example of the Way, and you had hoped someday you would see and hear him. Then one day to the gathered a letter was read from the Apostle Paul himself!

"Let me tell you how hard I have worked for you and for the people in Laodicea and for all others who do not know me personally. I do so that their hearts may be filled with courage and that they may be drawn together in love and have the full wealth of assurance which true understanding brings. And they will know God's secret, which is Christ himself. He is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:1-3 GNT)

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"...we have always prayed for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives. Then you will be able to live as the Lord wants, and will always do what pleases him..."
Col. 1:9-10 GNT)

"... God knows that I always remember you every time I pray. I ask that God in his good will may at last make it possible for me to visit you now." (Romans 1: 9-10 GNT)

Now imagine that you are living right now in this twentieth century and imagine how you would feel if you got a letter "(signed) Paul". Imagine how you would feel if you read.

"We always thank God for you all, and always mention you in our prayers. For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm. Our brothers, we know that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own..."
(1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 GNT)

"We always thank God for you all, and always mention you in our prayers... We thank him for the joy we have in his presence because of you...day and night we ask him with all our heart to let us see you personally and supply what is needed in your faith."
(1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 GNT)

How it encourages us to know that we have such an intercessor in heaven right now, praying and enabling us to remain in Him and treasure His Word in our hearts so that we may become like the Father, while according to His riches in Christ Jesus He is answering our prayers and giving us all that we need to live the life to which He has called us.

3 TALKING TO GOD FOR MEN

O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!
Job 16: 21 KJV

My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.
Job 16:20-21 NIV

After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.
Job 42:10 NIV

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.
Romans 15: 30 NIV

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"Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still, He will never talk well with real success to men for God who had not learned well how to talk to God for men." E.M. Bounds⁹

How easy it is to get so absorbed in talking to men for God that we forget to talk to God for men! How easy to forget that in the warfare against the cosmic powers of this dark age (Ephesians 6: 12) mere human words are like buckshot, perhaps covering a lot of territory but of no eternal effect. Only when the words are the Word of God, a living two-edged sword, is there value in their use.

We must first talk to God, asking that His Spirit prepare the way and, taking by prayer, the sword of the Spirit so sharp "It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12 GNT)

God's Word gives us many examples of those for whom we are to pray: for friends and enemies, for brothers in the Lord and for kings and those in high places.

Moses was a prime example of one who talked to God for men. He prayed often for a willful and grumbling people that fell often into God's disfavor. (Examples of intercessory prayer in Scripture Exodus 32:9-14; 34:8-9; Numbers 16:19-24, 41-50) Once the Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people despise Me? Will they never believe Me, even after all the miracles I have done among them? I will disinherit them and destroy them with a plague, and I will make you into a nation far greater and mightier than they are!" (Numbers 14:10-12 TLB)

Humanly speaking Moses should have been delighted. God was offering him great honor. But Moses was a true man of God. God's honor was at stake, so he prayed: "But what will the Egyptians think when they hear about it?... They know full well the power You displayed in rescuing Your people. They have told this to the inhabitants of this land... Now if You kill all Your people, the nations that have heard Your fame will say, 'The Lord God had to kill them because He wasn't able to take care of them in the wilderness'... Oh, I plead with You, pardon the sins of this people because of Your magnificent, steadfast love, just as You have forgiven them all the time from when we left Egypt until now." (Numbers 14:13-16, 19 TLB)

At Sinai, heartbroken because of the golden calf, Moses fasted and prayed forty days and nights for the forgiveness of a people who maligned not only God but Moses, too, in their grumbings. (Deuteronomy 9:11-19)

Moses, following the rebellion of Korah, (Numbers 16:1-49) was the victim of a vicious protest demonstration. God brought a plague upon the protesters in punishment of their sin and rebellion, but Moses commanded Aaron to put altar fire with the incense

⁹ (E. M. Bounds, Power Through Prayer 1985)

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in his censer and go into the midst of the protesters to stop the plague. Aaron "stood between the living and the dead and the plague was stopped." (Numbers 16)

Abraham, alarmed for his nephew, Lot, interceded for the city of Sodom. His prayer would have been answered could the city have met the minimal requirements of ten upright men in the city. As it was only Lot could meet the requirements. Sodom was not saved, but God answered the prayers of Abraham in that Lot was saved. (Genesis 18:16-33; 19:15-26)

Job had endured a great deal at the hands of his "comforters". When God told the "would be wise men" to go to Job and ask him to pray for them, Job did so. -- Job was himself blessed for "After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before." (Job 42:10 NIV)

Samuel called for and got thunder and rain on a day of wheat harvest as a sign to the people that the Lord was not pleased that they had chosen an earthly king to replace the King of Heaven and Earth. When they quickly repented and begged Samuel to pray for them that they should not die, he assured them that he would not sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for them. Rather he would not only pray for them but would also teach them the good and right way. (1Samuel 12:17-23)

David, after he had sinned in counting his own resources instead of God's, repented and interceded for his people that they should not suffer for his foolishness, and another plague was stopped by the prayer of repentance. (2 Samuel 24:1-25)

When Hezekiah saw that many of the Israelites had eaten the Passover without ritual cleansing, he cried to God for them, explaining that they had prepared their hearts to seek God, though they had not been able to go through the rites of purification. They were forgiven and healed and had such great joy in the feast that when the seven days were completed they voluntarily and joyously extended the feast for another seven days. It was a time when prayer went right up into heaven. "... God heard them for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place." (2 Chronicles 30:13-27) Prayer can turn a sorry situation into one of real victory,

Ezra prayed a magnificent prayer of repentance for his people, including himself as one of the sinful, who had allowed sin to happen. The people were of one heart and mind with him, and at considerable cost to themselves agreed to make restitution before God. Ezra, by his identification with the sinful had led them into the right attitude before God. (Ezra 9:1-10)

Daniel's prayer of repentance for himself and his people is strikingly like that of Ezra. (Daniel 9:1-23)

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Jesus, Himself facing death, prayed for the men God had given Him as disciples and friends. "I pray for them... for they belong to you...Keep them safe..." From lions' dens and evil kings which He knew were in their future? No! Listen as He prays: "... so that they may be one just as you and I are one ... I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One." (John 17: 9, 11, 15 GNT)

The worst thing the Evil One can do to the followers of Jesus is to fill them with hate and wrangling. Jesus prayed. "Make them your own... " This blessing He asked not only for the disciples of that New Testament day, but for us, too. " I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us ... in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me." (John 17:20-21, 23 GNT)

This prayer was to accomplish Jesus' purpose in coming to be man. "I made you known to them and I will continue to do so, in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them." (John 17:26 GNT)

Jesus did not complete that prayer that day just before Gethsemane "because he lives forever to plead with God for them." (Hebrews 7:25 GNT) Nor does He intend to finish it alone. He wants us to join Him in this ministry of intercession. "Whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:19 GNT) He is with us today as we intercede for His people and for the lost.

Paul, as well as having a tremendous ministry of intercession himself, at times cried, "Brothers and sisters, pray for us." (1 Thessalonians 5:25 NIV), and then added that when many join in prayer, many can also join in thanksgiving and praise when the prayer is answered.

Paul also assured the Colossians that Epaphras "always prays fervently for you, asking God to make you stand firm, as mature and fully convinced Christians, in complete obedience to God's will. I can personally testify to his hard work for you..." (Colossians 4:12-13 GNT) Prayer is work – not easy work either!

Who can better understand Paul's pleas for prayer that there would be an open door of opportunity for the gospel and that the message might be spoken clearly than the missionary. He is faced with his own inadequacy in a language not his own, and the very real veil that Satan puts over the minds of unbelievers "though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand." (Matthew 13:13 NIV) Only persistent, believing prayer can take away the veil and give fluency of tongue to His servants, as well as boldness to go on preaching in spite of the seemingly impossible barriers.

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With Paul, too, we feel the urgency for prayer "that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly" (2 Thessalonians 3:1 NIV) for it so often seems far too slow for the urgency of our times. Yes, with Paul, modern missionaries would say, "Keep on praying for us." (Hebrews 13:18 GNT) People sometimes say, "You missionaries! You are just too modest to tell us what you really need. You just say, 'Pray for us.' Tell us what do you really need most?"

What does one say in reply? How can one so involved in spiritual battle make friends understand that truly there is no greater need than urgent prayer? Financial support is important, but money does not buy spiritual victories!

One is reminded of Joshua's battle with Amalek. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill to watch the battle. Moses held up his hands - a stance common for a prayer of supplication. So long as his hands were raised heavenward Joshua was victorious. But Moses' arms grew weary. Then Aaron and Hur came along side, each holding up one of his arms, and in time the battle was won. (Exodus 17: 10-13)

Missionaries so often live their lives on the "tip toe" of expectancy - a very tiring position, but one of necessary anticipation. How they need friends to hold them up in prayer!

Sometimes we, God's servants, need someone to pray that our eyes will be opened, even as Elisha prayed for his servant. (2 Kings 6:8-23 KJV) Sometimes we forget that there are "horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha". The battle seems so impossible, except for this power from God so invisible, yet so constantly available to us. There is great strength and assurance to be had when some friend of God prays for the opening of our spiritual eyes.

God's servants are sometimes faced with a dilemma as Daniel was when he went to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and asked them to pray that God would give him the wisdom to interpret the King's dream. (Daniel 2:17, 19)

How often God's servants need wisdom! James says, "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God..." (James 1:5 KJV) We should pray for wisdom for one another. If the preacher keeps on doing stupid things, preaches insipid sermons, why not just ask God to give him wisdom. You might get a good preacher without having to send the pulpit committee out on a hunt!

Sometimes God's servants may be, like Peter, asleep between two guards, tied with two chains. Oh not always literally -- though more often than we are aware of even in our day God's servants in some parts of the world are in prison for their faith. But there are also spiritual forces which bind and guard us, keeping us from effective service. The answer to Peter's problem was, of course, a prayer meeting. (Acts 12:1-12) Jesus said, "Believe that you have received it" (Mark 11:24 NIV) Present tense!

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There is scriptural precedent for praying both for and against one's enemies. Elisha, in almost the same breath in which he asked for sight for his servant, asked for blindness for his enemies, that God's people might have the victory. Then he prayed again that the enemy might have sight again so that they could see their defeated condition. (2 Kings 6:18, 20)

This is the basis of the prayer Jesus told us to pray for our enemies and those who use us badly -- that they might see their spiritually defeated condition and come to a right relationship with their God.

There was once a church where God's own people were becoming enemies of one another. Certain leaders in the church had taken their eyes off of Jesus and were looking at each other. Vance Havner says, "The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Maybe we've been looking at each other, which would hardly set us rejoicing!"¹⁰

Some of the elders and deacons in that church turned their eyes more squarely on Jesus. They began to pray as they had never prayed before. One elder and his wife spent a whole night in prayer following a particularly painful tussle at a board meeting. Another elder's wife, greeted with, "I think I have a solution ... I've been praying a lot about it..." replied, "What else have any of us been doing but praying these last few weeks?"

The result? The increased spiritual maturity of those who turned to the Lord in prayer was amazing. One who visited again after a long absence said, "I've never seen more mature love in a church." It was true. As these men and women prayed for their enemies, not only were the enemies willing to repent of their divisive spirit but they were removed by their own volition both from offices and from membership. Concern on the part of those who bore the prayer burden became more and more intense. The situation in the church was much easier to live with, but what of those who had estranged themselves from the fellowship of the church? Volumes of prayer went up that these people would be melted by the love of God and return to the fellowship. Those who prayed were seeing these erstwhile enemies through God's eyes of love.

Praying for our enemies may change us more than it changes the enemy. A love that is so humanly impossible wells up in our own hearts. We learn by focusing prayer on an enemy to see that enemy as God sees him. If God loves him, we had better learn to love him, too.

Our intercession, though, is not to begin and end with our brothers and our enemies. We are told that "petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life ... This is good and it pleases God our Savior..." (1 Timothy 2:1-3 GNT)

¹⁰ (Havner 1964)

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Ezra told the priests to "pray for the life of the king." (Ezra 6:10 KJV) Nehemiah was burdened for the restoration of Jerusalem, but as the king's cup bearer he had to have the king's permission for a leave of absence to go do the job he felt called to do for the Lord. For what earthly reason would a heathen king grant such a request? Nehemiah prayed for the king, that his heart would be open to God's will. It was, and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt at the king's expense! (Nehemiah 1:10)

Prayers for kings -- and dictators, and prime ministers, and presidents today could very well change history! Who can tell which prayers were answered in the opening of Eastern Europe to the Gospel in such a surprisingly fast renaissance of freedom? Our own country needs a similar restoration of spiritual values. What would happen if we really prayed? There is only one way to find out -- and that's to pray!

We especially need to pray for wisdom and courage for Godly men and women in our government and we need to pray for the enemy that their eyes be opened to their own godlessness and lost condition. James says, "The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results." (James 5:16 TLB)

Paul wrote to Timothy "I urge, that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people; for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a peaceful and quiet life with all reverence towards God and with proper conduct. This is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4 GNT)

We might say, "Pray, intercede, give thanks for the ungodly men in our government who have approved abortion and made that approval a law in our land. Intercede for those who are ripping all reference to God and morality from our schools?" That I cannot do!

But wait! Who was the king, the Emperor when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy? None but the ultra wicked Nero who later blamed the Christians for burning Rome and provided his own garden for the hideous arena where Christians would be torn apart and devoured by lions. Yet Paul said, "Pray for that man!"

Pray for the king, the president, your representatives in Senate and the House. The Supreme Court. Pray that we will be able in our time to live peaceful, quiet, godly, holy, fearless lives.

4 TALKING TO GOD WITH MEN

"Again. I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for; it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come gather in my name, there am I with them."
Matthew 18:19-20 NIV

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
Ecclesiastes 4:12 NIV

"And a new desire has been born in me. It is that none of you miss the peculiar blessing there is in united prayer. Two little sticks burning together can make a glow, thank God; but how much more warm the glow of forty or fifty if each be on fire."
Amy Carmichael ¹¹ ** Quoted by Bishop Houghton... **

A cord threefold we need, no less!
A fellowship of prayer;
There's you and me, with Christ to bless
Entwined a threefold cord.

'Tis not with ease a threefold cord
Is broken, frayed or rent.
The Scarlet Thread -- blood of our Lord -
Assures a lifeline strong.

The rope that holds us at the brink
Must be that threefold cord.
So fuse it well -- the prayer wrought link --
This lifeline of lost men.

We don't often think of queens in heathen courts as being conveners of prayer meetings, but it happened once.

Queen Esther of the court of Ahasuerus was charged with fearful responsibility. She had to make a request for her people before the King. If the King held out his scepter she would enter with her plea. If he did not, it was "off with her head!"

"Pray!" Esther sent this message to her people. " Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."
(Esther 4:16 NIV)

¹¹ (Houghton 1953)

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The people did -- they prayed. Esther did -- she went before the King, and the King did -- he held out his scepter and listened sympathetically to her request. (Esther 4-8)

The first lady of Formosa (now called Taiwan), Madame Chiang Kai Shek, was a famous convener of prayer meetings in her troubled times. In her own words, "But to those who persist in prayers there will suddenly come a fresh burst and flowering of faith. And with it, a wider and deeper joy than ever experienced before. Soon after my arrival in Formosa, after the Communists seized China, I felt summoned to form a prayer group. I quailed at the thought. I shied away in self-consciousness. My friends would think that I was over pious as I once thought my mother was. Isn't it odd that most of us feel no reticence in proclaiming our love for our family and friends, but we are most unwilling to let people know of our allegiance to Christ? Because this is true, our devotion to Him withers, for only in reaffirmation can we keep love alive." ¹²

Madame Chiang goes on to tell how the prayer groups were formed, how they sang, read the Word, shared their prayer burdens and then knelt in prayer together. She concludes, "I have experienced what I had so often heard about and never understood: spiritual joy and exhilaration. Soon I realized that others were feeling the same thing. This is the strange fruit of a prayer group -- intellectual conviction is the proof all around the members of the power of prayer, plus an entirely fresh resurgence of inward joy. This is one of the ways religion truly becomes personal." ¹³

Daniel once called a small prayer meeting of great power. (Dan 2:17-19) He was to face the king with the humanly impossible task of reconstructing the king's dream and then interpreting it. He went first to the king to beg a little extra time, --then he went home and said to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, "Pray! Pray hard! Ask God to tell me the dream and its meaning." They did -- they prayed. God did -- He gave Daniel the wisdom he needed. The result of this prayer cell was that Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen King, fell on his knees and cried, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of Kings, and a revealer of mysteries." (Daniel 2:47 NIV)

The New Testament church was born in a prayer meeting. How can we restore the New Testament Church without restoring the vital prayer meeting? What was the New Testament type of prayer meeting? Was it "every Wednesday at 7:30 bring your Bible -- we'll open the Word together then we'll pray a little? (Oh yes, we'll be very careful not to run overtime!)" I doubt this had much resemblance to the prayer meetings of the New Testament church. I rather think those prayer meetings were much more like the prayer cell groups that sprang up in the 1970's --here and there-- within the church, but more outside of the scheduled activities of the church--a spontaneous response to a great need.

¹² (Kai-shek 1955)

¹³ Ibid

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I think they lived together in fellowship -- not just met for fellowship. They shared deeply one another's burdens. When a need arose they just stopped and prayed. The earliest record of the disciples drawing together in prayerful oneness was in Acts 1:14 (NIV) where they "all joined together constantly in prayer."

This certainly wasn't the last time their hearts were joined in prayer for it became a way of life. In Acts 4:23-32 as soon as the followers of Christ heard what had happened to Peter and John "they all joined together in prayer to God." What a prayer meeting that must have been! It probably scarcely surpassed the time in Acts 12:5-17 -- the one that was in progress while an angel was shaking Peter awake in prison and leading him out.

As the believers went from victory to victory in their prayer meetings how their faith must have increased. How they must have looked forward to those times of fellowship in prayer.

Paul told the Colossians that he had prayed (labored) for them that their hearts would be "drawn together in love and so have the full wealth of assurance which true understanding brings". (Colossians 2:2 GNT) John said "But if we live in the light -- just as he is in the light -- then we have fellowship with one another." (1 John 1:7 GNT)

Why is it in the church today that when we speak of a fellowship meeting it usually refers to a meal or refreshments together -- seldom a time of prayer and spiritual feasting, much less fasting? "Join us for a time of fellowship." That is "refreshments will be served," and often in this day of health consciousness a terrible temptation for one that God is directing to be more discreet in what one eats for one's health's sake. We're missing something if spiritual feasting is not the main reason for fellowship.

What happened to the prayer meeting? I have probably dozed off in as many of them as you have! But why? "Why should conversation with the Living God be so dull? Could it be for the simple reason that we have ceased to converse -- to really communicate? One is not apt to pray effectively in public unless he prays effectively in private. Rosalind Rinker in Prayer, Conversing with God,¹⁴ lists it as the impossibility of speaking intimately (in prayer) to One with whom we have no relationship. We need to get acquainted with God at home.

Another hindrance is self-defense. We want others to think we have a good relationship with God, whether we do or not, so we pad our prayers with fine sounding language and pseudo concern. This can stifle any prayer meeting. What we need is openness between ourselves and God and between ourselves and our fellow Christians. How much more of a blessing we can be to one another if we can open our lives,

¹⁴ (Rinker, Rosalind, "Prayer, Conversing with God" 1959, Zondervan 1987)

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confess our sins one to another and say, "Brothers, Sisters, I've got problems! Pray for me." (James 5:16) Instead we hide our problems from each other with a gauze veil that conceals not so much the problem as the nature of it. If only we could draw back the veil of pride and pray together over our problems!

Sincerely, such an openness with God would tend to get rid of the language barrier that stultifies our prayer meetings. If we were really talking with a Person who is alive and real to us we would not pray as often we do, "O God, we thank you, God that we can come into Your Presence God, God we need you today, God..."¹⁵ Nor would we use such vague theological terms as we often do.

Perhaps the biggest, most effective deadener of prayer meetings is long windedness, the brother or sister who drones on and on until everyone is at least half asleep. Who has not been in prayer meeting where some well meaning brother had prayed all the way to Timbuctu and back without a thought that others might have burdens on their own hearts they would like to share in prayer. (And if the prayer meeting just had to end at 8:30 -- well that's just too bad!) We need to remember that not only do others have burdens they want to share in audible prayer, but someone else might be better able to lead others of the group into a oneness of heart in praying for some of the requests the long-winded one had selfishly covered himself.

I had read Rosalind Rinker's book on conversational prayer with a "well isn't that interesting?" attitude. In fact, I suspected it might be some sort of a gimmick and I don't care too much for gimmicks in religion. Then one night I walked into an OMF prayer meeting in Chiang Rai where they were having just this kind of a prayer meeting. Something happened to me that night. This was real prayer and everyone was excitedly sharing in it.

Each person prayed a short prayer, making one basic request -- not just a sentence prayer but a short succinct, heartfelt prayer for whatever the Spirit led him to pray. The next person -- not next in order in the circle, but as the Lord led -- might add some other angle to the prayer just prayed, or he might introduce a new topic for prayer. It was thrilling to find oneself joining heartily into the prayer being prayed, knowing that it was not going to be repeated in vain repetitions round and round the circle. This was much more in keeping with Jesus' teaching, "use not vain repetitions". (Matthew 6:7 KJV) We were all praying together for it -- right now! We knew God had heard and all that was left as each person finished praying was to say, "Thank You, Lord," for where all had agreed there could be no doubt of an answer. The prayer continued, each person praying as many times as he wished until at last all the burdens had been left with Him and there was only the last final "Thank You, Lord," to be whispered in each heart.

¹⁵ Ibid

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The next experience I had of this type of prayer was equally exciting, but different in that it was broken up into small prayer cells instead of one large group. This was at the Lake James School of Missions. Further preparation of the heart for worship in the singing of a hymn and a devotional through a couple of prayer requests of general interest was mentioned. Then the entire group of several hundred people was asked to form into prayer cells of four people each. We were asked to get acquainted enough to know one personal request from each person, then each was to pray a short prayer for one another. This meant that every person in the hall had an opportunity to pray with others in those few minutes -- except once when I got carried away and suddenly remorsefully remembered that I had prayed too long and one brother had not gotten to pray. It was a good self rebuke to me though.

One time we had three Christian servicemen visiting in our home in Bangkok. They were on a three-day pass from their base. All had brought their Bibles, and a couple of them had brought their guitars. We sat and sang, discussed the Word -- at any and all times of the day and night. I spent quite a bit of time scrubbing the pots of hospitality, but often there was one of the fellows in the kitchen talking about the Lord as I scrubbed. All in all, it had been a real blessing to all of us.

Then I asked one of the fellows if he had ever been in a conversational type prayer meeting. He said he hadn't and then added, "Let's try it tonight!" And so we did, each of us praying many times, remembering one another and our own problems which we had been openly sharing during the days we were together. We prayed for others and it seemed easy for each of us to pray using the most ordinary sort of English. Finally, everyone was quiet for a time -- and we knew that the results of that prayer meeting wouldn't end for a long time. My daughter Jeni said, "That was great! It was just as if Jesus were sitting right there on one of the chairs talking with us!" She was so right!

The next day a young man, a fellow who had never known the Lord, but who was living in our home, came to me to ask some questions about the New Testament which he had promised me he would read. We had prayed for him the night before and now as Jeni realized that I was talking seriously with him, she slipped to the carport to pray while waiting for the others to come back from a shopping trip. When they came she jumped in the car and said, "Don't anyone get out until we have a prayer meeting for our friend that Mom is talking to."

The rest of our time together was just like that, praying for one another and loving one another very much. Understanding one another and the problems we were facing together. I think I know now what the prayer meetings were like in the New Testament Church.

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Prayers are not to be sermons, but they are to help one another. If we are praying and sharing as the early church was, we will find ourselves blessed with mutual growth and glow.

Another new breath of the Spirit that is blowing through some prayer groups is the use of a passage of Scripture as a guide for our prayers. It is amazing how many Scripture passages lend themselves to this kind of prayer, refreshing the spirit with the Word of God as we pray.

My first experience of this came as a group of us knelt at six each morning on the altar steps. It became an "altar of incense for us as we prayed through our concerns for the congregation and its leaders.

One of the most beautiful things about it, especially as we were beginning our prayer time with a Psalm, was that we were led first to praise and drawn closer to the Lord in an attitude of faith, hope and love. Take a possible example. Psalm 4 verse one leads us to praise for our righteous God along with our plea to be heard, taking time to ponder and express our awe at His perfect righteousness.

Having praised Him we go on to our distress regarding the matters we have come to pray about, and we can begin to define some of those concerns -- no need for sordid details for God hears our thoughts and hearts as well as our words, but enough so others can join in the "Amen". We confess then that it is only through His mercy that these prayers will be answered.

Verse two leads on to prayers that we ourselves will glorify Him and that He will deliver us from others for whom we pray from the deceitful modern idols that may have been set up within the sanctuary of our churches. Verse three follows naturally specific prayers for ourselves and others that He will "set us apart for Himself ". Then praise that He is even now listening to each prayer. Verse four leads us to pray for ourselves that our anger over sin that is causing "little ones" to stumble is not misdirected or expressed outside His will, asking God to day and night search our hearts and remind us that the anger of man does not accomplish the will of God. (James 1:20) "Help us, Lord to control our tongues while You work."

Verse six goes a step further in asking that when wrongs are righted it will be evident that it is the light of God's face shining now that the church has achieved the victory.

Verse seven brings us full circle in "making our requests known with thanksgiving", (Philippians 4:6) --thanks that He has so filled our hearts with joy that the distress which brought us to Him has been put in His hand and we can sleep in peace, knowing He is working out the details, whether through us or in spite of us.

Praise God! The modern church is discovering new depths of corporate prayer in small intimate, caring groups that are bringing congregations together in new power and unity that is intensely healing to the Body of Christ.

5 Talking to Men for God

The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king. Nehemiah 2:4-5 NIV

Pray, then, that I may speak, as I should, in such a way as to make it clear.
--Paul Colossians 4:4 GNT

Pray, that I may be bold in speaking about the gospel as I should.
--Paul Ephesians 6:20 GNT

Today, O Lord,
My path will meet the path
Of those who die for lack of love.
Men rejected by mankind,
Women anguished by the loss
Of those they love,
Children crushed by those
Who ought to love them.

Yet, Lord
I dare not speak one word
Except You give that word to me.
A word marinated in Your love,
Sweet with Your care,
Pungent with Your truth.

Yes, Lord, I'll go-
But You must lead me
To the ones who, unsuspecting,
Wait for You
You must give me
Words to speak to them-
Your love with which to love them.

As we learn to pray without ceasing and as we talk to God for men, we will have a new perspective on talking to men for God.

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Keith Miller describes his discovery this way:

To remind myself of God's presence I decided to pray every time I walked to and from the drinking fountain in the hall. Things began to happen as I walked through the offices and spoke to people. I was praying and I began to pray for them. Although I could not notice any outward difference in my own attitudes, some of the love and concern I began to feel for these people must have communicated itself to them, because without my saying anything about my new intention in that situation people began to come into my private office to talk to me about their inner lives.¹⁶

Often as we prayed with young believers who were in the throes of "kicking the opium habit," we found it hard to tell where we left off praying for or with them and when we began talking to them for – God. The surest cure in the world is to pray the addict through the hours of terrible craving, fear, and physical distress.

Comparing notes with a doctor in the Bangkok detoxification center, we found that prayer for Christians was resulting in an 85% cure rate as compared with the hospital rate of 10%. The doctor was amazed for we were using only the simplest medicines to help them through.

Nehemiah demonstrated out of the urgency of his situation another way in which one combines talking to men for God and to God for men at the same time.

(Nehemiah 2:4-5 NIV)

Nehemiah's heart burned with the desire to go back to his homeland to restore the walls of the Holy City--but how could he hope for such a thing? He was not a mason, but cupbearer to the heathen king of a heathen land that held him as captive. How could such a king understand the longing of his heart?

As Nehemiah prayed and went before the king with the royal cup, his face was unable to conceal the distress and longing of his heart.

The king, noticing, asked, "What is it you want?"

Nehemiah "prayed to the God of heaven" and spoke to the king. The impossible happened! The king was concerned and immediately began to make provision for his cupbearer to become a wall builder.

Major Ian Thomas¹⁷ tells of thrilling times when prayer has put him in the right place at the right time with a person whose heart the Holy Spirit had prepared for this moment. One story he tells is of an improbable, nearly impossible, trip he made to Europe where he had an improbable "conversation" with a Dutch lad--by means of

¹⁶ Miller, Keith, Taste of New Wine, Word Books, 1965, Used by permission.

¹⁷ Major Ian Thomas, from a taped sermon

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writing him a note in English in the hope that the Dutch boy would be interested enough to have it translated and find he had an invitation to Ian Thomas' English home, where there was much spiritual food for young people.

The boy did have it read--he went to the Thomas home where he found the Lord and learned to pray that God would lead him to souls in need.

Not long after, as the boy was on a bus in England a young Dutch traveler "just happened" to put a Dutch flag on his knapsack just as the Dutch Christian boy came along. A Dutch conversation—a Dutch conversion--another young Christian deeply impressed with the importance of talking to God for and with men and at the same time to men for God.

This story points up the exciting ways the Lord leads one who is in such close touch with God that God can say, "There is someone I want you to talk to. To which one's heart replies, "All right, Lord, but I won't know what to say."

The heart that is tuned on God's beam will often marvel at the perfect answers--or question--God speaks through him. One night I was awakened at midnight. The Lord spoke to my heart. "Go talk to your young friend now!"

"Lord, this is a funny time to talk to him. I know I have been praying that You would tell me when the right time is to talk with him, and I have just heard the refrigerator door close, but by the time I get out there he'll be back in bed fast asleep. Anyway, you know, Lord, he was "high" when I saw him a few hours ago. Is that any condition for serious talk about You?"

"Go, talk to your young friend about Me now."

"Oh, all right, Lord, but I'll bet he's asleep by now."

My young friend was not asleep. He sat in the dark living room, thinking his own wistful thoughts, waiting for someone to tell him about Someone who has the answers to all his problems.

There have been many other times in our years of ministry to the Mien hill tribe, who are never taught in conventional ways--but in ways and moments that the Lord provides.

There are a couple of very precious instances that come often to mind. We had all been much in prayer for Granny Tsou. She had long been addicted to opium and as her daughters in law and several grandchildren became Christians Granny only looked on wistfully saying, "The doctor told me I am too old to break opium, so I can't become a Christian." She was then 70 years old."

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Many times I and others had explained to Granny that God did not expect us to do anything He would not enable us for. So the thing for her to do was to put her trust fully in Him and then wait to see what He would do for her.

Still she lingered, and still we prayed. One day, visiting Granny who was ill and praying for her, I suddenly said: "Granny, someday your son, your daughters-in-law, your grandchildren and I will go to Heaven, but we will be so sad."

Granny's eyes met mine with a look of surprise. "Why" she asked, "why would you be sad in heaven?" "Well," I replied, "We'll all be up there looking for Granny and Granny won't be there."

Her eyes fell and that was the end of the conversation. Not long after, Granny did confess publicly her faith in Christ and I will never forget the joy on her face as she came up from her baptism in the cool creek." She was indeed a new creature in Christ Jesus, never complaining (as before) always radiant sitting in the first row every Sunday.

Sometime later Granny said, "Teacher do you remember the day you told me you would be sad in heaven if you didn't find me there?"

"Yes, Granny, I remember" I replied.

"Well, I decided I would be sad, too, if I wasn't there so I decided I must believe quickly and be sure to go there."

A couple of years later Granny was lonely. Both her daughter-in-laws had gone to Bangkok to demonstrate their fine handiwork at a fair sponsored by the Royal Family of Thailand. Granddaughter, Ying, was manager of our handicraft program sewing center in the refugee camp and was gone from 7am to 5 or 6 pm and Granny then about 72 was left alone all day and lonely.

Ying said, "Granny, jump on the back of my motor bike and go with me to the camp. You can spend the day visiting with the Christians there while I work."

Granny jumped on in her full tribal attire and so spent three days visiting with Christians in the camp. The evening of the third day as she returned home she thought, "I have forgotten to smoke my opium for three days! If I can forget it for 3 days and feel so good, I no longer need it!"

What rejoicing that brought in family and church. She was afraid, because of the doctor's warning to attempt an opium cure so God just enabled her to forget it all for 3 days and she was cured.

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Two or three years later Granny went to be with the Lord, when Ying checked on her early in the morning she said, "Ying I'm going up" Ying thought she meant that she wanted up in the bed rather than on the pallet on the floor which she favored at night. So Ying helped her into the bed and went to prepare breakfast.

When she came back Granny had "gone up" to Jesus and on her face was a most beautiful smile—her life continued--for she had entered into Life, not death.

Demon worshippers in the village were impressed. Never had they seen such joy in a death and had to concede that Granny had entered into a fullness of Joy.

Another instance of a woman who was reluctant to put her faith in the Lord was Ying's aunt on her mother's side. Ying had led her mother to the Lord but Aunt Faam only said, "Mahn, mahn, ---slowly, slowly—someday I will believe."

We all continued to pray for Aunt Faam but I must admit my faith had weakened to less than a mustard seed, and I always asked the Lord for wisdom and grace whenever I had an encounter with Aunt Faam.

One day I sat in her home talking to her and again, after listening intently she said, "Mahn, mahn" I was silently praying and was shocked to hear myself say "Faam I don't think you will ever believe. You will just be saying "Mahn, mahn" until you fall into hell".

Shocked, yet I didn't hear the Lord rebuking me but I certainly wondered how Aunt Faam would take that rather brash statement.

Not long after that Aunt Faam did become a Christian and a radiant one. She has a good voice for Mien chants and loves to sing. She and Ying's mother often travel through the Mien village selling cloth and thread and they never miss the opportunity to witness through Gospel chants in the non-Christian villages they visit.

Precious as the Lord's conversation had been with us through the years as we tried to talk to men for God, this chapter kept getting pushed aside. Somehow it didn't seem quite finished. Everything else had been completed and was ready for final typing. Maybe it would be better to omit this chapter. Then to my deep, deep joy, I found the Lord was waiting to teach me a new dimension of the subject. The teachers He used were high school young people who were experiencing something richer than I had ever experienced myself.

At my daughter's wedding reception, a friend of the groom said to a lovely high school girl, "When were you saved?" "I'm not sure I am," the girl replied. She had been trained by loving Christian parents in the Word and the Christian life but up to that

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time had not claimed Him as her own personal Savior. She found the Lord that day in all His beauty and power and from then on she was not just lovely, she was radiant. All she had been taught as a child by Christian parents suddenly became very real to her in her own life. "What happened to you?" her friends asked, and one by one He happened to them, too.

As we sat in hand-clasped circles of prayer, these youth and three or four adults, we would feel a hand quietly slip loose and find that two had left the circle. Sometimes it was a Christian who realized his friend was ready to do business with the Lord. Quietly they slipped away to pray together the penitent's prayer. Shortly they would return--radiant!

Or perhaps it would be two estranged friends, holding a grudge against one another. As the warmth of the prayer circle reached their hearts they had to "leave the altar" for a few minutes to heal the hurt--then to return to the circle, eyes moist with tears of joy and release.

Sometimes the circle became a circle of confession when sins and grudges were publicly confessed in prayer. I grew younger in heart as I shared this new dimension of talking to God and men at the same time.

The possibilities are unlimited if we find this new dimension--this walk with God that communicates Him through us! My husband's brother, Burl, tells how, as he daily asked the Lord to "use me today", he was led again and again to people who had a deep need--whose hearts were prepared, though they might have been the last to suspect it.

One day as Burl walked near a bus station--a spot he seldom went--he saw a man pacing back and forth. "None of my business," he might well have said, but rather he knew it was his business--the Lord's business.

The man, he found, was debating suicide. After a time of love and concern and prayer together, the man gave his heart to the Lord.

At one time a Christian friend was having difficulties in his Christian life. There was much resentment--and I was far from guiltless in the matter. Then God spoke to my heart. "You must go talk with him." After much prayer I set out, somewhat timidly. Knowing my own lack of patience, I felt I was the last one who should attempt this touchy situation--why not someone endowed with patience?

Yet I was amazed as the Lord gave me patience and love far beyond what I knew I had. Never have I carried on two simultaneous conversations more vigorously--one with God and one with my friend. God solved several problems that day--and

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taught me that talking to men for God needs to be a party line conversation with God as the most important participant.

Who, indeed, can divide the fine line between talking to God for or with men and talking to men for God?

It is like a length of fine silk floss, spun together into one strong strand.

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