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THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE  
JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022

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# Welcome

## Inspired to pray

**W**elcome to this issue of *idea* magazine focusing on prayer and intercession. A few years ago, I was very discouraged. There were things I had spent years praying for, and it felt like God was not listening. Only the very opposite of what I was praying for seemed to be happening. When I asked God for encouragement, I felt Him remind me of the words from the song Waymaker – “Even when you can’t see it, I’m moving.” As it says in 2 Corinthians 5:4, “for we walk by faith, not by sight”. I have taken that reminder as great inspiration in my prayer life. Now, looking back, I can see He had heard my prayers, and He was moving, to miraculous results.

In this issue, you will, I hope, find inspiration for your own prayer life.

From what Gavin Calver says about DL Moody (I won’t spoil it for you) on page 34, to Pastor Agu Irukwu sharing about his congregation prayer-

walking around the ExCel Centre in London when it was being made into the Covid Nightingale hospital. They prayed and declared no one would die there, that it would not be needed... and we saw it was disbanded, hardly used, by the end of 2020.

On page 20, Debra Green from Redeeming our Communities tells stories of how prayer changed her community in Manchester. She said, “Imagine how we felt when we prayed ‘no more Gunchester’ in a packed velodrome in 2008, only to read on the Manchester Evening News front page headline six months later: ‘Is this the end of Gunchester? Violent crime has fallen by 38 per cent in the last six months.’”

Prayer changes things, and perhaps more importantly it changes us. We have to trust God with the answer, because even if we can’t see it, He is moving.

Jemimah Wright, Acting editor



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# PRAYING TIME IS NEVER WASTED TIME



**W**hy take time to pray, you ask? Prayer can seem so tedious and just another religious ritual. However, all around us are people who want an authentic relationship with God. This only happens when we pray.

I love John 15:15. It says, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you.” A revelation of this friendship will keep your prayer life alive. We become true friends of Jesus if we take time to talk. We also need to develop a partnership with the Spirit.

In Romans 8:26 we read about this partnership: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought,

but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” We need to develop a healthy two-way communication with God. We need to understand that prayer is more than a place to ask for help with our most recent crisis but also find a place of exchange and conversation. As someone once said, “Prayer is not about seeking an answer but about seeking the One who has all the power to answer.” We need to expect to hear God speaking with us too. Prayer is about knowing that as you draw near to the heart of God, God is going to touch your life.

God is calling to us to stand and “mind the gap” for others

**Rachel Hickson** reminds us of the importance of standing in the gap through prayer, and how we can build our relationship with God through the two-way conversation of prayer.

“Prayer is not about seeking an answer but about seeking the One who has all the power to answer.”

## Friendship with God

Truly transparent friendships are rare. Most of us hide something due to fear and a sense of inadequacy. We do not want to be judged and so we hide. When God calls Adam we read that he hid too: “But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ And he answered, ‘I heard you were in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid.’” (Genesis 3:9)

Fear will also rob us of a real and open relationship with God. Good friendships take time. If you are prepared to invest quality time into a relationship then you will be rewarded with a more intimate knowledge and understanding of that person. This same principle works in our friendship with God. If you will give Him your time, He will share the secrets of heaven with you and allow you to understand things that were previously hidden. There are many areas where the church needs fresh insight and wisdom, but these revelations will not be given to us unless we spend time talking with God.

The disciples were captivated by Jesus and His relationship with His Father and wanted to learn to pray. In Luke 11:1 we read this account: “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’” It is interesting that Jesus’ disciples, who lived with Him and watched Him moving in the supernatural, never asked Him, “Lord, teach us how to do miracles.” They cried out, “Lord, teach us to pray!” I believe this cry is stirring in God’s people all over the world right now. As we pursue God and establish our prayer relationship, like Jesus, we need to inspire others as they watch us in this place of prayer.

Anyone who has travelled on the London underground will be familiar with the voice reminding people to, “Mind the gap, please – mind the gap!” as the doors open and people get on and off the trains. In the same way God is calling to us to stand and “mind the gap” for others. We are being challenged to pray beyond ourselves and embrace the needs of others. Heaven is declaring, “Let His kingdom come,” but earth is out of

alignment. As we pray, with one hand we are laying hold of heaven’s desire and, with the other, earth’s reality, and we cry, “Lord, let your kingdom come now to this place at this time.” Everything can shout, “Don’t bother, give up, your prayer will make no difference.” But Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Remember: now is not a good time to give up.

## Don’t stop praying

Your prayer life is probably far more effective than you realise, so don’t stop now. The enemy would love you to believe that the delay to the answers to your prayers is because you are a bad person, or that your prayer is powerless. In fact, you are probably praying the right prayers, but you just need to be persistent – you are doing good – so don’t get weary. Every prayer we pray is like laying another piece of tarmac on that highway of freedom.

Isaiah 62:10 says, “Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise the banner for the nations.”

It is by our prayer or intercession that we bridge the gaps. Even when we cannot discern any change in the natural, our prayer is having effect in the spiritual realms. Praying time is never wasted time. Each time we pray, something is happening and atmospheres are shifting in the heavens. One day, suddenly, your mission will be accomplished. So, remember, do not give up – and watch what happens just because you prayed a prayer of generosity for others.

We need to stand in the gap for our neighbours, our cities, towns or villages, and our nation. As we increase our time in prayer, I believe God will give us increased revelation and discernment regarding the spiritual atmospheres in our communities. Armed with this Holy Spirit information, we can pray more targeted and effective prayers and then have the joy of seeing hopeless situations totally transformed. This is the privilege of prayer – it changes the world!

Rachel Hickson is  
founding director  
of Heartcry for

Change. Her book *I Love Prayer* is available  
from [heartcryforchange.com/shop](http://heartcryforchange.com/shop)





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# PASTOR PREETHY

Pastor Preethy Kurian shares why a prayer movement she was part of in India was so effective, and why prayer is an utterly vital foundation for her current ministry in Capstone Church, London.

## Tell us about yourself.

My husband, Rakesh and I are the founding pastors of Capstone Church. I am also a computer science engineer and director of a financial technology company, started in 2015. We have one daughter, Rhema.

## How did you come to faith in Jesus?

Though I was born in India to a Catholic family, I grew up in Saudi Arabia. I figured there was a God, but He seemed so far away and uninvolved. I would say one or two Catholic prayers every now and then to keep me out of trouble. My family was open to all religions. In 1996, while at my first job, I felt incomplete. I knew there was a God but did not know how to reach Him. I became a Christian while attending a Catholic charismatic meeting in Cochin. I was 23 years old at the time. I repented and invited Jesus into my life; God wasn't so far away anymore. From that point, my life was fundamentally transformed. I wanted to live for Jesus and Him alone.

I joined a youth prayer ministry and revival started breaking out. Today, that small youth group is one of the largest churches in my hometown and has impacted our state. I believe one of the key success points of the ministry was the stress given to personal prayer, and corporate and intercessory prayer.

## How did you start Capstone Church?

When we arrived in London in 2005, we believed God was opening a new season in our lives. We didn't know what God wanted us to do, so we would walk the streets to pray for the land. We realised we needed to go to the streets to preach the gospel. It was not easy; it was quite a humbling experience as

we were not always received well. As we continued consistent prayer and ministry, God started adding faithful people to the team. We saw many Hindus and non-Christians attending the services. In February 2009, Capstone Church was birthed in East London. Today, we are honoured to be pastors of a vibrant multinational community of believers.

## What does prayer look like at Capstone Church?

Prayer was always at the centre. In the early days of church planting, when a team would go out to the streets to evangelise, there would also be a team interceding as the backbone of the work. We understood that those who go and those who send have the same reward. We figured that prayer was a way to reach places and people we could not go ourselves.

The church got a vision of prayer and intercession because everything we did was preceded by prayer. People learned the power of agreement in prayer and would use it as a key weapon in their lives. As a church we are committed to upholding the Evangelical Alliance and its leadership in prayer and request prayer points for the season to pray into.

## Why do you believe prayer is important?

I believe prayer is vital because it gives us God's solutions for our daily living and strengthens our faith in God. Prayer is our communication with God, and it opens our spirit to the possibilities of God. The liberty of our families, community and the nations depend on us standing in the gap as soldiers in the battlefield against the onslaught of darkness. That is why prayer is important, and why we will keep praying.

[capstone-church.org](http://capstone-church.org)

# BEING A SPECIAL ENVOY IN PRAYER

Belief-based persecution, particularly of Christians, remains at an all-time high globally. **Fiona Bruce MP** explains the urgent situation, and how we can intercede in prayer.

**N**ever have so many people, and so many Christians in particular, been persecuted simply for what they believe. The charity Open Doors estimates that, across 76 countries, 360 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution. Every two hours a Christian somewhere in the world is killed for their faith. Persecution not only affects Christians – indeed it affects people of all faiths, and none.

In Russia, 71-year-old Valentina Baranovskya and many like her have known the authoritarian hand of the state as she serves a prison sentence in Siberia, convicted as a criminal. Her crime? Valentina is a Jehovah's Witness – a group banned in Russia where it is designated an "extremist organisation".

In Nigeria, 18-year-old Leah Sharibu has passed her fourth anniversary in captivity, kidnapped by the Boko Haram extremist group simply because of her gender and education, and kept because of her faith – she refused to deny Jesus.

And in Vietnam, Nguyen Bac Truyen, a legal expert who has supported Buddhist prisoners of conscience, is serving an 11-year sentence in a prison a thousand kilometres away from his family.

Across the world today millions of people like Valentina, Leah and Nguyen are losing their

education, jobs, homes, livelihoods, families, freedom and access to justice – and even life itself – simply on account of what they believe.

## Why does freedom of religion or belief matter so much?

Freedom of Religion or Belief, or FoRB for short, matters, because what we believe goes to the very heart of what makes us human. Our beliefs give us dignity, purpose and worth. FoRB matters because where it is disregarded or violated, other important rights are all too often denied too – rights such as freedom of expression or assembly; the right to work, even the right to life itself.

And yet, compared with many other 21st century global concerns, the right to FoRB, and its dreadful abuses, engage little attention from the media or elsewhere.





## What can we do? We can pray!

# 1

We can pray for the persecuted, to have the strength to endure, and for their situations to change. In 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul writes, “In all the persecutions and trials you are suffering... we constantly pray for you.” And we can pray not only for Christians, but for those who do not share our faith – such prayers are an act of Christlike love.

# 2

We can pray for the persecutors, that those who persecute would cease and change. In Acts 7–8, Stephen, after being falsely accused, and as he was being stoned to death, prayed “Lord, do not hold this against them...” and we also read, “Saul was there, giving approval to his death.” Saul later came to know Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

# 3

We can pray for those in authority, as we are reminded in 1 Timothy 2, that in countries where governments are instigating or allowing persecution, they would recognise their responsibilities to respect, and support, the freedom of belief of their peoples “to live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

# 4

We can pray for the impact of the UK-hosted Global Summit on FoRB. This summer, government ministers, faith and belief leaders and representatives, civil society activists and young people from around the world will gather in London for a Ministerial Conference hosted by the British government. Pray that they will not only discuss global concerns about FoRB, but also agree to practical commitments which will lead to real change in the lives of people suffering persecution. Pray that many, especially young people, will be inspired to champion freedom of religion or belief in their generation – and to challenge its abuses – and so promote change in the years to come.

*Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton has been a Member of Parliament for 12 years, is Co-Chair of the Pro-Life All Party Parliamentary Group and the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. A Lawyer by profession, she is married to Richard and they have two grown-up sons.*





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Jemimah Wright spoke to **Pastor Agu Irukwu** about the Prayer Shield initiative and its impact, and how he longs for everyone to find delight in prayer.



# FINDING THE DELIGHT *in prayer*

## How did the Prayer Shield initiative come about?

I was spending a quiet day and the idea just popped into my mind to raise prayer around the nation and for the nation in a very simple way: a two-minute prayer every single day, and another minute or so declaring the word over the nation. If that was all you could give, that was it. Four minutes, max, and you are done.

It was an opportunity to bring the body of Christ together across different denominations. So from 2020–21 we had 365 Christian leaders, across all denominations, leading a prayer a day.

I think every prayer initiative that is birthed in a church breathes the life of God into the church.

The beauty about prayer is that you're

going to get two answers. If you're persistent, you will get the answer to your prayer. But even more important than the answer to your prayer, you get more of God.

Sometimes you get so much of God, that it makes what you're seeking Him for pale in comparison. I think that's what happened with us and the Prayer Shield. It happens with every prayer initiative.

He says in Jeremiah 33:3, "Call on me, and I will answer and show you great and mighty things." I always say to people, leave Him to answer. Leave Him to show us great and mighty things, but where are the people who are calling? Let's not be negligent in calling. Let's not be negligent in coming to the place of prayer, in lifting eyes to Him, turning our attention to Him, and He will do His part.

## How do you pray?

For me, prayer has moved from just a discipline to a delight. The beauty about that is that when it's a delight, it's not so structured; you take every opportunity to talk to God. In the evening I'll walk for about an hour and a half and I'll use that as my prayer time. Then I'll set aside time first thing in the morning to spend at least an hour in prayer.

It's a big thing for me to get prayer away from a religious ritual. I hope my sons and daughter don't think talking to me is hard work. I hope it's, "Oh, wow, what a great opportunity to hang out with daddy again. Just jive with him and have a nice conversation with him and discuss some deep things with him." That's how I see prayer.



**When I pray, I am saying, “God, I’m aligning with your plans and your purposes. Even when it’s not what I want, trusting that it’s the best in the final outcome.”**

A big part of prayer for me is conversational prayer, where God is a constant part of everything you're doing. I try to encourage people to pray with Him in the gym, or in between meetings at work. Maintain constant communication with Him and listen out for Him, as we read in Nehemiah 2:

The king says to Nehemiah, "Why are you looking so sad?" Nehemiah explains why, and the king says, "What is it you want?"

Nehemiah says, "Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king..."

That is mind blowing. He had the presence of mind to shoot up a prayer to God first, before speaking to the king. That tells you how prayer was embedded in his life. He had the presence of mind to bring God into everything.

I use that to constantly remind myself to pray to God before I open my mouth. It will make a world of difference.

It's not that every prayer is answered how we want it answered; we must understand that in prayer. There must be room for God to do what He wants to do, and to answer in the way that He wants to answer. My late wife died of cancer, and we prayed for her to overcome cancer. We prayed and prayed and prayed. We had prayer chains, we had non-stop prayer, but she passed away from cancer.

Then someone who was very close to me was also afflicted by cancer. We prayed and prayed and prayed and that person was healed. So there are two contrasts.

We've just got to trust God, and trust that in the final analysis, He will take the best decision based on everything that He knows, which is everything.

Prayer is not trying to twist God's arm to do it your way. When I pray, I am saying, "God, I'm aligning with your plans and your purposes. Even when it's not what I want, trusting that it's the best in the final outcome."

## Are there any Bible passages that inspire you to pray?

I think I've preached more out of Elijah's life than any other part of the Bible. I find Elijah's story compelling. The yardstick for effectual praying in the New Testament is Elijah. In James 5:17 it says, "Elijah was a man with a nature



like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months."

I was thinking, God, really, Elijah had the issues I have? My nature can become complex and complicated, and sometimes get in the way of prayer. Elijah had all that, and yet he could pray in the way that he prayed with such significant results. So for the average person like you and I, we can do some Elijah-like praying as well, with all the issues we have, and all we're dealing with.

## Are there any other stories that you could share of answered prayer to encourage us?

I believe very strongly that the reason that the Covid pandemic didn't get to the levels that were predicted was because there was a church that was praying. There were predictions of mass graves. I remember I was so traumatised when the ExCel Centre was converted into the Nightingale hospital, because we used the building for our Festival of Life, where 40,000 people gather for prayer and worship.

I encouraged one of our prayer teams to go and march around the perimeter of the ExCel Centre and declare that it wasn't going to happen. We're not going to have 1,000s of people coming out of here dead; all these beds are going to be made redundant; and we're not going to need this hospital.

It's important to know that it wasn't just my church, Jesus House, praying. The church in the UK responded in the way that the church should respond

in the place of prayer, and then in action, by loving our community in a practical way.

I think the church had one of its best seasons in my lifetime, in one of the darkest periods in our history, and certainly in my lifetime in this nation. We prayed specifically. I was very involved in encouraging the vaccine uptake, because I said to the church, "Do you remember we prayed and prayed and prayed for the scientific community to find a solution? So we can't say now that they found it that you don't want it, because that's what we prayed for."

When Boris Johnson was struck with Covid the church in this nation prayed for him. There were prayer vigils that were held for our prime minister, simply because the Bible encourages us to do so, irrespective of party affiliations. The Bible encourages us to lift him up, and we did lift him up. And, you know, one day he might find out that a lot of prayers kept him alive.

*Agu Irukwu is a law graduate of the University of Warwick. A former investment banker and partner in a law firm, he is now the senior pastor of Jesus House for all Nations, London. He is a key member of the One People Commission of the Evangelical Alliance, a body set up to integrate ethnic minority churches more fully into the Evangelical Alliance. He co-founded a children's charity with his wife, Sola, called Bright Futures for African Children. Pastors Agu and Sola Irukwu have three children and they live in Middlesex.*

**Michael Ball** from Manchester House of Prayer writes about the motivation behind their 24/7 prayer and worship in the city



# BECAUSE HE

In 2015, five years after we started our house of prayer, we had a speaker come and lead a conference. The night before the conference, we asked him to speak with our team of volunteers, about 20 or so people, and he said something which profoundly challenged me. He asked the question, “Do you know why there isn’t night and day worship and prayer in Manchester?” I remember leaning closer in, excited that I was about to hear the answer that would unlock the growth of the house of prayer. His answer was like a punch to the chest. He said, “Because we haven’t found Him worthy of it yet.”

Even just writing this it hits me

again. The idea of night and day worship feels over the top. It seems extreme, yet the idea of 24-hour petrol stations and supermarkets seems totally reasonable. We’re even fine with 24-hour McDonalds. We consider ourselves worth unceasing convenience and yet we haven’t found Jesus worthy of unceasing adoration.

Revelation 5 tells us that by His blood, we are redeemed, out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation for a specific reason. Each one of us, regardless of our calling, preference, or experience, is called to be a priest to God. Now, that doesn’t mean we all need to take religious orders or get ordained,

this simply means that a large part of our identity as the body of Christ is to minister to God. That may not be familiar language to all of us, but it is for everyone. It means that we are to live our lives “unto God”.

The house of prayer in Manchester exists as a place where God is ministered to. A large part of what we do is pray for the local church in the region. Our team is made up of people who represent over 25 different churches from a wide range of denominations, traditions and styles.

The house of prayer is an altar to Him, a place of worship and prayer. It’s a place where we want to see night and day worship and prayer because Jesus



# IS WORTHY

is worthy of it. If you think about it, we were all made for this! We were made by Him and for Him. And when He returns, we get to spend all our time doing this too. But not only that, the place of worship and prayer is also the place of power. As we sing to Him, as we read His word and as we pray, He listens, He cares, and He responds. His hand moves as we seek His face.

I remember praying for a ministry in the city regarding the building they were renting. They knew they had to leave their current space but didn't have anywhere lined up to go. We worshipped and prayed and shared what we felt the Lord was saying. The next time we saw

them we found out they had found a new space exactly the way we had prayed they would and the story of it lined up perfectly with the prophetic words the Lord had given us for them!

It's not just in Manchester that we're seeing God raise up houses of prayer. Over the years, I've had the privilege of visiting houses of prayer in five continents, and while each looks and feels different from the next, the heart and the values of it are the same. God is worthy of unceasing worship and prayer and He is raising up people from every tongue, tribe, people and nation, that incense would arise from every place.



*Michael Ball, along with his wife Becci, is the director of Manchester House of Prayer, a city wide, worship and prayer ministry which launched in 2010. As well as leading the house of prayer he is also a worship leader and songwriter. Find out more at [mhop.org.uk](http://mhop.org.uk).*

# PRAYER STORM

**James Aladiran** says we can all be involved in prayer and intercession, it is not just for the “holy few”, and it is vitally important if we want to see God’s kingdom come on earth.



**S**ome years ago, I was attending a Christian event. During the teaching session, the speaker said: “All the intercessors in the room put your hand up.” There were probably about 200 believers in the room, and I was expecting most people to put their hands up.

I raised my hand and looked around me. To my surprise there were only about 15 hands that went up. This made feel a bit frustrated, as I couldn’t understand why most Christians didn’t see themselves as intercessors. Then I remembered that only a few years

earlier I would not have identified myself as an intercessor. I had a few misconceptions about the ministry of intercession.

Back then, I felt like intercession was something for some super spiritual people who really knew how to pray eloquent heartfelt prayers, and could do so for very long periods of time. But intercession is a powerful ministry that I believe we are all called to engage in.

Intercession has various expressions. It is an act of praying the heart of God or standing in the gap (in prayer) between God and a person, place or situation. It

is contending for the manifestation of His purposes. Intercession is a big deal in the heart of God. I know this because God himself does it! Think about it: Jesus was on earth for 33 and half years. For 30 years He prepared for ministry, for three and a half years He did ministry. Now it’s been over 2,000 years since His resurrection and the Bible tells us that Jesus lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). So, if we do the maths that’s thirty years of preparation, three and half years of ministry and over 2,000 years of intercession. As if this were not enough, we are told by



apostle Paul that the Holy Spirit is an intercessor in Romans 8:26. So, two thirds of the Godhead is interceding! Since God Himself engages in intercession, I think it is fair to say that it is massively significant in the heart of God. I believe one of the primary ways in which the kingdom of God advances in the earth is through the ministry of intercession.

When cleansing the temple of the moneychangers, Jesus quotes Isaiah, saying, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Notice that Jesus didn’t say the temple will be called a house of preaching or a house of teaching or even a house of worship (of course these activities are important). Jesus declared the primary identity of His house to be a house of prayer for all nations.

Jesus Himself was a man of prayer. If there was ever any person that had an excuse not to pray, it was Jesus. He invested so much time in prayer and intercession when He was on earth. If He, being God, prayed so much, how much more should we?

Sometimes believers think if the Lord desires for something to take place then it just happens, disconnected from His church coming into agreement with Him in prayer. I don’t think this is an accurate picture of how God works.

Yes, God is sovereign over all, however He seems to have set things up to run in such a way that intercession greatly influences His activities on the earth. Simply put, our prayers have consequences and our lack of prayer has consequences. All through scripture,

we see various examples of God’s desires only being manifested when intercessors have been raised up to come into agreement with His heart.

God said to Elijah, “I will send rain on the earth” after three and a half years of no rain. Yet for some reason Elijah still had to put his head between his knees (which by the way was a birthing posture for women in those days) and contend in prayer seven times for the very thing God said He was going to do. In His sovereignty, God could have sent the rain without Elijah’s participation, however, He chose not to because, I believe, what Elijah modelled on that mountain top is a picture of how God intends to advance His kingdom on earth. Through intercessory, consistent, faith-filled prayers.

Even for Jesus to be born, God had to raise up an intercessor. The scriptures say Anna the prophetess “served God with fasting and prayer night and day”. Many of us believers ascribe to God’s sovereignty that which is our responsibility in prayer. Then we wonder why we are not seeing a manifestation of His victory.

The fact that God desires something doesn’t always mean it automatically gets fulfilled on the earth. For example, it is God’s desire that none should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). However, many are perishing today without coming to repentance.

All through scripture, I have found no such thing as a “gift of prayer” or even a “gift of intercession”. This is really important to understand because the moment you start to believe the lie

that someone has a “gift of prayer” and you don’t, you will probably start to feel the need to outsource your prayer life to them.

Every believer is called to be an intercessor. It has nothing to do with your eloquence or how long you can pray for. The model for prayer Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 6 captures this emphasis: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

This really is intercession. It is simple and it is about His will not our will. It is about His kingdom not our kingdom. Once we can align our hearts with His agenda, we should then declare back to Him what He wants accomplished in the earth and often we need to keep doing this repeatedly, like how Elijah had to keep pressing on in prayer until there was a breakthrough. Every believer is called to contend in prayer for God’s purposes to advance in the earth. Every believer is called to be an intercessor. Will you answer this call today?

*James leads Prayer Storm (prayerstorm.org), a worship and intercession movement which aims to equip the church and gather people from across the UK to fast and pray for the UK, believing God for a great spiritual awakening. Since May 2009, Prayer Storm has become a catalytic movement in seeing many catch a heart for intercession, starting regular prayer meetings in churches, schools, universities and work places.*





# PRAYER & FASTING FOR A MILLION DISCIPLES

**Dr Jonathan Oloyede** writes of his burden to raise up one million disciples for Christ in the UK and the prayer movement that needs to come first

**W**hen I accepted God’s call as an apostolic missionary to the UK in the 90s, I immediately got involved with church planting within the black (African) majority churches. During that period, I had several dreams and visions that were futuristic and pointed towards a coming revival. I have documented these in the book *Vision of Lights*.

I have now spent three decades in Britain, planting churches, generating racial and spiritual unity within the churches, mobilising prayer across the land and reviving the festival of Pentecost.

I have a burden to see one million disciples raised across the UK and beyond. This vision was heightened during the pandemic lockdown, and I believe with all my heart that the Lord will begin to visit many others with a similar vision for disciples.

The Lord began to show me that the end time focus of the church in the 21st century needed to return to the original command He gave her 2,000 years ago – to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.

It will involve a stronger and deeper and wider movement of prayer everywhere.

Many have asked me what the future holds for the church in the UK. I am not a prophet and make no claim to that office. I do however believe, because of the revelations I received many years ago, that something seismic is coming.

The future is multi-layered, but simply put, the next set of decades will see a multiplication of believers who are disciples of Christ across the land resulting in a spiritual climate change over these Isles.

It will involve a stronger and deeper and wider movement of prayer everywhere. This will be followed by a move of the Spirit among the younger generation, resulting in a massive harvest of souls. This will overflow into all areas of society and there will be many small, medium, and large-scale gatherings including stadium crowds focused on Jesus Christ and His gospel of the kingdom.

## What should I do?

One of the first things that you can do is seek the Lord’s face and heart about this revelation. The scriptures admonish us:

“Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:19–21)

Get yourself prepared to be part of the Lord’s end time movement and take your place.

Start making disciples by sharing and helping another person to come in direct contact with the Lord by His Spirit. Help at least one person within a year to know the scriptures and become grounded in their faith, so that they in turn can help another.

## Time to pray and fast

“Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets... While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabus and Saul...’ Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them.” (Acts 13:1–3)

It is time for local churches, leadership teams and leaders to rediscover the act of fasting and praying together. Many are praying together while others are fasting alone. Do not get hung up on the results; just ask the Lord Himself what you should do next.

The Lord has shown me and many others that He will move mightily across these shores again. This is not an if but a when. That’s why I’m encouraging the church to get ready for both His visit and return by focusing on the task at hand of making disciples.

“And the message of God kept on growing and spreading, and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a large number of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith [accepting Jesus as messiah and acknowledging Him as the source of eternal salvation].” (Acts 6:7)

*Born in Britain but bred in Nigeria, Dr Oloyede MB ChB is a medical doctor by profession but serves as a full-time apostolic missionary to the UK and Europe. He is the leader of City Chapel and the convener of the National Day of Prayer UK. Jonathan is blissfully married to Abbi and lives in Kent with his two children.*

**Debra Green** shares the story of how Redeeming Our Communities started and how she has seen incidents of violent crime reduce as a result of prayer.

# TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH PRAYER



**P**eople often ask me where the idea of Redeeming Our Communities (ROC) came from. The answer is that it was inspired by seven years of inter-church city-wide prayer in Greater Manchester. Concerned for our reputation as ‘Gunchester’ which described some of the serious social issues we were experiencing as a city, we felt stirred to start a united prayer movement back in 1993. Seven years later, we had over 200 churches of different denominations and streams praying together. Our aim was to change the spiritual atmosphere and reduce incidents of violent crime.

I’m a great believer in specific or informed prayer. We can only be specific if we have knowledge. Informed intercession is powerful.

Someone said “general prayers are a breeding ground for unbelief”. Think about it, if we can’t be bothered to do any research, our prayers will just be very generalised. Being specific holds us accountable and fires up our faith when we see the answer to our specific prayers.

Imagine how we felt when we prayed “no more Gunchester” in a packed velodrome in 2008, only to read on the Manchester Evening News front page headline six months later: “Is this the end of Gunchester? Violent crime has fallen by 38 per cent in the last six months”.

Prayer is a powerful first step.

As we started to tackle social issues the call to intercede only increased.



## Seven years of persistent prayer

Following seven years of persistent united prayer we felt led to start ROC. The idea of “people of goodwill working together towards safer, kinder communities” was born. We knew that no one organisation could transform a community working on their own, but that collaboration and partnerships were key. Our partnership with the police came first but quickly opened the door to working with other organisations. Prayer turned into action and new projects emerged such as the ROC Café afterschool youth clubs, which aimed to reduce anti-social behaviour.

However, we didn’t leave prayer behind. As we

started to tackle social issues, the call to intercede only increased. I can honestly say that what we prayed as a team at our regular Friday meetings and what we heard from God in the prayer room formed the basis of what we did next.

What started in Manchester quite quickly became a national movement. We launched ROC nationally at the Trumpet Call prayer event at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in 2006 with 7,000 people attending. I remember so clearly that we called all the police officers to the front and we prayed for them and thanked them publicly. One officer left the hall in tears. He said later, “In 30 years of service no one has ever said thank you to me.” We heard that three months later he attended an Alpha course and gave his life to Christ.

The event at the NEC directly led to our launch in Northern Ireland. Sir Matt Baggott, formerly chief constable in Leicester, was called to the police service of Northern Ireland and he invited us to start ROC there. I was told “it can’t be done, ROC won’t work here”, but we had 1,500 guests at the launch event in Waterfront Arena in 2012, and ten years later the work is thriving in Northern Ireland.

We love to bring communities together and around ten years ago we developed the “ROC Conversation” community engagement model. The whole community is invited to meet under one roof to explore ways of working together to tackle local issues, followed up by forming a multi-agency action group. What’s interesting is that when we’ve found a local prayer group to work alongside us the results are far more remarkable. Prayer and action truly work hand in hand.

*Debra Green OBE is the national director and founder of Redeeming Our Communities (ROC). She has 25 years of experience in bringing organisations together towards the goal of social transformation. Since 2004, this work has expanded and she has acted as a consultant to many other towns and cities with significant results. Such work has attracted interest from public services and local authorities who are impressed by the proven track record and results achieved. She received an OBE in 2012 in recognition of services to community cohesion.*

*Debra has had several books published: ‘City-changing prayer’ in 2005; ‘ROC Your World – changing communities for good’ in 2014; and ‘Mountain Moving Prayer’ in March 2019. Her books are available to purchase from [roc.uk.com/shop](http://roc.uk.com/shop)*

# Stories of Hope: Addiction recovery report

How the church and Christian organisations  
are tackling drug addiction in Scotland.

Out now: [eauk.it/soh](http://eauk.it/soh)



“ Jesus still saves people, he still heals people, and he still changes lives. I am living proof of it. – Liam ”



**Amanda Savory** from The Filling Stations ministry writes of their foundations in prayer and intercession, and the fruit they are seeing in rural corners of the UK.

# BRINGING NEW SPIRITUAL LIFE TO RURAL AREAS

It's been 18 years since our director, Richard Fothergill, had a vision from the Lord, for what would become the Filling Station ministry: birthed from what was essentially a prayer walk.

Richard, an anglican vicar, would regularly prayer-walk through the rolling hills of north Somerset. "That day," he remembers, "the Lord showed me He wanted to bring new spiritual life to the rural areas across the UK. I saw the landscape covered in an impenetrable dark mist, stopping the sun from reaching the ground – but as I watched the mist was broken up by whirlwinds coming from the ground to the sky, then patches of light appeared where the sun got through, as a wind came to disperse the broken-up mist. I realised the whirlwinds were created by more and more groups of people praying and worshipping. As they did, God would be known and seen by people, breaking through evil and spiritual blindness."

It was then that The Filling Station was born, as one small meeting, gathering believers together for renewal, outreach, worship, prayer and experiencing His presence."

As we enter 2022, with over 80 meetings in the UK and beyond, the mission of The Filling Station remains the same: to reach rural areas of our nation for Jesus. In the UK alone, this stands for 15 million people. Our mandate is to help Christians experience renewal, and share Jesus across the country, particularly with those who don't know him yet.

## Increasing level of prayer

James 5:16 tells us that "the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective" and we know prayer is the fuel for all that we are doing. We all long to see the Holy Spirit moving in more power through our meetings and beyond.

As the Filling Station team, we asked the Lord to give us a passion for prayer – and that it would not only fall on us as a ministry, but as a nation. We want our hearts to be stirred by Him to pray and declare, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

There has been something of a spiritual awakening over the last few years. People are searching, hungry to know more as the secular answers will not satisfy. With that comes the call to intercede for our communities, win the spiritual battle in the heavens and get ourselves ready.

## Prayer changes things – corporate and solitary

We gather those in our Filling Station community to meet for regular 24/7 prayer rooms, with individual Filling Station host teams taking an hour's slot each. We have early morning hour-long "Prayer Shot" Zoom calls for whoever can join. We have practiced Lenten "Daniel Fasts" across the network from which we have always seen an uptick in ministry activity directly as we begin to pray. We are there to practice and model prayer to the present generation – all of the 4,000 (and counting) people who attend a Filling Station somewhere each month.

## Prayer-walking and interceding: walking the land

From Richard's vision at the start, prayer-walking has been an essential tool for us here at the Filling Station. In 2017 and 2019, Richard prayer-walked the length and breadth of the UK on two "Prayer Treks". Over six weeks in 2017, he walked from John O'Groats to Land's End, and in 2019 from West Pembrokeshire to Lowestoft (the most easterly part of the UK). The route formed a cross across the land. He shared Christ with everyone he met, leading one man, a taxi driver, to the Lord in Shropshire as the Spirit had so clearly set up the moment for him to give his life to Jesus.

We are learning at the Filing Station that prayer changes things. As James 5 states, where faithful people pray it is a "powerful and mighty" act – only good things can follow.

For more information on our monthly meetings and our new homegroup style initiative, [FillingStation@home](mailto:FillingStation@home), please visit [thefillingstation.org.uk](http://thefillingstation.org.uk)

*Amanda Savory is the communications manager at The Filling Station. With a background in publishing as well as communications at a non-profit, Amanda now lives in the Lake District with her husband Nathan, returned to her childhood home of South Cumbria.*

# *The beautiful* **MARRIAGE** *of* **MISSIONS** *and* **PRAYER**

When we engage our hearts with God's, we can't help but become a part of the solution, says **Connor Doll** from Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Harpenden.



**T**hree hundred years ago, a group of religious refugees called the Moravians settled on the estate of a wealthy Austrian aristocrat named Count Zinzendorf. They grew from a handful of Moravian families into the small city of Herrnhut within just a few years.

In an incredible display of commitment and spiritual fervour, the Moravian community established a round-the-clock prayer watch, to raise their voices in 24/7 worship and prayer. Little did they know, the fire that they continually tended to in prayer would end up lighting the fuse of the modern-day missions movement and inspire countless others to follow in their footsteps for generations to come.

Much like the Moravians, YWAM Harpenden's origins are found in displacement.

Thirty-five years ago, Lynn and Marti Green, the founders of YWAM England, were leading a community of about 40 YWAM workers in London. They had served faithfully in the city, but unfortunate circumstances were closing the door on their current accommodation. After a prayer meeting for God's direction, they ended up at Highfield Oval, a partially occupied site on the north edge of London that was once a National Children's Home. God miraculously provided circumstances and finances that made it possible for YWAM to purchase the property and repurpose it to be a missions training and sending base.

Today, Highfield Oval is YWAM's largest campus in the UK. We are home to more than 100 full-time staff from more than 30 nations. The Oval Prayer Room started in 2020 and became a

focus of ours during the start of the pandemic. We began knocking down walls, painting, and renovating a small room under the chapel when we weren't allowed to gather. As a missions organisation primarily focused on going into the nations, the pandemic really limited our activity. We decided to respond by prioritizing the one thing Covid restrictions couldn't limit: prayer.

YWAM's two core values are to "know God and to make God known". It's at the centre of everything we do. And we believe that the two are deeply interwoven. You cannot separate knowing God from making Him known and vice versa. And the fruit of that in our community has been evangelistic action driven by prayerful intimacy. We see that both in history, like through the Moravians, and in scripture. One of the clearest displays





**You cannot separate knowing God from making Him known and vice versa. And the fruit of that in our community has been evangelistic action driven by prayerful intimacy.**

of this connection is in Matthew 9–10.

“When [Jesus] saw the crowds, He had compassion for them... Then he said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.’”

In this passage, Jesus commands His disciples to pray that labourers would be sent into the harvest field. Then Jesus turns around and sends His disciples into the very harvest field they just prayed for. It’s an incredible insight into the heart of Jesus – that intimacy with Him wouldn’t be detached from action for Him, but that we would marry missions with prayer. The two things would go hand-in-hand.

And that’s why we, as a missional community, have committed to pursuing 24/7 prayer and worship. We see in

scripture that Jesus loves the nations of the earth; they are His inheritance and reward.

And I’ve witnessed first-hand that as we gaze at Jesus in prayer and worship, we actually grow in love for the nations as well. When we engage our hearts with God’s, we can’t help but become a part of the solution. It was His design all along: that we’d be co-labourers with Him as we partake in the beautiful marriage of missions and prayer.

*Connor Doll is a full-time missionary at YWAM Harpenden, where he serves in various discipleship roles and leads The Oval Prayer Room, a small grassroots community pursuing 24/7 prayer and worship. Instagram, @ovalprayerroom*

# HOW TO PRAY FOR LEADERS

*(when you don't feel like it)*



**M**ore than once in my life, people I know, and even some I've just met, have told me that there is something of the persistent widow about me. For those who aren't familiar with Jesus' parable, it's about a woman who repeatedly petitions a judge for justice. Finally, the judge, motivated only by sheer exasperation, grants her request. To be honest, my reaction to this comparison has always been horror because this definitely seems like a Christian way of calling someone a nag! Thankfully, the Bible's interpretation of the woman is more favourable

than my own and the story is presented to show the disciples that they should pray and not give up.

My own walk with God through prayer is complicated and for most of my life it would not be categorised as persistent or "without ceasing" as Paul directs in his letter to the Thessalonians. But in my early 20s I did something that radically altered my relationship with prayer - I opened my own small business.

For almost 10 years, I owned and operated cafés in Glasgow. Armed with only the blissful ignorance that comes with being 22, I almost immediately

**Sofie Gillespie**

writes from her own experience of running a small business, about the importance of supporting our leaders in prayer – even when it takes grace.

found myself completely in over my head. I realised that there was considerably more to running a café than just a love of chat. I knew virtually nothing about leading a team and even less about managing accounts.

For a year, I worked extremely hard to learn all I could about running a business. But the acquisition of skills wasn't enough. There will always be more to know, to learn. In a team of people, there will always be relational challenges. And yet, when you're the leader and something goes wrong, everyone is looking to you for the answers, and it doesn't seem to matter that the answers are equally elusive to you.

This problem is inevitable. No one person or even team of people can solve all that pains us. But for those of us who follow Jesus we have the blissful relief of having access to the most wonderful of solutions. For me, the process was slow (I'm not the quickest of learners) but God has been faithful as I finally found myself on my knees before Him, the one who knows, and sees all things.

It is true that some (maybe most) answers remain a mystery to me; life and the life of a business ebbs and flows, and healthy relationships are hard, but when I finally committed myself to the daily practice of prayer, the loneliness and weight of leadership that had exhausted me throughout the early years of running the shops lifted.

I continued to work hard, but in partnership with God. I had just enough wisdom to know that though there may be a to-do list as long as my arm, God can achieve in an instant more than we can do in a lifetime. Prayer became not just a priority but a necessity in my life.

Over the last 10 years, as I have struggled with my own small sphere of leadership, making many

mistakes big and small, I have found God has challenged me in the way I think about the leaders around me. In the era of partygate, corporate cowardice and greed it is so easy to criticise our leaders. And, certainly in the church, we are not immune to the heartbreak of leadership failures.

It is right that we hold our leaders to account, but do we spend more time tearing our pastors and politicians down than we do lifting them up in prayer? Do we trust that, though our leaders may not be who we would have chosen, that God is in control? Are we humble enough to acknowledge that there is much about this life that is a mystery and that God alone has all the answers?

Leadership is hard. Our leaders need our prayers. That has never been truer than during the complexities of the last two years.

People are exhausted, anxious, under financial strain, and at the end of themselves. Leaders, broad shouldered though they may be, are not immune to this. As men and women of faith, let's look at our leaders with the same grace that has been afforded to us. Let's pray that God would surround our leaders with wise council. Let's pray that our leaders would encounter Jesus, the greatest leader that has ever walked the earth. Let's nag God with our prayers for the leaders around us and be thankful that in His graciousness He will call it persistence.

*Sofie joined the Evangelical Alliance as UK Public Leadership coordinator in 2022. Previously, Sofie owned and operated cafe businesses in Glasgow. She is a board member for Alpha Scotland and Bethany Christian Trust. She is married to Jake and loves to cook, talk politics and go to the cinema.*

# PRAYING STUDENTS

**Nicole Lewis** writes about her passion to pray for students, and the God who answers prayer.

A couple of years ago, I was visiting one of the student teams I oversee as part of my role as associate student director for Agapé UK. I was out at the university with one of our staff when we ran into a student he had recently met.

We went over to chat with him and as we approached, the student said, very loudly and excitedly, “You prayed for me and it actually worked!” The student, who wasn’t a Christian, had shared with my friend about some hard circumstances he was dealing with. My friend said that he would be praying for him. God showed up and answered that prayer. The student knew for certain it was prayer that had changed everything.

Those words stuck with me for quite some time: “You prayed for me and it actually worked.” It reminded me of how I have often approached prayer in the 24 years I have been doing student work. I pray, God shows up, and I am amazed, just like this student.

Which is not to say that everything I have prayed for has turned out the way I prayed for it to. Sometimes, what I have prayed for hasn’t happened and I get discouraged. Other times, God has answered those prayers differently than I had prayed for. But prayer reminds us that we are in partnership with God.

Our student work is about what God is doing through His Spirit in the hearts and lives of students, and we are simply getting to step into that. In our prayers, we can say to God, “lead us to students whose hearts are open to Jesus and curious about faith” or “help us connect with Christian students who

have a passion for seeing others on their campus know Jesus.” We can also pray, “Jesus, help us to know how to disciple and mentor students to help them become more like you” and “Jesus as we go out to share the gospel with students, let us listen well so we see where you are at work in their lives, and how we can connect the good news of Jesus to where they are at.”

Prayer also reminds us that we are in partnership with others. In my first year of ministry, I learned an important lesson about prayer. I felt very insecure about sharing the gospel and discipling students, but I didn’t want to tell anyone because I thought I should just know how to do it.

One day, when I was studying Ephesians, I read 6:19 where Paul asks the church to be praying for him so that whenever he would speak, words would be given to him to proclaim the gospel with confidence. When I read this, I thought to myself, if Paul didn’t always know what to say, why do I think I need to? If he invited others to pray

and intercede for him, why shouldn’t I be doing the same? Our student teams are spread out across five cities. It would be easy to crack on with our own work in each location, but we want to be intentionally interceding for one another and inviting those who partner with us to do the same.

We know that the three or four years of a student’s university life are significant. We want as many people as possible praying for us and for universities, for the spiritual battle for the hearts and minds of students.

Years ago, someone did a survey of world leaders and found that the one thing they all had in common was that at one point they were all university students. In the UK, future world leaders, political influencers and culture shapers are studying in our cities. Imagine what a difference it would make here and in the nations around the world if while studying, they came to know the goodness and love of God in Jesus. Let us pray for those open doors on our campuses.

*Nicole Lewis serves as the UK associate national student director for Agapé UK (an organisation inspiring people to discover Jesus at home, work, university and abroad). She is also the London city coordinator for Agapé UK. Nicole is passionate about seeing people fall deeply in love with Jesus and walk with him for a lifetime. She lives in London, where she loves to go on rambles (or what she calls her #WanderWalks) and describes herself as a beautifully black and wonderfully white woman.*

# NG FOR DENTS



# Let's

# PRAY

Anna Seevaratnam and Jerome O'Meara encourage us to speak out and pray for those who don't yet know Christ.

The Talking Jesus research we have been involved in here at the Evangelical Alliance shows that 15 per cent of Christians come to faith through conversations with Christians they knew well and that 62 per cent of non-Christians describe the Christians they know well as friendly. These are encouraging statistics for us to hear, especially when we so often hear in the news today such negative language towards Christians and Christianity. If a personal relationship with Christians elicits such a positive response from non-Christians, why don't we engage more with our non-Christian friends? As the spoken word piece by Jerome O'Meara says, "We gotta' speak louder than we ever been speaking, there's a cry inside the people". This can be daunting but, when aided by prayer, connecting our faith story as well as our lives with our friends becomes a lot more impactful.

When we pray for those around us who don't know Jesus, we are praying God's heart too.

In Hebrews, we see that we have a priestly calling to represent God to the people around us and to intercede for those we care about. When Jesus came to earth and died for us, He enabled us to have direct access to God and not have to go through the Levitical priesthood. This is a powerful promise! In Jesus we see profound communication with the Father displayed, and demonstration of the heart of the Father to those around Him. He laid down his life, a king

become slave, that's the God I serve.

As with Jesus, God wants us to partner with Him through being in communication with Him and sharing God with others. We got a truth so rich, we can't basket this light. Prayer is our way of directly communicating with God. It is the way to talk to Him intimately, about our entire lives, and evangelism is our way of sharing these truths with others. When we pray for those around us who do not know Jesus, we are praying God's heart too. His heart longs to see them know Him intimately and deeply.

Prayer should always be high on the list when it comes to evangelism and witnessing to all that God has done in our lives. It helps to keep us grounded in the Father and to know He is in the process. Sometimes it can be discouraging when we do not see our friends come to know Jesus. However, we can also be assured that even when we can't always see the fruit of our prayers in the physical, our prayers are moving something in the spiritual world. We are winning battle ground for Jesus. Our prayers may not always be answered in the way that we want them to, but that should not stop us from praying those bold prayers and continuing to do so. It can be easy to give up when we are not seeing results, but Jesus asks us to persevere and He is the one who sees it all.

In the times when I have prayed for a specific need for my friends, I am always surprised at the way God has answered my prayers. Prayer is a way of celebrating your friends' joys, grieving with their sorrows and bringing their needs to the Father. It is our privilege to bring them before our loving God.

Not only should we be praying for their salvation but also for other aspects in their lives. God wants their whole lives. We can be praying for their relationships, work, studies, and times of rest. Sometimes, when we cannot think of what to pray, let's make sure we are listening to them, hearing what their needs are.

In prayer, we can also pray for opportunities for us to be bold and share Jesus with them, because praying often leads to sharing. Recently, a colleague highlighted the passive commission. The Hebrew word for "go" was passive in the sense of "going" as you go about your day. Let us be continually praying and asking for more opportunities as we go about our days to share Jesus in word, thought and deed. Are we brave or do we cower?

*Anna Seevaratnam is a mission assistant for the Evangelical Alliance. Before working for the Evangelical Alliance, she studied international development and Spanish at university. Anna loves climbing, and good food, especially Sri Lankan. She is passionate about crossing barriers when it comes to sharing Jesus.*

To find out more, why not check out the spoken word piece by Jerome O'Meara at [eauk.it/sea-of-people](http://eauk.it/sea-of-people) or by using your phone to access the link.



# SPOKEN WORD

by Jerome O'Meara

Are these just nice words  
to keep my soul at ease  
while I float through space like  
an open sea?  
I'm hopeless searching for this hope in me,  
anchored to the sea but my boat's  
been breached  
I'm the captain of the ship  
but my sail's been ripped  
and my crew mates dipped yeah,  
I'm lonely, at the surface of the sea  
where I'm barely breathing and the  
temperatures dropping below freezing.  
I see a sea of people  
a city of lost sheep  
I see they're feeble  
I see a thousand tears from the broken  
I see a steeple  
I see hope in the beacon of light that shines  
in the darkest night  
That's the reason  
we gotta' speak louder  
then we ever been speaking  
there's a cry inside the people  
and it's digging even deeper  
and they're walking even closer  
to the ocean  
and its funny 'cos the sea  
means two things  
you either getting baptised or you capsize  
and that's just life  
either you sink or swim

No one knows the day no one knows the hour  
are we covered by grace,  
when the Son for the second time comes?  
Are brave or do we cower,  
Are we Abel or Cain?  
Are we able to say that walk in his power?  
You seen the price that he paid?  
Laid down his life  
A king become slave  
That's the God I serve  
From my first to my dying days  
Fulfil that deep thirst that the world  
still craves  
We all have worth call that imago Dei  
by His Word that's the son He gave  
the meaning of life ain't the car  
that you drive  
or the job that you hold  
and don't search inside  
for the purpose is greater  
then what we keep in our minds  
we got a heart so dark  
but a spark so light  
we got a storm so big  
but a God so kind  
we a got a truth so rich  
we can't basket this light.

*Jerome joined the Evangelical Alliance's 2021-22 graduate scheme as digital content assistant after graduating in creative writing from the University of Portsmouth. He currently volunteers at Evangelical Alliance member organisation Speak Life, where he and colleagues work together to make film and spoken word to share the gospel.*

# GIVING THE WORLD'S NEWS TO GOD

A large chunk of my working day is dedicated to consuming news. I listen, read and chew over articles, podcasts and visual broadcasts daily. It's a privilege and challenge of my job. I do it to stay on top of the political and policy issues that my team works on. Also, I look for stories for Cross Section – our podcast where we discuss news, culture and how they intersect with the Christian faith.

For me, consuming the news has become tied up with work. But I'm aware that, for most people, engaging with the news is a part of daily routine, and therefore might be done without much strategy.

I have had to think carefully about how I engage with the news in a way that allows me to do my job effectively. I don't want to become apathetic to suffering, and I also need to protect my heart and mental health. Ultimately, I have learnt to include God in the process – praying through the news and remembering He is king over all. Here are three suggestions for engaging, which I hope serve you well.

## People in the news are made in God's image

Whether they are celebrities or war victims, criminals or politicians, the people we read about in the news are created in the image of God. Remembering this simple truth can correct our thinking and aid our prayers. When we are tempted to judge, hate, or switch off emotionally, we must remember that each person we hear about in the news is precious to God. Jesus knows each of them by name, and longs for them to call Him saviour. Pray that they would.

**Jo Evans**, advocacy coordinator for the Evangelical Alliance, has learnt that prayer is the best way to navigate the endless news cycle

## God is infinite, I am finite

I'm sure you have known feelings of outrage and discontentment when reading about immense suffering and injustice. How can it be allowed to carry on? What do we do with our anger and heartbreak when our power is often so limited?

Consuming the news tests my theology of God's sovereignty. I will passionately tell anyone that I believe in a good God who is in control of all things, but how does that work when we read of wars, abuse, or systematic prejudice? However, I trust that God is at work in and through suffering. The scandal of Jesus' crucifixion testifies to this above anything else. God is working powerfully for good, even when it is beyond our understanding.

When you read the news and feel outraged by problems you cannot deal with, lift them to God, your heavenly Father, who can.

## In my weakness, God is powerful

When Christians engage in the world around us, it equips us to enter the conversations our peers





are having. It gives us the opportunity to share something of the hope Jesus can bring. However, we cannot know everything that is happening everywhere. We have limits.

As well as the limits of time and power, we have emotional limits. There is only so much suffering and injustice that each of us can bear to consume. It is worth reflecting on what stories you find particularly distressing. Personally, I know if a headline mentions the death of a child, it is a story I will avoid reading. Similarly, when stories flare up about the abuse of women, as they so regularly do, I can only read a small amount before I know it is wise to stop for the sake of my heart and mental health.

It is okay to acknowledge that there is only so much that we can take in. We are in the privileged position that when consuming news, we have the choice. This does not make you care less. But instead remember that His “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We glorify God when we remember and praise

Him for being the only one powerful enough to bear the suffering of the entire world.

Jesus did this at the cross, carrying all the world’s sin and pain and offering a future where there will be no need for breaking news notifications or live updates. When Jesus returns, the world will be at peace, and will we sing around the throne of our sovereign, saviour King. As you navigate the news, praise God for this certain hope to come.

It’s ok to acknowledge that there is only so much that we can take in.

*Jo joined the Evangelical Alliance in October 2020. Having grown up in Dubai, Jo moved to the UK to study English and Film at Exeter, before being an assistant youth worker for her church. She is passionate about equipping young people to enter conversations about contemporary issues, and ultimately speak of Jesus.*



# INTERCESSION IS NOT COMPLICATED

**Gavin Calver** reflects on the impact of DL Moody's prayer life, and why we mustn't give up praying on behalf of others.

I am profoundly impacted by the story of the American evangelist, DL Moody, who prayed daily for 100 of his friends to come to know Christ. A man so devout, so committed and full of faith that the Lord would move powerfully in response to this act of intercession. Incredibly, 96 of these friends surrendered their lives to Jesus before he died and the remaining four did so at his funeral! What an incredible testimony of the power of God through prayer.

So often we can be praying for something without really believing that the Lord can change the circumstances dramatically. We can easily give up praying because we feel weary, believe it's never going to happen or even stop caring. Moody loved his friends so much that he kept on praying again and again for their salvation. I'm challenged afresh over my heart response and level of faith in intercession.

In Acts 12, James, the brother of John, has just been put to death by Herod, who proceeded to seize Peter as well and put him into prison (Acts 12:2-3). The disciples must have thought that Peter would be murdered too but they gather

to "earnestly pray to God for him" (12:5). The Lord then powerfully intervenes on behalf of his people and miraculously delivers Peter out of chains, a locked gate, and the guards (12:6-10). The servant girl Rhoda announces that "Peter is at the door!" They don't believe it, declaring, "you're out of your mind!" (12:13-15). He has to keep on knocking until they eventually realise it is genuinely him at the door! Just because something might seem impossible to us, doesn't mean we should stop praying in faith and believing for it. The Lord reminds us often that He truly is the God of the impossible.

I remember preaching at a church where they had two large digital screens on the wall and on the screens were lots of different names. The first screen had many more names than the second. The minister began to read the notices and eventually he came to refer to the screens and the names: the first one was a list of everyone the church was praying for to come to faith, the second screen listed all those who had met Jesus. Suddenly there was an eruption of joy as four names were moved from the first screen to the second as they had

become Christians in the last couple of weeks. It was such an encouragement to the church to witness their corporate prayers leading to transformation to individual lives.

This model at the church stayed with me because of the fact that other people were praying for individuals they didn't know - so often we intercede by ourselves and yet there is such power in praying together. In Matthew 18:19-20 Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I'd imagine that as those names came into the body of Christ there was already a sense of connection and relationship because of the intercession offered on their behalf.

Intercession in its essence is simply praying on behalf of others - it's not complicated. The question is who, and what, are we pressing in with prayer for? Maybe there are others who need to join us in praying for what we are longing for. Let's be those who ask and believe that transformation is possible by the power of His mighty hand. Perhaps we should all be a bit more like DL Moody and start a daily prayer list of our own too.



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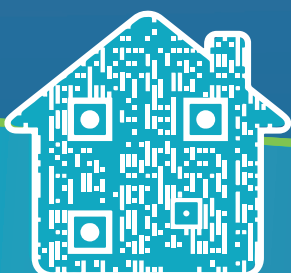
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