

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# ACTIVATED

Vol 25 • Issue 6

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Coming before  
our Father

## Perfect Timing

Seeing God's  
protection

## Hearing God's Whispers

He is always near





## PERSONALLY SPEAKING A GLIMPSE INTO PRAYER

It would be unrealistic to think we could cover the colossal subject of prayer in one edition of *Activated*. But, while the subject of prayer is vast, it is not complicated. It's a matter of believing there is a God who loves us and wants to be in close relationship with us. He is sensitive to our needs and hears our

prayers and invites us to draw near to Him. If we have faith as small as a mustard seed, all things are possible through prayer (Matthew 17:20).

We don't need to worry if our prayers aren't fluent or articulate. Victor Hugo wrote in the epic novel, *Les Misérables*, "As for methods of prayer, all are good, as long as they are sincere." Yet, the Bible does show us how we can pray more effectively. Jesus Himself taught His disciples to pray with the well-known "Lord's Prayer," which Peter Amsterdam breaks down beautifully for us in his article on page four.

Here are some points to keep in mind when we come before God in prayer:

- Our petitions are to be based in love, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).
- Have a sincere and clean heart, "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18–19).
- Avoid mindless rote, "When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases" (Matthew 6:7–8).
- Our prayers come from devotion, not obligation, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).
- Approach the Lord with humility, "We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy" (Daniel 9:18).
- Pray with faith, "All things are possible for one who believes" (Mark 9:23).
- Seek His will above all, "This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us" (1 John 5:14).

God is eager to listen to our prayers at any time. He is more concerned with our sincerity than our eloquence. And though He does not always answer our prayers in the way we expect, as we align our will with His, we will eventually see that His ways are best.

We hope that you enjoy this glimpse into the fascinating topic of prayer, as you delve into this month's issue of *Activated*.

Gabriel and Sally García  
*Activated* Editorial Team

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Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God.—*Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

# PERFECT TIMING

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

**TODAY I WAS REMINDED OF A MIRACLE GOD DID IN ANSWER TO PRAYER.** I am sure He answers my prayers every day and those of billions of others around the world; it's just that we often don't recognize His hand at work in our lives. Each answer to prayer that we experience is a precious treasure that shines more each time we share it. That's why I don't want to keep this testimony to myself or take it for granted as I lightheartedly say, "Oh well, another day, another miracle."

That particular morning my wife and I had taken some extra time in our busy schedule to read God's Word, pray, and connect with the Holy Spirit so we would be strengthened for the day. I believe that was one reason the Lord worked on our behalf.

Later in the day I visited a friend for a Bible study. It was monsoon season in India where we lived at the time, and as it does so often at that time of year, the wind began blowing fiercely amidst very heavy rain. As my friend and I were safe and secure inside, our driver was outside minding the car and catching up on some needed rest. A security guard from another flat came up and knocked on the window of our car to awaken the driver from his nap.

"Better move your car," he warned, "That tree you are parked under doesn't look very stable."

"Nothing doing! You just want me to move so you can give my parking place to someone else!"

"Just trying to help. But I suggest you move your car now."

Something about the friendly tone in the guard's voice caused our driver to heed his advice to move the car forward. He had not even turned off the engine when the tree fell with a colossal boom right where he had been parked moments before! The tree was about two meters in diameter and would have seriously damaged the car or flattened it completely with the driver inside.

The driver, my friend, and I all praised God for His protection! I am sure it was God answering the prayers for protection and safety that we had prayed that morning. This reminded me once again how important prayer is!

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND MIME ARTIST WHO SPENT 47 YEARS DOING MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN 10 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. HE AND HIS WIFE PAULINE CURRENTLY LIVE IN GERMANY. ■

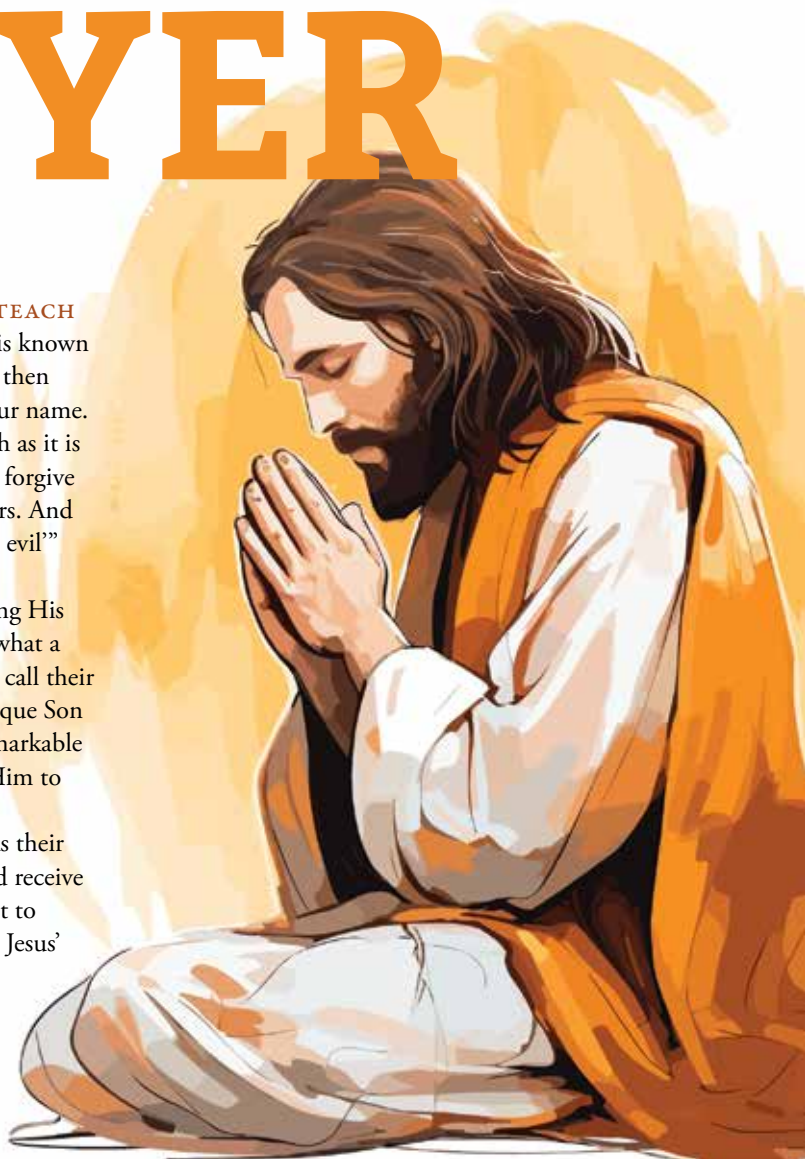
# THE LORD'S PRAYER

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

WHEN JESUS' DISCIPLES ASKED HIM TO TEACH THEM HOW TO PRAY, He taught them what is known as the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1). He said: "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (Matthew 6:9–13).

The word Jesus used in prayer when addressing His Father was the Aramaic word *Abba*, which was what a son or daughter in first-century Palestine would call their father. It is understandable that Jesus, as the unique Son of God, would call His Father *Abba*, but the remarkable thing is that Jesus taught those who believe in Him to address God as *Abba* as well.

Everyone who believes in and receives Jesus as their Savior can call God their Father. "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Through Jesus' death and resurrection, believers are adopted into God's family as the sons and daughters of God, and therefore have the privilege of calling





If you have not yet come to know Jesus Christ as your savior, you can open your heart to Him by praying this simple prayer:

Dear Jesus, please forgive me for my sins. I believe that You died for me. I invite You into my life. Please fill me with Your love and Holy Spirit. Help me to love You and others and live by the truth in the Bible. Amen.

God their Father, *Abba*. “Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Galatians 4:6 NLT).

Praying “our Father” implies a sense of intimacy, that we are addressing one who loves us and cares for us. Prayer isn’t meant to be a complicated formal manner of addressing a distant entity. The prayer Jesus taught was short and unpretentious, a simple heartfelt communication by those who know that they depend on their Father for their daily needs, who need forgiveness of their sins and His protection and care.

By beginning the prayer with “our Father in heaven,” Jesus also reminds us that, while we address God intimately as His children, we should also be aware of His infinite greatness. He is God Almighty, the all-powerful Creator of everything that exists.

After the opening address, *Our Father in heaven*, six petitions follow. The first three pertain to God directly—His name, His kingdom, and His will. These are followed by another three which have to do with us—our physical needs, sins, and temptations.

As a pattern for prayer, we learn from the opening of the Lord’s Prayer to begin our prayers by entering into His presence with praise, reverence, and worship. Because of our relationship with God as our loving heavenly Father, we trust Him, depend on Him, and know that He has our best interests at heart. This is a foundational understanding of Christian prayer.

The first three phrases of the prayer which refer to God are “Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Here we have three petitions: may Your name

be sanctified, may Your kingdom come, and may Your will be done. These express our prayer for God’s glory in relation to His name, rule, and will.

The word *hallow* means to honor and treat with the highest respect. When we pray *hallowed be your name*, we are asking the Lord to cause His name to be glorified everywhere. We are asking Him to act in the physical world, and particularly through us, His followers, so that all humanity may come to honor Him as God.

The second petition, *your kingdom come*, is a request for God to bring about His reign, power, and authority throughout the earth. The kingdom of God is both a present reality introduced through Jesus’ life and ministry as well as a future one that will be made complete after He returns.

When we pray *your kingdom come*, we are asking God to cause the gospel to be preached throughout the world so that people will have the opportunity to enter His kingdom. At the same time, we’re praying that Jesus will return and the kingdom of God will reign, as the words at the closing of the book of Revelation express: *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:20 NKJV).

The third petition, *your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*, builds on the second. When God reigns, His will is done. Here we pray for the full realization of all that the kingdom means—that His kingdom, power, and reign will become a reality on earth, and that His will for our lives will be given precedence over our own.

After the first three petitions, the prayer focuses on our human needs with the fourth petition. “Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:11–13). This pattern—first prioritizing God, and second moving on to human needs—is also seen elsewhere in Jesus’ teachings: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

*Give us this day our daily bread* conveys the request for our Father to provide our physical needs—whatever is needed for the preservation of our lives. In first-century Mediterranean life, workers were paid daily and only had enough to live on day by day. Living in such insecure circumstances made the prayer very meaningful.

The fifth petition reads: *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*. The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew’s

gospel uses the words *debts* and *debtors* to portray sin, while Luke’s gospel uses *sins* and *indebtedness* (Luke 11:4). Matthew’s *debts* and Luke’s *sins* both convey transgressions against God.

When Jesus told His disciples to pray *forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*, He was speaking of our being forgiven of our sin. God has graciously and mercifully forgiven us for our sins through salvation. Therefore, we are to forgive others as an extension of God’s grace.

The last petition, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* is the petition of everyone who seeks to maintain a close and right relationship with God. We are requesting that our Father keep us from sinning, from situations in which we will fail the test, and from evil in every form—in our hearts, attitudes, and actions. We beseech our Father to keep us from anything that would come between us and disrupt our communion with Him.

The prayer in the Gospel of Matthew ends with: *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen* (Matthew 6:13). This last phrase is not included in many translations and is considered to have been added in the late second century. Though it may not have been part of Jesus’ original teaching, it is nevertheless a beautiful and fitting end to the prayer.

Heavenly Father, may You reign in our lives and throughout the world. Help all of us who believe in You to share the joyous news of salvation so that as many people as possible will come to know You. Teach us to live according to the principles in Your Word, so that we may reflect You and Your ways to others. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE. ■



# LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

BY MARIE ALVERO



**RECENTLY I RECEIVED A CALL FROM MY DAUGHTER, WHO WAS A FEW HOURS AWAY WITH HER FRIENDS; THEY WERE GOING TO ATTEND A CONCERT.** They had excitedly purchased tickets months in advance, but she told me that the tickets were fake, and they had to buy new tickets. She needed my help, and I was ready to assist.

My child, who has seen me fail, lose patience, and disappoint her sometimes, still trusted her mom. She knew I would want to help her. Despite my mistakes over the years, I have managed to communicate this to my kids.

Isn't it odd that we know this about our earthly relationships, but we often forget that it's also true about God? [Matthew 7:9-11](#) says: "Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

If I know that God is a good Father, it makes it easier to come to Him in prayer. He knows my needs, but He is also touched by my acknowledgement of Him as my Father. I think sometimes I, and maybe you, become

intimidated by prayer, thinking that there are special words or a precise formula that will make God respond in the way I desire.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught them the Lord's Prayer ([Matthew 6:9-13](#)), which speaks of surrender, dependence, mercy, and guidance. It fully acknowledges our need for God. In this same chapter Jesus says that God knows what we need before we ask Him ([Matthew 6:8](#)).

Whenever I feel like prayer is complicated or that I'm not "getting it right," I go back to the Lord's Prayer. I remember that I want His will. I remember that I rely on Him for my daily needs. I remember that I need forgiveness, even as I need His strength to forgive others. I remember that I need Him to keep me from temptation.

God wants to be in relationship with us. He wants prayer to be the way we communicate with Him. He wants us to trust Him, because He is our good Father, and He wants what is good for us.

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■

A white car is shown from a rear three-quarter view, driving on a road that stretches into the distance. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a warm, golden sunset sky. The car's taillights and rear wheel are prominent.

# HEARING GOD'S WHISPERS

BY SIMON BISHOP

I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT PRAYER IS NOT ONLY SPEAKING TO GOD, but seeking His guidance as well, and then taking the time to listen to His still, small voice (see [1 Kings 19:11–12 NKJV](#)). When a situation arises unexpectedly, I ask Jesus to help me know what I should do, but sometimes I also struggle wondering if I am really hearing His voice or if it is just my own thoughts. Here is a little incident that encouraged me regarding this question.

On a trip to visit my home country, I rented a car online close to the airport. I found what I thought was a very good deal. When I arrived at the rental company, however, I was informed that they wouldn't allow me to rent the car unless I took out additional insurance, which more than doubled the daily rate and turned what had looked like a good deal into an expensive one. I thought about trying to find a more economical option, but since

I was very tired and there were no other rental companies close by, I decided that I would take the car just for that day, and then look for a different car the next day.

The following day, before going out I prayed for various aspects of my day, and one of my requests was that I could find a better deal on a rental car. I also asked God if there was a reason *why* I was in this situation with the rental company requiring the additional expensive insurance. At the end of my prayer, as I quietly waited, I felt God telling me to just keep the car I already had. I was surprised, as one of the things I am usually concerned about is being frugal, since my life as a volunteer means I need to be conscious of my budget. I did keep the original car, but I continued to wonder if I had gotten it right.

Several mornings later, as I came out of the house where I was staying with friends, I found a police car parked next to my rental car. The side window had



been smashed in and some items were stolen, although thankfully nothing of great value. The police told me that they had seen the damaged car and had called the rental company to report it.

I then contacted the rental company and they told me that I could just go to a nearby branch and get a replacement car. I was informed that the replacement of the window, as well as the damage to the interior of the car from rain and snow, would have cost well over \$1,000 USD if I had not had the added insurance, but since I did, there were no additional charges. It was suddenly very clear why God had led me to accept the extra insurance costs and keep the car.

I was grateful that I had taken the time to pray and ask God about this situation and had followed what I believed was His leading, even though it seemed contrary to my first impulse and inclination. This incident also taught me that God's Spirit often speaks to our heart, sometimes with just a phrase or an impression. But if we listen, we can hear His whispers and benefit. "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" (Jeremiah 33:3).

SIMON BISHOP DOES FULL-TIME MISSION AND HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■

## POINTS TO PONDER

# The Wonders of Prayer

Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty.—*E. M. Bounds*

None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience. Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness.—*Martin Luther*

What wings are to a bird and sails to a ship, so is prayer to the soul.—*Corrie ten Boom*

Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.—*Max Lucado*

True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that—it is a spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and Earth.—*Charles Spurgeon*

Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue; God's voice is its most essential part. Listening to God's voice is the secret of the assurance that He will listen to mine.—*Andrew Murray*

Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer *is* the greater work.—*Oswald Chambers*

God will do great things for you if you will wait for Him. Yield to Him. Cooperate with Him.—*John Smith*

If your day is hemmed in with prayer, it is less likely to come unraveled.—*Cynthia Lewis*

Though my needs may drive me to prayer, it is there I come face to face with my greatest need: an encounter with God Himself.—*Philip Yancey*



# PRAYER POINTERS

BY NATALIA NAZAROVA

**VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE.** This certainly has proven to be true in my prayer life. Here are a few things that have worked for me at different times.

- **Prayer list.** When I began taking a few minutes every day to pray for others, I simply prayed for whoever came to mind. I soon found, however, that there was almost no end to people and situations that needed divine intervention. To make the most of my prayer time, I needed to get organized, so I started keeping a written list. I don't have time to pray for every item on my list every day, so I keep track by checking off each item as I pray for it. When I get to the end of the list, I start over with another series of checkmarks. I add new items as new needs arise, and mark items "Done!" when God answers.

- **Prayer promises.** I printed "promise" verses from the Bible on small cards. For example, "Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matthew 21:22). As I pray for each item on my list, I draw a card from the stack and claim that promise.

- **Meditative prayer.** Nowhere am I more aware of God's love and care than when I walk in nature. As I take in the sights and sounds of His creation, I ask Him to guide my thoughts to people and situations that need my

prayers, and then I ask Him to take care of them as only He can.

- **Teaming up.** Sometimes I arrange with a friend to spend 10 or 15 minutes praying together. You can also join or form a prayer group to meet regularly for prayer. "If two of you agree on earth about anything that they ask," Jesus promised, "it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).

- **Pillow prayer.** When I can't sleep, I focus my thoughts on others and their needs, and pray for God to provide. Or sometimes I count my blessings in the form of short, specific prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God for His goodness. After a short while, I usually drift off to sleep.

- **Unloading.** When I feel overwhelmed by problems or the task at hand, I sometimes unburden my mind and spirit by imagining each issue as a brick and handing it over to Jesus, in the form of a short prayer.

- **Variety.** When prayer becomes routine, I ask Jesus to show me a new plan or way to pray.

NATALIA NAZAROVA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER FROM UKRAINE WHO DEVOTED TEN YEARS TO NONPROFIT WORK THROUGHOUT EASTERN EUROPE AND SOUTH AMERICA. ■

# ASK!—AND YOU WILL RECEIVE!



BY AMY JOY MIZRANY

## IT WAS EXAM DAY FOR MY BROTHER AND ME.

All the late evenings we had spent studying were about to be put to the test. We had taken one exam already. Our lecturer sent us a link for our passes to take today's exam at the university, and I logged on to print them out.

Then I ran into trouble. The website was only loading my pass for the previous exam. We only had three hours until we had to go to the exam hall. This could be a problem. I scrolled around the university's website until I saw a help line. I dialed it and was immediately greeted by a voice recording saying, "Please hold, your problem will be addressed in a minute."

I was annoyed but I waited. After a while, a new voice recording played. "Did you know you can receive help for any online questions at our new help line? Just dial the number ..." and it proceeded to say the same number that I had just dialed. Frustrated, I hung up. I went back to the website and tried yet again. But no.

Just then, a notification popped up on my phone. It was my app of the Bible verse for the day. Matthew 7:7: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

I closed my eyes and prayed, "I'm asking, Jesus, that You please work it out for the passes for our exam to be sent to us." Then without further worry, I typed in our student numbers, and without even checking the pages, I printed them. When I retrieved them from the printer, I saw that they were for the wrong day. I was tempted to try again, but I recalled the Bible verse. I had asked, and I would trust that this was the answer.

When it was time for the exam, the staff didn't even glance at our passes. The person at the door greeted us cheerfully, remembering us from the previous exam. She ushered us to our seats. We sat the exam and it went great.

God doesn't always answer my prayers the way I think He should, but He *does* answer every time, and He never leaves me stranded. Ask, and you will receive!

AMY JOY MIZRANY WAS BORN AND LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE SHE IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH *HELPING HAND* AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE PLAYS THE VIOLIN. ■



# WHY I FOLLOW JESUS

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 13, troubles in my family, a friend dying in a car accident, and the influence of an atheist teacher caused me to doubt the existence of God. So, I declared I was an atheist.

When I was 17, the movie “Godspell” was released. I went to see it out of curiosity. I enjoyed it so much that I saw it six times. Then at age 18, I prayed to receive Jesus in my heart, again out of curiosity. I thought, *If this is real, something will happen. If it’s not real, I have nothing to lose.*

A few months later, curiosity led me to pick up a friend’s New Testament. I couldn’t stop reading it until I had read all four Gospels, which took all afternoon. I experienced the same sensation I had had when watching the movie “Godspell.” There was something that captivated me.

At 19, I joined a Christian youth group and would talk to other young people about Jesus and the Gospel. But a voice kept whispering to me, saying: “You don’t believe in God! What are you doing in this group? Don’t be a hypocrite! Leave!” I knew enough about the Bible by then to suspect that that might be the voice of the Devil. Yet my earlier years of unbelief still influenced me at times, and one night I prayed: “God, if You exist, You are going

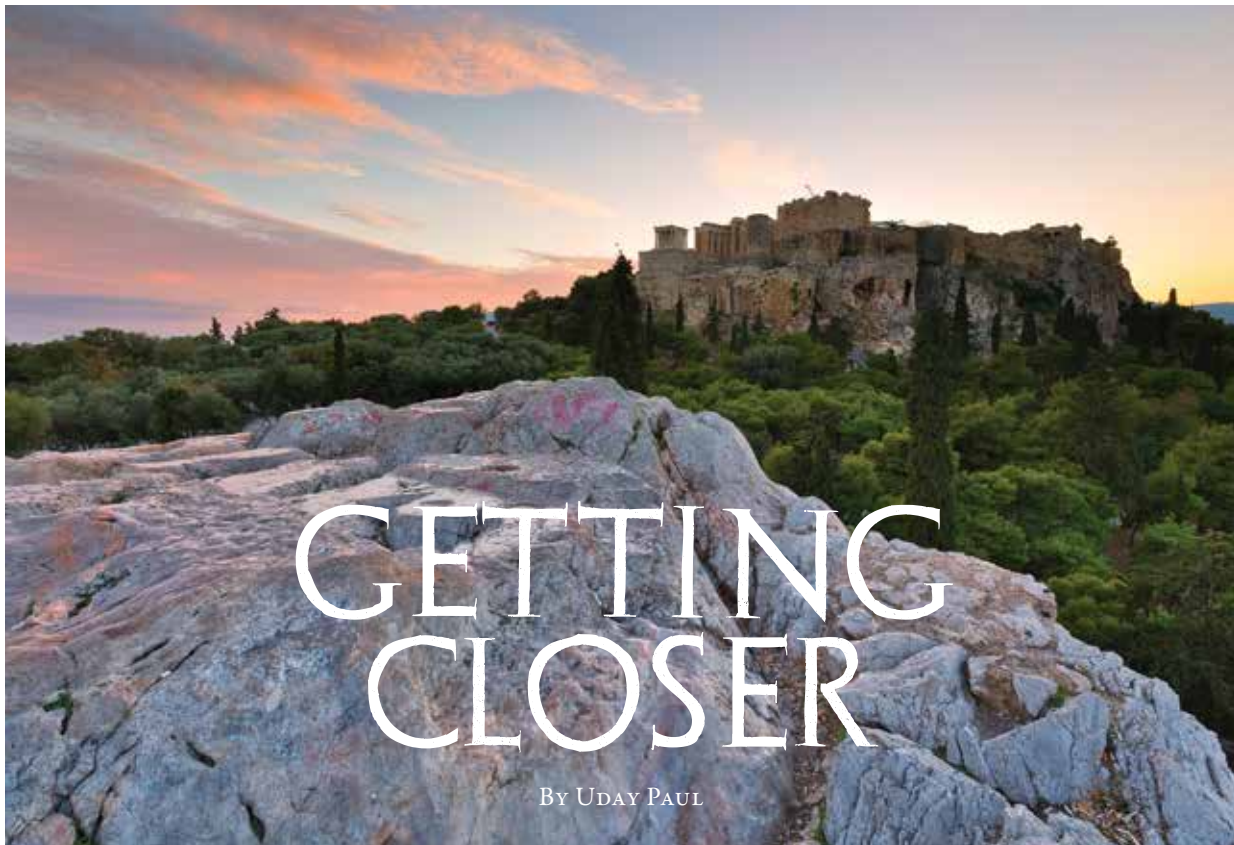
to have to prove that to me. Otherwise, I will stop serving You tomorrow.”

That night I dreamed that a being of light appeared to me. He had the face of a beautiful young man, and he had little stars twinkling around him, as if he were traveling in space. He looked me straight in the eyes, and without moving his lips, said: “God sent me here to tell you that He exists!” Then as quickly as he had appeared, he disappeared!

I woke with a start and went outside to look at the starry sky. I felt so important to God that He had answered my prayer, sending an angel, of all things! I also felt so loved by God by the fact that He didn’t want me to turn away from Him.

Since that day I have never doubted the existence of a loving God, and I have tried to follow Jesus the best I can. I understand how people sometimes lose faith in God when things go wrong. But I also see God’s omnipotence, because even when I wasn’t following Him, He was following me.

ROSANE CORDOBA LIVES IN BRAZIL. SHE IS A FREE-LANCE WRITER, TRANSLATOR, AND PRODUCER OF FAITH-BASED AND CHARACTER-BUILDING CHILDREN’S MATERIAL. ■



# GETTING CLOSER

BY UDAY PAUL

ON A RECENT TRIP TO GREECE, I visited the Areopagus in Athens. Thousands of years ago, this rocky knoll was the site of a judicial court that had extensive authority over the civil and religious life of Athens. The Areopagus (or Mars Hill or Hill of Ares) also became famous for another reason—that’s where the apostle Paul preached to the city fathers. He brought them a message about the one true God, who created the universe and everything in it and whose Son, Jesus, had been raised from the dead. (See [Acts 17:22–31](#).)

After speaking of God’s greatness and magnificence, Paul told the Athenians of His kindness and proximity. He said that “in Him we live and move and have our being.” He is not an inaccessible being who lives distant from humanity. God is easily accessible, and His presence is very close to us.

King David also spoke of the universal and all-pervading presence of God when he said, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if

I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me” ([Psalm 139:7–10](#) NIV).

The Bible also encourages us to draw near to God and promises that He will draw near to us ([James 4:8](#)). It says that we “who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” ([Ephesians 2:13](#)). This isn’t talking about a nearness of *distance*, but a nearness of *relationship*. When a person who has lived with their parents all their life says that they’re getting closer to them, they don’t mean that they’re closer physically, but that they’re now getting to know their parents better and becoming more closely connected to them in heart and mind.

That’s how we, too, can enjoy an intimate relationship with God. That’s the kind of relationship He desires to have with us ([John 17:3](#)), and He assures us that we will find Him when we seek Him with our whole heart ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)).

UDAY PAUL IS A FREELANCE WRITER, VOLUNTEER, AND TEACHER BASED IN INDIA. ■

# WHY IS GOD TAKING SO LONG?



**Q: I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB, BUT SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS. IF I HAVE PRAYED AND AM DOING MY PART, WHY ISN'T GOD HELPING ME?**

**A:** The way God works in our lives and the way He chooses to answer our prayers is often beyond our comprehension. Waiting is mysterious; it's humbling, and it usually takes faith and patience. His purposes and timetable are often different from ours.

When things are not turning out the way you had hoped, when you feel your prayers aren't being answered, when the trials of life seem too much to bear, when the battle seems too long, when your faith is under attack, when you're feeling weary and aren't sure if you can endure much longer, you can climb up onto the foundation that God has provided for your faith—the many promises and encouraging words contained in the Bible—and rest in that safe haven.

One such promise is that “you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours” (Mark 11:24 NLT). But God doesn't promise that it will be yours instantly or that He will answer in exactly the way you expected. His timetable and plan are not always the same as ours. There are times when He does bring instant answers to prayer, but there are also many occasions when He allows time for our faith to mature and develop, like fine wine. Patience is the mark of a vintage faith, one that is deep and rich and full-bodied.

Throughout history God has tested and tried people's faith through not granting immediate answers to their prayers. He waited until His timing was exactly right.

Patience is not an easy virtue to cultivate. In fact, it goes entirely against the way the world today operates, which is all about getting quick results. We can experience rapid answers to prayer when God knows that's what's best, but sometimes He may allow us to experience the tests, trials, and challenges of life that arise when His answers don't come immediately.

Faith isn't manifested only in God's immediate answers to our prayers; it is also manifested in our endurance, longsuffering, and having the patience to hold on even when we don't see the results we had hoped for from our prayers or the answer is delayed. So “let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4 NKJV). ■

# THE POWER OF A SIMPLE PRAYER

BY JOYCE SUTTIN



**IT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY SINCE WE HAD LAST PRAYED TOGETHER IN OUR HOME**, but the Lord had a plan for renewing our relationship with Him. I was surprised at how uncomplicated turning back to Him was. I made a personal decision, knowing it would require a willing sacrifice, but when the Lord renewed my heart, the sacrifice seemed easy. His love poured into my life, and He gave me a new heart. This, in turn, affected my whole family.

Some of our friends could not understand the change in us. One family in particular had a girl who was my daughter's good friend. I had been uncertain about how to explain to the parents about this new direction in our lives and I wondered what their response would be. Then my daughter was invited for a sleepover at their house, and I was happy to let her stay the night with them.

She had a wonderful time and came home happy and inspired. I asked her if she had said anything about Jesus while she was with them and she replied, "Of course!"

Some weeks later I heard the story of what happened while she was there. Their family had sat down for a meal together and my daughter had said, "Is it okay if we all join hands and thank Jesus for the food?" Puzzled, the parents willingly agreed and listened to her childlike prayer.

Little did my daughter realize that those few simple words would strike a chord in her friend's mom. She told me that after my daughter prayed, she could hardly make it through the meal. Afterwards, she went to her bedroom and cried. She remembered times of family prayer in her life. She remembered times of sweet fellowship with other Christians and realized how far she had distanced herself and her family from the Lord. She fell to her knees and asked for the Lord's forgiveness and began a journey of renewal, a journey that, with time, profoundly influenced her children.

I have thought a lot about this series of events since then. First the journey of renewal that my family experienced, and then the simple act of my daughter asking if it was okay to pray before a meal. I saw a chain reaction that changed lives. It makes me wonder what small steps the Lord will ask of me today. I might not even realize the impact I could have on others' lives by just asking a simple question, "Is it okay if I say a prayer with you?"

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



# YOUR GOOD SHEPHERD

When you feel tired, anxious, or overwhelmed, come to Me and you will find relief from the worries and cares that tumble about you. As you cast your cares on Me in prayer, I will encourage, strengthen, and comfort you, and help you make it through the day. You will find comfort and rest for your soul (Matthew 11:28-29).

Remember that I am the Good Shepherd and I love and care for My sheep (John 10:11). Not only that—I am *your* Good Shepherd. If you will come to Me and be still and learn of Me, I will renew your strength (Isaiah 40:31). When you feel weary and burdened, that is the time to take shelter in My presence and rest under the shadow of My wings (Psalm 91:4).

I know what it is like to feel the burden and the strain of the earthly life. I was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). I am able to empathize with everything that you face, and I always live to intercede on your behalf (Hebrews 7:25). As your Good Shepherd, I go before you, that you may look to Me and partake of My strength.

As you draw close to Me and commune with Me, you will discover that My love will carry you. So meet Me in the secret place of prayer, and see that I will supply your needs (Psalm 91:1). When you feel weary and burdened with the strain of it all, enter into My presence, and find My joy, peace, and strength.