

# *Prayer Devotions*



*March 2020*

*Luke 18:1*

*Pray Always and Never Give Up*

## ***Prayer for Persecuted Church***

### **Pray for those in the midst of persecution**

*Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Hebrews 13:3*

Global watchdog Open Doors reports that 322 Christians are killed every month for their faith while millions more suffer persecution on a routine basis.

Please pray that these believers will not only stay committed to the call of Christ but also will respond in love to the evil shown by their aggressors. God's love will open doors for these believers to share the Gospel even more.

This Month's Countries, these are some of the most dangerous countries to follow Jesus:

**Kuwait**

**Kenya**

**Bhutan**

**Daily Prayers for March** “I can forgive, but I cannot forget, is only another way of saying, I will not forgive. Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note - torn in two, and burned up, so that it never can be shown against one.”

*Henry Ward Beecher*

**Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>:** In the Bible forgiveness isn't just a suggestion – it's a command. In fact, an unforgiving spirit is represented as one of the most egregious sins. We are told that if we refuse to forgive, our heavenly Father will hand us over to the torturers. (Matt. 18:34-35) Forgiveness entails more than the act of releasing someone of their debt; true forgiveness in Biblical terms meant that the relationship was restored to its former state. And our model for that is Jesus giving His own life in exchange for ours so that our original “garden” relationship with God could be restored. We are told to get rid of all anger, whining, resentment, insults, and nastiness; and instead we should be kind and tender hearted towards those who have offended us. I believe one of the underlying principles here is that our Christ-like behavior just *might* (not a guarantee) be the catalyst to turning a lost soul to their Savior. Forgiveness costs us nothing except perhaps our prideful desire for revenge, but unforgiveness could be very costly – torturous in fact! Thank You, Jesus, for Your extravagant forgiveness; help us to readily extend it to our offenders. **Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:13; Luke 6:37**

**Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>:** In Psalm 22, God's word tells us that He inhabits (dwells in, is enthroned upon) the praises of His people. It fascinates me that God placed this powerful encouragement in the midst of David describing incredible suffering. When going through a trial, I often forget that God is near and in control. I forget to praise Him and instead search for relief in my own strength! I was reminded of this recently and remembered how easily I can feel His presence during Sunday worship. It's during difficult times that I need to remember to praise God and thank Him for being near and in control. Maybe I wouldn't feel so alone in my struggles. **Isaiah 41:10**

**Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**: We readily tell others about a great movie we've seen so they too can have a great movie-going experience. We sing the praises of athletes and entertainers, of places and products when we find them worthy or when we have benefited from what they have to offer. Likewise, we rely on the trusted testimony of others to help us decide how and where to spend our money and our time, where to get our teeth cleaned or our annual check-up. We often trust things and people that are highly praised. Yet those things and people can fail or disappoint. NOT so with God. **Psalm 147** calls for us to raise our voices and praise God. Praise is our witness to others of what we know about God to be true, what we know God can, has already done, and will do. From our own mouths and experiences, our praise tells others what God has done in the world, in creation, and in our own lives, and assures them that God can meet their needs as well. Praise is what I give back to you, O God, in thanksgiving for who You are and for all that You do. When blessings overflow, it's easy to let You know how grateful I am, but help me to grow in my awareness of your everyday goodness, of unexpected blessings, of your involvement in the simple and the ordinary so that my praise may flow as freely in the little things of life as in the big. **Psalms 147**

**Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>**: David knew the power of music in relating to His heavenly Father, and as a result there are many Psalms we can quote at least in part due to their being set to music. We can learn to deepen our prayer life through employing this strategy. Think of a hymn or piece of contemporary worship music that really speaks to your soul. Then spend some time either independently or perhaps in a group setting really listening to and going deeper into what the lyrics are speaking to you and how they might become a prayer of either praise or encouragement. For me personally I find that certain songs come to mind when I am facing different situations. When I feel powerless, I remind myself of one of my favorite Bible verses – Isaiah 43:2 – set to music in “Another in the Fire” by Hillsong. I begin to sing and meditate on the lyrics and I am immediately encouraged. When I begin to question one of His promises, I remind myself, “I know breakthrough is coming; by faith, I feel a miracle; my God made me a promise and He won’t stop now!” Or any time I witness something in creation that really stirs my heart, I break into “How Great Thou Art.” Let music become one of your practices of personal prayer to God and enjoy the peace, encouragement and intimacy it can create. **Psalms 98:1-6; Colossians 3:16**

**Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>:** Psalm 12:8 reads, “The wicked strut about on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men.” What really struck me when I read that was the Oscars this year. The movie *Joker* received a whopping 11 nominations – the greatest number of any movie – and grossed over one billion dollars! It’s the first R-rated movie to ever break that barrier. The title character is a failed comedian who is driven to insanity and amorality and sparks a violent counter-cultural revolution against the wealthy of Gotham City. Some theaters even refused to show the movie because of its violent content and its potential to incite copycat acts of depravity. And this is what our society hails as the best of the best? The Hebrew word for vileness in the Psalm is *zulluth* which means to be morally debased, worthless, or to make light of. When we exalt such evil, how can we expect the goodness of a holy God to desire to inhabit the same space? Lord, give us clean hands and pure hearts. Forgive us for any way we personally have allowed things that are vile to be allowed into our lives. Lead us in paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake. **Psalm 1; Psalm 119:9; Philippians 4:8**

**Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>:** **Mark 2:1-12** What a great passage! This is one of the stories that children love. It presents such a vivid mental picture, and it’s actually quite humorous. Four desperate people battle the crowds, scale the building, and descend through the roof all to bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. When Jesus sees him, clearly unable to walk, he immediately responds by saying, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” That’s it! Jesus doesn’t even acknowledge the obvious condition of the man before him. It’s only when Jesus realizes the confusion of the people around him that he heals the paralysis. The people are shocked not by the authority over sin, but the ability to bring physical healing. They only perceive one part of what happened, and it’s enough to amaze them. Nonetheless, our Mark still packs so much into these words. Again we see what appears to be a supernatural healing, and our narrator explicitly highlights the fact that the healing is not the point. The event is merely to point us to Christ. The people respond appropriately, crying out, “We have never seen anything like this.”

**Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>**: Forgiveness can be such a difficult thing to grapple with. There are those among us who have suffered atrocities at the hands of others, and the trauma of that can be a relentless voice, reminding them over and over of the other's sin and their unworthiness to receive pardon. But Dwight L. Moody once said, "The voice of sin is loud, but the voice of forgiveness is louder." You see, that hounding reminder screaming in your ear is like a heavy chain keeping you bound to the offender, allowing no way of escape. But forgiveness is the bolt cutter, and the one being set free is you! You've no doubt heard before that unforgiveness is like drinking a cup of poison and expecting the other person to die. In fact, chances are the offender may not even be aware of your torment. And the truth is, we can't truly experience the joy and release of God's forgiveness if we are unwilling to forgive others. Listen to His voice of forgiveness, receive the blessing, and release the guilt and bitterness. Being free in His Presence is far better than living in the toxic bondage of unforgiveness. **Mark. 11:25; Matthew 6:12; Psalm 103:10-12**

**Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**: Turn to **Psalm 130**. "More than those who watch for the morning." Today, the sun came up, the day before, the day before. In fact, morning is a pretty sure thing. Morning will come. To say my soul waits and hopes more than those who watch for the morning—that's more than a sure thing. Though this is a psalm written from the darkness of night, it speaks of a hope that is surer than the hope that the sun will rise tomorrow. It's important for us to remember that hope in sunrise doesn't dispel the night. The psalmist still has to endure the darkness of night, but it's with the knowledge that sunrise is coming. As we continue our journey through Lent, we are tempted by our experience of instant downloads and overnight shipping. We want to get to the end. We are tempted to skip ahead to Easter morning—to ignore or forget the events of Lent and Holy Week. Instead, let's sit with the Psalmist and wait. Let's continue our journey, not only anticipating what lies ahead, but noticing what God is doing at this very moment.

**Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**: What seems like a lifetime ago I worked in electronics selling components to manufacturers of military grade equipment. One of the specs for the devices was a particular standard for gold plating on the component to ensure conductivity of the electrical signal or impulse. Without it the integrity of the contacts was compromised and the “message” being sent could be interrupted or corrupted because the conductors were more susceptible to tarnish. The same could be said of us as representatives of God the Father and His message of hope and salvation through Jesus. If we don’t immerse ourselves in His Presence and allow it to cover us like a protective, reliable shield against anything that would distort the trustworthiness of His message, then those who are looking to us as a connection to what He says will receive degraded signals. There’s an old song that says, “You’re the only Jesus some will ever see.” We can never take that lightly. We are in a war against a real enemy, and it’s imperative that our weapons are military grade. Even though we may not be aware, others are getting signals from us if we profess to be directed by our Commander in Chief. May we always carry with us the unadulterated word, having been refined in His fire and reflecting His image. **Proverbs 25:11; 2 Timothy 2:14**

**Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**: Mark 5:21-43 This passage is very profound. As we look closer at it there is a tangible difference as to how we read it and what is actually took place in it. “So that she may be made well and live.” The sequence of that request has always fascinated me. Made well is first, and live is second, not the other way around. It’s as if being made well is more important, more vital. From one perspective, this is obvious. To live again without having the underlying problem addressed will yield the same results. But there is more to it. There is something deeper. When Jesus heals the woman in the middle of this story, he proclaims healing and also wholeness. He doesn’t use either phrase with the little girl, but he tells them to feed her. Feeding is an action that indicates growth, strength, health, wholeness. Jesus makes them both well. He doesn’t just bring the little girl back to life and cleanse the bleeding woman. He makes them well. Their prayers were bigger than simple removal of symptoms. They don’t want to be un-sick. They ask to be well. Lord help us to pray bigger than removal of symptoms, step into praying for wellness and to be whole.

**Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>:** Heartfelt prayer is always powerful, but I think there is special power behind prayers that are audible (the enemy can't read our minds), and praying in a group setting allows others to agree with our prayers and to add new perspectives. However not everyone is comfortable praying aloud or in front of others, so using sentence prayers is one way to overcome this fear or hesitancy. Sentence praying is simply a fill-in-the-blank approach to voicing our praise or petitions to the Father. An example might be, "God, I worship You because You are \_\_\_\_\_", or, "Lord, we need Your guidance in \_\_\_\_\_." This can be practiced in the privacy of your own bedroom until it becomes more natural, and even alone there is authority in voiced declarations. Ministry leaders can provide topics and possibly sentence prayer examples prior to a group meeting so members will have a chance to prepare ideas ahead of time. This relieves some of the stress associated with praying aloud in a group, and those who are still reluctant can pass without any judgment. As this method is practiced, soon everyone will see the benefits of each person adding to the prayer and the richness and spontaneity of these prayers will become natural and dynamic. Thank Him that He has given each one of us a voice and a heart to commune with Him and to encourage and agree with others in calling out to Him. Where two or more are gathered... **Matthew 18:19-20; Psalm 107:28-30**

**Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>:** ***Psalm 121:1-2.7-8*** The words from this psalm reading begins with a question: Where will my help come? This question invites us to imagine, perhaps, a person traveling into new places, with new and possible dangers. Where does this traveler's help come? It comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, who will protect and keep the traveler all of the days of his/her life. I invite you to consider these words today, and reflect on the times when you have perhaps asked this same question. How was God present for you at that time? How is the Lord keeping "your going out and your coming in" your busy and sometimes challenging life, as you travel through your days? We pray *Lord* You are our help, our guide, our protector. Thank you for the life you bring us each day. Help us to see you in all that we do, as we go on our way, to new and familiar paths each day. Amen.

**Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**: You've probably heard the expression "get in gear" which conveys the idea that one needs to start working or doing something in a more energetic and effective way. In *Seizing Your Divine Moment* Erwin McManus writes, "I am convinced that the great tragedy is not the sins that we commit, but the life that we fail to live. You cannot follow God in neutral. God created you to do something." A car in neutral will only move of its own volition if it's headed downhill. Just like you wouldn't fill your car up with gas and then put it in neutral in the driveway and let it idle until it died, God doesn't place His Spirit in us for us to sit idly by until **we** die! We all have divine moments that have been prepared for us to seize, but in order to do so we must be willing to *actively* take hold of them. Ask Him to place in your heart an insatiable desire to actively seize the life He created you to live, and to do so with excellence. **Ephesians 2:10; 2 Peter 1:3-8**

**Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>**: We've talked a lot about forgiving others, but I believe a major issue for many Christians is the question of whether or not we are willing to forgive ourselves. The enemy loves to remind us of our offenses, and sometimes we can get caught up in his lies that our transgression is too great; it's just unforgiveable. C.S. Lewis said, "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." Let's face it, do you really believe that you are above Jesus? That He died for everyone else's sin, but yours is beyond His ability to pardon? We may have had no excuse for our behavior, but Jesus knew how weak we are, and God's love for you and me is so immense that He decided to give life for life – His in exchange for ours. To refuse that kind of love and sacrifice, to say it isn't enough, is what would truly be inexcusable. We are audaciously loved and unfathomably forgiven. Accept it, cherish it, and learn from it. **Psalms 103:12; Mark 10:45; Acts 3:19**

**Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>**: My kids used to love playing hide and seek, tag. That means you hide until you want to make a run for base. If you're tagged on the way to base, then you're out. But if you run from your hiding place and safely make it back to base, then whoever is It has to keep seeking. There are usually accusations of rule-breaking and cheating if someone has to be It for too many turns. The beautiful thing about being in a covenant relationship with God is that God never tires of seeking us out and chasing us down. We run, we hide, and God relentlessly pursues us. Even the people we adore the most will occasionally let us down, break the rules, and break our trust. God shows us a different way to be in relationship with one another – mutually serving, giving each other the place of honor. Pray, Lord help me not to hide from You but in awe of Your loving kindness toward me. In all my relationships, help me to demonstrate Your love and mercy with kindness and compassion. **Psalm 27:7-11**

**Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>:** I walked into a quiet room to see a woman in her late 60s, lying on the bed. The first thing I noticed was she was alone. The window shades blocked most light from the room save a tiny ray coming in from the corner leaving the atmosphere empty, grey and piercingly still. I realized as I entered that I had forgotten to check her medical info, so I briefly glanced at my paperwork to discover she was expected to die anytime. I called out her name and she didn't budge. Her eyes were wide open, staring aimlessly at the ceiling, her face stone cold. I tried saying her name again to see if I could get any sort of movement or reaction. Nothing. In that moment I debated: Should I leave? Should I stay and try talking with her, even though she was unable to respond or probably hear me? I felt an urgency in my spirit. She could be seconds away from death's door. Even if she couldn't hear me, I decided I had to at least try, so I walked over to her bedside and began talking. I introduced myself and talked a little about what I do as a Chaplain. Ever so slightly, her neck began to turn and I noticed her eyes fell wide-eyed on mine. I had no idea if she could comprehend my words, but her eye contact was an encouraging sign that she might be following what I was saying. "Would it be alright if I read you some scriptures and prayed for you?" I paused, waiting see if she was strong enough to speak or signal anything. She tried moving her lips, but weakness hindered her from forming any words. Defeat covered her face; I could read frustration with her inability to communicate. "It's okay; you don't need to say anything." I pulled out my Bible, noticing she was still intently focused on me. "I'm going to read you some passages, okay?" And then I noticed the first ever so slight nod. My heart was instantly lifted as I realized she could both hear and comprehend what I was saying. I read a scripture and asked if she wanted me to read more. She nodded, so I read another passage and she nodded for more. After a few passages, I read to her John 14. "Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many rooms, if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you." Lastly I read Jesus' famous words, "I am The Way, The Truth and The Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." When I finished I looked up to see tears streaming down her face as she still intensely stared at me. In that moment I knew she had heard me. I prayed the gospel, for her

peace and comfort in these last moments. The expression on her face was the same, still unable to move. I smiled, told her thank you, and left. As I walked out, the first thing I realized was that I had NO idea what God had just done or how He would use it, but the moment was still special. My hope is placed in the fact that The Word of God holds power, never returns void and always proves true. "Secret things belong to the Lord." This patient, this brief moment and interaction belong to Him and all we can do is pray for her salvation and His glory. **John 14:1-6; Isaiah 55:11**

**Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>:** Every artist loves to display his work. But when I am working on my art, I know it is a work in progress. When I'm done, then I am happy to show it to others. We, too, are a work in progress. God is doing a work in our life. When it is done, He will show us. If it isn't done yet, be patient. God sees the end from the beginning. We can't see what it is, but God can. That is important to remember. As God told the exiled nation of Israel, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (**Jeremiah 29:11**). For Israel, it meant they would be in Babylon for a while, but ultimately, God would get them out. What it means specifically for us on a day-to-day basis, time will tell. Whatever it is, it is good because God is in control of it.

**Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>**: A promise is a vow, a pledge, a guarantee that what is said can be counted on to come to pass. We are told in 2 Corinthians that **all** the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ Jesus; they are sure and firm. When you consider the multitude of promises this encompasses, it's overwhelming! Whatever we ask according to His will, *He will do!* He will keep you in perfect peace; no weapon formed against you can prosper; He will supply all of your needs; He is with you always and will renew your strength; He will guide you and go before you, with you, and follow after you; He will pour out His Spirit on your children; nothing is too difficult for Him; and He says that *His words will not return void!* And that's just scratching the surface of what He has promised. That ought to inspire you to start claiming His promises in your prayers. I love what Pete Greig shared at Start the Year off Right. In first Chronicles chapter 17 David is recounting all that the Lord has said, and in response he utters what Greig calls the four most powerful words we can pray, "*Do as You promised.*" Do you truly trust and believe God? Then take Him at His word! Pray and claim His promises. **2 Chronicles 1:20; 1 John 5:14-15; Isaiah 55:11** (and so many more – look for them!)

**Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>**: Where does your identity lie? In today's psalm, the writer makes a clear statement about the identity of the most powerful person in his culture, the king. He names God as the king's parent, the one who gives him life and being. Everything that the king is and does comes from God. The king's core identity is wholly wrapped up in God. Jesus was fond of making similar declarations about his own identity: "The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (**John 5:19**); "I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak" (**John 12:49**). For both the king and for Jesus, being children of God meant seeing their identities as deeply linked to who God is. That connection shapes every word and action, changing the way a person moves through the world. Pray- God, so many things go into making me who I am: my family, my DNA, my past, my culture, my personality. At the root of it all, however, I am your child. Let me live in a way that reflects who you are, shining forth from my core.

**Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>:** In Matthew chapter 16 the disciples have just witnessed Jesus feeding first 5000 and then 4000 from little more than a sack lunch. Now they have traveled to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and the disciples discover they have brought no “bread” with them. When Jesus makes the comment that they are to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they immediately conclude it’s because they forgot the bread! And in a way, they’re right. It was just a different “bread” they had forgotten. First, the leaven Jesus was speaking of was the doctrines held by these groups which would eventually affect the very nature of what they believed if even a small bit of it was allowed to ferment in their beliefs. The Pharisees, or “the separated ones”, were legalistic, arrogant exclusionists whose religion was external rather than a matter of the heart and relationship with God. Sadducees were more political than religious and denied the idea of resurrection and that humans were the sole masters of their destinies. All of this was contrary to what Jesus taught and modeled. He was the necessary Bread of Life, and through personal relationship with Him and dependence on the grace He afforded, any who accepted Him were assured of eternal life. We all need to be reminded at times that nothing can be allowed to contaminate the true bread – that which is vital for life, is always in full supply, and is miraculously provided. **John 6:26-35; 1 Timothy 6:3-5**

**Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**: So often when we read the Bible's accounts of the miraculous we can feel that that was then and this is now. In response to that mindset, I found two provocative quotes. The first is from Mike Murdock. "Miracles do not go where they are needed; they go where they are expected." Many of us have encountered situations where a miracle was definitely needed, but how often do we actually expect it to happen? That brings me to the second quote, from C.S. Lewis, "Those who assume that miracles cannot happen are merely wasting their time by looking into the texts; we know in advance what results they will find for they have begun by begging the question." Even Jesus commented that He could do very little in His hometown because of the lack of belief. Why don't we start taking God at His word and pray expectantly? He may not choose to answer in the way we anticipate, but He will definitely respond to the honest, heartfelt cries of His children, and He won't give us a scorpion. Be persistent, be expectant, and believe. **Matthew 15:38, 21:21; Mark 9:23; Ephesians 3:20-21**

**Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**: Whatever we might acquire in life, the novelty of it will diminish over time. Take a new car, for example. Don't you love the new-car smell? You look for excuses to drive it. You vow to never eat in your car. And then a month goes by and you're late for work. You have to eat, and sure enough, you have your first spill inside your car. Some time passes, and you get that first little dent in the door. Then the paint chips a little. And after a while, that new car is not so exciting. We could take that metaphor and apply it to everything in life. No matter how big, how cool, or how fast whatever it is, everything loses its appeal after a period of time. So if you think happiness comes from what you have, you will find that you are always going to want something else to take its place. But the Bible teaches that happiness—true happiness—comes from who we know. Listen to the words of **Habakkuk**: “Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!” **(3:17–18)**. Let me update that for modern times: Even when business is slow and there are no prospects in the immediate future, even when my investments have evaporated and the car won't start, I will rejoice in the Lord. Our joy and contentment in life does not come from what we have. It comes from whom we know.

**Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>**: One of the defining characteristics of really strong, successful, effective people is tenacity. Joseph had it. Moses had it. The apostle Paul had it. It's that dogged determination to stay the course regardless of the setbacks. The presence and power of God are not a one-time outpouring that somehow becomes a Kevlar coating for life. Instead it is a perpetual pursuit - a constant, unyielding resolve to seek Him, listen to Him, know Him, and obey Him. It's easy to follow Him when things are going smoothly, but the true test is when there are obstacles and we feel like we're out there all alone and can't see the positive outcome He has promised. We aren't immune to the enemy's assaults, and in all honesty when we are truly walking according to God's design we have something of a target on our backs that reads, "Watch out, devil! God is on the move!" Let this be a reminder as well as an encouragement to press in and press on. Thank You, Father, that You know Your plans for us and You will never leave us. Give us the wisdom to stay close to the only One we can trust to show the way and provide shelter. **Jeremiah 29:11; Philippians 3:14; 2 Peter 1:4-8**

**Tuesday, March 24<sup>rd</sup>**: The Hebrew root word translated "keep" means to guard, to protect, to take care of someone or something. It implies looking out for someone else's best interests, keeping another from harm or injury, watching out for his or her welfare. In order to "keep" someone in this way, you must pay attention. You have to intentionally regard the other seriously, personally, continually. You have to care. God cared for Abraham. God cared for Nicodemus. God cared for Jesus. God cares for me. Faith is living like you are God's person. Faith is living your life trusting God every day. Faith includes living by God's rules and trusting God to love you and forgive you when you mess up. Faith means living like Jesus. God is my keeper—in a good way. God keeps me constantly in sight, protecting me always. God keeps me from evil. God keeps me surrounded by care and provision when I am awake and while I sleep. Lord, you watch over my comings and goings. With the decisions I make, keep me safe. Watch over those I love. Help me to care for others as much as you care for me. **Psalms 121**

**Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>**: We would all probably agree that the government could stand some improvement in the way it functions. Even though it may feel like your prayers are so small in relationship to the enormity of the political quagmire, we are urged (admonished, strongly advised) to pray for our leaders, and we are also told that the fervent (passionate, earnest, heartfelt) prayers of a righteous person can accomplish much. Begin by giving God thanks that we live in a free country and that there are devoted Christians strategically placed by Him in positions of authority. Pray for those who govern that wisdom would enter their hearts, godly knowledge would be pleasant to them, and they would be delivered from the way of evil and those who would speak perverse things. Pray that all deeds of darkness would be brought to light, exposing hidden agendas that are not in accordance with what would be pleasing to God. Finally, ask that we as a nation would humble ourselves before our Father, repent, turn from all ungodly practices and seek His face. Add to these anything else that He puts on your heart, and if you would like further direction, refer to Carol Ann Hale Kononova's guide "A Scriptural Prayer for Good Government." The incentive for us is that we may lead tranquil and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity. May God bless America. **1 Timothy 2:1-3; James 5:16; Proverbs 2: 9-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5**

**Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>**: One of the great deficiencies of power and influence among contemporary churches is an attitude of complacency. We've become settlers rather than pioneers. The command of Jesus to His disciples was to go! When things are running fairly smoothly, we have a tendency to sit back and enjoy the "good enough" rather than press on to the outrageously exceeding abundance that God desires. Can you imagine where we would be right now if there had been no pioneering spirit in the early days of our country? How about in the fields of medicine or technology? We are made in God's image and He is the Creator of the universe. That means He has also made us to be creative, and creative people are always looking for resourceful ways to make things better. Pure Heart has a wonderful avenue for us to utilize that pioneer spirit God has placed in each of us – Communities on Mission. We are His masterpiece, created with a specific mission in mind that we might fulfill it. Discover what marvelous plans He has for you. Don't settle for anything less. **Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:9; Exodus 9:16**

**Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>**: **Mark 4:21-34** Parables can be so confusing. They defy our attempts to make them into fables or allegories. They're not systematic. They are word pictures, poems, sculptures. They create an impression, a sense, a hunch, an idea, a thought, a feeling. The parables in **Mark 4:21-34** speak of growth, attention, work, blessing, urgency, life, provision, safety, shelter, productivity, creation. Notice that those who have ears to hear don't automatically hear. They are called to listen, and to pay attention. This calling is helpful for us to bear in mind as we encounter the parables. As much as we want to tie them down to easy interpretations, there is value in simply listening, paying attention, and soaking up the strangeness of the stories.

**Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>**: The definition of *miracle* is – an act of God; an amazing event; something admired as a marvelous creation or example. What we tend to look for as “a miracle” sometimes is actually more of a magic trick. Something to dazzle us. And the bottom line is that God is absolutely able to dazzle us with the things that He can and will do when we come to Him from hearts that are aligned with His. I’ve personally seen Him orchestrate events or bring about healings that defy the laws of nature. But then I realize that He is the Creator of the laws nature as well! When you sit down and really contemplate from that posture, you realize that we are surrounded by miracles every day: the intricate workings of our body to sustain life, to grow, to heal itself, and to process thoughts and formulate and solve complex problems; the consistency of the times and seasons, yet the variety of that from year to year and from region to region. I truly believe that the more aware we are of the seemingly mundane miracles surrounding us and the more appreciative we are of these, the more apt we will be to experience and recognize the greater miracles He is working. Take some time to revel in His miraculous creation and thank Him for all He has done, all He continues to do, and all He can and will do. **Psalm 139; Jeremiah 32:27**

**Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**: Blind spots. We all have them; people and situations in which we fail to see the big picture. How many times do we who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ ask the wrong questions or misplace our focus? We are so quick to make snap judgments about others that we turn a blind eye to possibility. We see something that must have a simple explanation (either this man or his parents sinned) instead of mystery and potential. We assume sin in our neighbor, when often we ourselves are the ones in need of healing. Perhaps those blind spots in our own life are gifts yet to be revealed, places where the light of Christ can break through. The good news is that possibility isn’t limited to our own experience or imagination. Possibility is limitless with God. Pray- Lord, thank you for showing me that your possibilities are better than my own. Help me be slow to judge others, and quick to pray that not my will, but yours be done. **John 9:1–5**

**Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>**: On one of the Monday morning prayer walks of Pure Heart's campus, one of the prayer walkers was impressed with the idea of the resource center being a place where we simply partner with God to re-source what He has already so amply provided for us. He is truly the source of all we could ever need, but sometimes we need to be reminded that He has already made it available to us. And then another of the prayer walkers was reminded of a devotion given by a Korean missionary on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, and how he kept repeating the phrase, "We lack nothing!" The Amplified reads, "...I shall not lack." And David declares later in Psalm 34 that there is no want for those who truly revere and worship Him with godly fear. Our Father owns the cattle on 1000 hills, so is it any wonder that He has the resources to take care of us? Just as He has given us all that we need, He has also commissioned us see that those who don't know Him or who find themselves in need are directed to the true source. We simply re-source what we've been given. He promises to refresh and restore, to lead us in paths of righteousness, to guide and protect us, to never leave us, to provide and protect us – truly we lack nothing! **Psalm 23, 34:9, 50:10; Philippians 4:19**

**Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>**: Over the past few years I have tried to live by a daily philosophy...to live every day as though it is the only day to be examined at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Stop just for a moment and reread that sentence. In case you didn't go back; let me repeat it, "Live every day as though it is the only that will be examined at the Judgment Seat of Christ." Once the magnitude of that statement settled into my heart, I realized the significance and responsibility of serving God every day. Every day will be examined. Every decision, motive, intent, word, expression, and attitude will fall under the righteous assessment of God. So to set each day into its proper motion, we must intend to start the day with God. As George Lorimar said, "You've got to get up every morning with determination if you are going to go to bed with satisfaction." Nothing substitutes our devotion. Nothing. It is from our personal time with God that life flows. Ministry, service, worship, and power are all nurtured through those early morning hours of solitude, study and supplication. Give the first hours of your day to the Lord and it is certain He will guide and govern your steps throughout the rest of the day. **Psalm 21-25**