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Connection SDMI



SDMI
USA/CANADA REGION



CHURCH of the
NAZARENE

DISCIPLESHIP AND PRAYER

The Gift Worth Unwrapping Early and Using Every Day

by Rev. Larry R. Morris

I love the Christmas season. Fortunately I have wonderful memories of meaningful Christmas pageants, Christmas music, Christmas dinners, and family devotions before the opening of the gifts on Christmas morning. These were special times in which our busy lives were put aside and we recognized the greatest gift of life – life in Christ.

An essential part of our family devotions growing up was family prayer. During that prayer time it was awe inspiring to feel at that moment we were in direct contact with the triune God of the Universe. I can recall the sense of peace that would come over us as we shared our blessings and lifted our requests to God. All was well. Anxiety and fear were gone.

From childhood through grandparenting, we live in a world full of endless options and activities. Heightened anxiety and fear are common byproducts. Recent surveys of Christians reveal we are not immune to the many anxieties and fears that greet us every morning and confront us every night in news reports. Their message is that our resources are inadequate to meet the demands of a rapidly changing and chaotic world. This message of uncertainty and inadequacy is not from our Lord and Savior. With Him our resources are always adequate to meet the challenges before us. That is why, during this Advent season, it is time not only to embrace the miracle of the birth of Christ but also God's gift of communication and intercession – prayer.

There is nothing like intimate communion with God through prayer to calm our fears and to help bring us back to recognition of who God is and whose we are. It is good to remember and practice what Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6-7:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

God has blessed us with the opportunity to know His heart and for Him to know ours. This blessing is extended to everyone, every generation, regardless of circumstance. As SDMI ministry leaders, let's model and challenge others to open and use this priceless gift.

In this issue of *Connections* you will find articles about ministry to children, youth, and adults that will inspire and resource you in the priceless gift of prayer. Feel free to share the content with others on your district or church. May God richly bless you with His presence and peace.

Larry Morris is the SDMI USA/Canada Regional Coordinator.

The Rhythm of Prayer

by Rev. Trey Brooks



In the life of families, there are rhythms. Perhaps we eat a Pop Tart for breakfast on the way to school or lunch with grandparents on Sunday afternoon. We have a routine of what we do when we arrive home from school or

work. In our house, my wife has trained our kids that upon entering the door, shoes come off and go in their “home.” This is so much of a rhythm for our kids that it doesn’t matter whose house we are in; the shoes come off and go into their “home” by the door.

Rhythms are important. According to Dictionary.com, rhythm is defined as “movement or procedure with uniform or patterned recurrence of a beat, accent, or the like.” It happens almost without thinking.

Most likely, if you are reading this article, you attend church, and that is a rhythm. But what about in your home? What are the rhythms in the life of your family? Do you have a rhythm of spiritually teaching your kids? Do you pray with your kids? Do you pray at times other than a quick blessing before meals?

If we want to be people who are teaching our kids about prayer, what are the ways in which we are going to teach them prayer as a regular “patterned recurrence” in their lives?

Regular “patterned recurrence” is important. How might you create “patterned recurrence” of spiritual conversations with your children? This can be lived out in many different ways. Perhaps before bed you read a story from God’s Word and pray. Perhaps on the rush to school in the morning you choose a stoplight; and at that light, you take a moment to thank God for something. Perhaps you have a date with each of your kids once a week or once a month, and you engage them in spiritual conversation and pray together. This will look very different for each kid and will evolve as they age.

When we begin to learn a new rhythm, it takes intentionality because it’s not a “patterned recurrence.” You may need to put it on your calendar, set an alarm on your phone, or make a sign over the mirror. However, we must make it important to have “patterned recurrence” of spiritual conversation and prayer with and for our children. If we want them to know how to pray and commune with God, we are the best and most effective models.

Trey Brooks & his wife, Candice, are co-directors of Equip to Engage. Learn more at www.equiptoengage.org. Contact Trey at trey@equiptoengage.org.

Children’s Bible Quizzing & Prayer

by Rev. Leslie Hart

Prayer and Bible study are two of the most important building blocks of young disciples. Children’s Bible Quizzing focuses on learning, understanding, and applying Scripture—God’s clear communication with us. Prayer focuses on our communication with God. Both are learned practices.

Fortunately, God’s Word provides guidance and models for prayer. Children’s Bible Quizzing can strengthen any child’s prayer life if we help them make the connection between prayer and the study of God’s Word. Posing questions like the following can be an effective way to make that connection:

- Did the people in the Bible story talk to God (or in other words “pray”)?
- What was happening, why did they turn to God, and what did they say?
- What was the result of their prayer?
- What difference did it make?
- What do the answers tell us about God’s character, nature, and love for us?

These are often tough questions, but it’s important for children to know that we don’t have to have all the answers. Children’s Bible Quizzing helps children learn about the One who is faithful and trustworthy, whose love and peace are beyond our understanding.

At the next quizzing competition, kids, coaches, and parents will still be praying for calm nerves, good memories, and high scores; but let’s not stop there. Let’s focus on helping children gain a lifelong hunger for more of God and His Word. Let’s help them learn to communicate with Him in the midst of everyday situations until they find themselves “praying without ceasing.”



Leslie Hart is the USA/Canada Children’s Ministries Coordinator.

“And When You Pray...A Biblical Perspective”

by Judi King



When a forlorn woman stood to pray, a priest named Eli, who happened to observe her lips moving in silent appeal, thought she was drunk and rebuked her for her lack of self-control. “Not so, my lord,” the woman replied. “I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief” (1 Samuel 1:15-16). The woman was Hannah, and her grief was for the children she seemed destined never to have.

From this passage, we learn something about prayer during Old Testament times: apparently, people adopted a particular stance when praying. Before Hannah began her prayer, she “stood up” (v. 9). And from Eli’s surprise that she wasn’t speaking aloud, as well as from other Old Testament passages, we can surmise that prayer was usually spoken aloud. This practice carried over into the early Christian centuries. A painting on a wall in the catacombs of Rome, where many Christians hid to escape persecution in those early years after the resurrection of Christ, shows a worshiper standing with raised hands in prayer.

We find additional references to prayer in other biblical passages. David speaks of praying “in the morning” (Ps. 5:3); Psalm 6, on the other hand, mentions that he spent the night in prayer during a particularly wrenching time in his life (v. 6). And in Psalms 22 and 55, he spent whole days in seeking God’s presence. What does this tell us? David was in constant communion with His

Lord. It is no wonder that God described him as “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22).

Daniel was another man of prayer. Taken into exile in Babylon along with the other Jewish exiles (sixth century BC), Daniel continued to worship the God of Israel in spite of serving in the Babylonian royal court. One of the ways he maintained his faith was by praying three times a day (6:11), even in violation of a decree that resulted in his being thrown into a den of lions! By New Testament times, some of the religious leaders were making quite a show of prayer. Jesus advised His disciples NOT to pray as they did: “For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others” (Matthew 6:5). Instead, Jesus advised His followers to find a quiet, secluded place to pour out their hearts to their Father (v. 6). In addition, He recommended that they keep it short – God knows our needs and wants to respond to them (vv. 7-8).

How important is prayer for believers? Important enough that Jesus spent long hours in prayer during the three short years of His ministry: “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). The night before He chose the Twelve, He “spent the night praying to God” (6:12). On His last night before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, He took His disciples to a garden and prayed long enough that His disciples fell asleep three times while He was there (Matthew 26:36-46)!

Prayer is important; those who speak to God find in Him a willing listener and peace at times of great sorrow or anguish of soul. Prayer brings us into communion with God; our relationship with our heavenly Father is established and deepened with every moment we spend in His presence. So let’s rejoice and enjoy this priceless gift of prayer.

Judi King is the Illustrated Bible Life editor at Nazarene Publishing House.

Prayer and the Discipleship Place

by Rev. John Comstock

Many who grow up in a Christian church may have learned prayers to recite at bedtime or before a meal. If so, we may have inadvertently begun to believe that prayer is something that is a mere mechanistic exercise, void of any meaningful relationship with God. As adults, many struggle to understand the purpose of prayer.

The Discipleship Place has a course called “Practicing Wesleyan-Holiness Spiritual Formation.” Lesson twelve of this course addresses prayer. This lesson will define and explain prayers of confession, intercession, and petition and state their significance for the holy life. It will also help individuals examine their prayer life and build the habit of offering prayers of confession, intercession, and petition. You can find this lesson by going to www.DiscipleshipPlace.org then clicking on Study > Lay Ministry > Spiritual Formation.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact our office by emailing DiscipleshipPlace@nazarene.org or by calling toll free, 888-243-2467.

John Comstock is the USA/Canada Coordinator of Continuing Lay Training (CLT).



The God of the Underdogs Vacation Bible School

by Rev. G. Daniel Harris



In the fall of 2014, Kids Reaching Kids began work on a new VBS curriculum. What resulted was *The God of the Underdogs*. The project came about as a response to a growing need within many local Nazarene churches looking for a Wesleyan/Holiness Vacation Bible School that could bring children to a saving faith in Christ, while at the same time avoid placing a financial burden on their church.

The God of the Underdogs VBS was sent free of charge to every Nazarene church within the United States and Canada; eventually, it made its way all across the globe. The curriculum was made available in both English and Spanish; and with the help of some VBS-passionate Nazarenes in Kenya, portions were translated into Swahili.

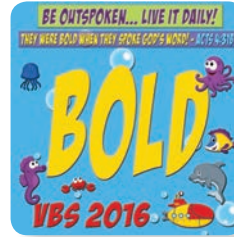
In addition to hard copies, *The God of the Underdogs* is available as a free download at www.gotuvbs.com and will remain there indefinitely.

What follows are some highlights of the impact being made by *The God of the Underdogs*. In 2015, a *God of the Underdogs* VBS was held in

- 272 USA churches across 39 states
- 90 churches in Kenya
- 28 churches in Guyana
- And at least one church in Canada, Great Britain, Japan, Trinidad, and Zimbabwe

In 2016, *God of the Underdogs* will impact...

- 52 churches in Puerto Rico as a part of *Encuentro (Encounter) Puerto Rico*
- Potentially over 100 churches throughout other parts of Mesoamerica



Due to the success of *The God of the Underdogs* VBS, Kids Reaching Kids is producing a second VBS curriculum for 2016. *BOLD: Be Outspoken... Live it Daily!* will lead children on a BOLD adventure through the book of Acts. If your church would like to receive a free *BOLD* VBS kit, you can request one at www.boldvbs.com. *BOLD* will be available in English, Spanish, and Swahili.

Finally, Kids Reaching Kids would like to ask you to pray for the following:

- The children and children's workers across the globe who have been, or will be impacted by *The God of the Underdogs* and *BOLD* VBS curriculums.
- The continued development and translation of these VBS materials.
- That through these ministry efforts, hearts and lives will be transformed through the power of Jesus Christ.

Dan Harris is the SDMI Kids Reaching Kids Coordinator, Church of the Nazarene.

Intercessory Prayer

by Rev. Donna Fillmore

“The real business of your life as a saved soul is intercessory prayer.” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*)



Prayer is a privilege we have been given so we can communicate with our Holy God. When we pray for someone, we are bringing that person before the attention of Almighty God. There are many who need our prayers. Intercession carries a responsibility and demands much, but the rewards are great. Here are 5 ways to pray for the children in your Sunday School classes and VBS.

1. Pray about *all* the requests children make...including sick pets and their other concerns.
2. Pray about the specific situations in each child's family, their parents, and the salvation of unsaved parents.
3. Ask God to keep the children safe and protect them from negative influences in their schools and neighborhoods.
4. Pray that the children will remain tender toward God and one day receive Jesus as their Savior.
5. Pray for wisdom in dealing with each student – particularly the “difficult” ones. Ask God to help you reflect His love to them.

John 17 is the ultimate example of intercessory prayer. Jesus set aside time in the hour of His greatest crisis to offer a prayer of intercession for us. Let us be moved to do the same for the children we influence.

Donna Fillmore is a retired Executive Editor of children's curriculum at Nazarene Publishing House.

Praying Together: Forming a Deeper Connection as a Couple

by Dr. David & Lisa Frisbie

Early in our careers as DINKs (dual income, no kids) we found ourselves running in two different directions and living on two very separate schedules. If one of us was awake, the other was asleep. If one of us was energized and ready for the day, the other one was worn out from a full and demanding night at work.



We loved each other, but our lives were running on two different tracks.

Our pastor, Paul Cunningham, began preaching to us about prayer. His wife, Connie, began talking to our Sunday School class (young married couples) about the importance of having a devotional time together. Between them, the two Cunninghams provided us the prayer model we valued as we tried to build a more perfect union. How did God know what we needed?

What we needed was time together as a couple, to listen to each other and then pray for each other, inviting God's presence to transform our busy lives into places of spiritual refreshment and mutual encouragement.

What we needed was a deeper love for each other, something deep enough to overcome our natural selfishness as each of us tried to succeed in our chosen fields.

What we needed was someone to pray for us while knowing exactly what was going on in our lives and understanding what the challenges of our day would look like.

Intentionally and daily, we began praying for each other while with each other, a practice we now recommend to couples in every setting and venue where we minister. What we do is this: we begin by holding hands, we share prayer requests with each other, and

then we pray for each other. Our prayers are short, simple, and out loud, asking God to get involved in our issues and show us His wisdom.

For us and for couples around the world, this brief but meaningful moment of connection has become the most important part of our daily routine. Of the many ways we share and express our love for each other, the intimacy of sharing together in prayer is what draws us closer to one another and closer to God.

David and Lisa Frisbie serve together as Executive Directors of *Healthy Habits for Parents and Families* in Rancho Santa Fe, California. They are the authors of dozens of articles and twenty-six books about marriage and family life, including their recent book *Right from the Start* (Beacon Hill Press). Their books are widely available for Kindle, Nook, and other e-readers.

Right From the Start: A Premarital Guide for Couples provides real-life stories and advice to help you prepare for and thrive in married life. Through their engaging story-telling, David and Lisa Frisbie open doors for you and your loved one to hash out ideas and potential misunderstandings. As you discuss thoughtful and important questions with each other, you will deepen your understanding of your own life experiences and those of your partner as you use the art of conversation to share and shape your expectations of life as a married couple.

Key topics include:

- Money (how you've used it, how you expect to deal with it)
- Sex (your prior experiences and your expectations in marriage)
- Power (who's the boss? why? how was it in your family growing up?)
- Faith (the importance of shared values, especially in spiritual matters)
- Family (roles and expectations within the family unit, including parenting)

Be aware: This book boldly goes where other pre-marriage books have not yet gone. This is an in-depth look at why marriages go bad and how you can keep your marriage from becoming yet another divorce statistic.

Do You Pray?

by Rev. David Middendorf



I was asked the other day if men and women who ride motorcycles ever pray as they ride. I responded that indeed we do. It used to be when we rode and saw someone in a *cage* (*biker speak for a car or truck*) and the person was driving erratically, we would assume they had been drinking. The new drunk driver today is anybody with a cell phone, and that's pretty much everybody who drives. So, yes, we pray without ceasing as we ride.

But what about off the bike, or if you don't ride motorcycles, do you pray? I'm not talking about at meals or at

corporate worship times when a leader says, "Let us pray." And I'm not talking about when someone asks, "Would you open us in prayer?" What I mean is, when no one is around,

when no one knows...do you pray? Do you have a time each day dedicated to the one thing that can change everything?

The movie *War Room* was released this year, and my wife and I went to see it...three times. It's a good movie with a strong message about having a prayer strategy. A purpose for prayer. Making prayer the first thing you do, not what you do when all you know to do has failed. Since seeing *War Room*, our prayer life has changed dramatically. I highly recommend this movie if you are seeking a new prayer model.

Do you pray just to have a private time alone with God? To tell Him how much you love Him, to hallow His name? Do you pray to thank Him for His blessings in your life? Do you pray to intercede for someone and to ask for strength for the day? Do you pray so that you can be still and listen and know who He is... who He really is?

Do you pray?

David Middendorf is chair of Nazarene Motorcycle Fellowship (NMF) and is on staff at Shepherd Church of the Nazarene in Gahanna, Ohio.

Praying for Your Teens

adapted from an article by Rev. Gerald Norrington

Measuring the impact of prayer is a challenge, but prayer is the single most important investment you can make in the lives of teens – whether your own or teens you teach. Congregations, church staff, teachers and leaders, parents, and grandparents all need to be encouraged to pray for the teens in their lives. We need to pray individually and as a unified team. We need to pray as specifically as possible and by name for the teens in our care. The following Scripture passages and prayers can be used as a guide as you seek God's blessings on the ministry to teens in your church.

Sunday

Pray that [teen's name] will know Christ as Savior.

"From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Monday

Pray that [teen] will be protected from the evil one.

"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

Tuesday

Pray that [teen] will have a responsible attitude in all relationships and a respect for authority.

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established" (Romans 13:1).

Wednesday

Pray that [teen] will desire the right kind of friends and will be kept for the right life partner.

"My son, if sinners entice you, do not give into them" (Proverbs 1:10).

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).



[Continued on next page.]

Our Prayers and God's Answers

by Johnna Hall Harding



My husband pastors a Nazarene church with a small congregation of mostly elderly people on fixed incomes, making finances an on-going challenge. We have been praying for confirmation that we are serving where God wants us to serve, and He continues to let us know “this is our ministry field” for now; we aren’t to go anywhere.

I serve as the youth pastor at the church, where we minister to over 30 teens and children on Mondays and Wednesdays – feeding them and giving them a safe place to be as well as a spiritual message. Most of these kids come from extreme levels of poverty and

dysfunction; even if their parents would start coming to church, they would not have much to contribute financially. My husband and I reach out to these kids with the hope and prayer that they will hide God’s Word in their hearts and seek His face. We do so with no expectation of anything in return.

Over the past few years, we have formed a “relationship” with a lady (let’s call her Anna) who works in a restaurant in town. My husband has had the privilege of driving Anna’s children to Pre-K over the past three years. He is bi-vocational, working as a school bus driver, a job he took on with the hope of reaching the community for Christ. Earlier this year, we convinced Anna to let her three older children come to church on Wednesday nights; they attend the Catholic church on Sundays with their grandma but do not have activities on Wednesdays.

We had been taking Anna’s children to church for several months when one evening Anna sent a card with the children. Since her primary language is Spanish, her English writing is not flawless; but I want to stay true to her words. Anna wrote, “We do little things in life. God sent us a big blessings in life. Thank you! We thankful and bless for letting our kids in your lives. This money is a small donation to the church. Love always.”

Knowing Anna’s own financial struggles, I was moved that she wanted to contribute to our ministry; but I wasn’t expecting much. However, nestled in the envelope with the note was \$1,000!

I was so humbled and amazed at how great our God is and how faithful He is to those who serve Him! I was reminded that when we don’t expect anything, God delivers BIG! This experience is also a great reminder that we are to minister and be Jesus everywhere we are (even in restaurants). We never know who might find Jesus or be blessed by our example.

Johnna Hall Harding is a pastor’s wife at a Church of the Nazarene in a small Oklahoma town.

Praying for Your Teens (continued)

Thursday

Pray that [teen’s name] will learn to submit completely to God.

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Friday

Pray that [teen] will be sold out to Jesus Christ.

“I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2).

Saturday

Pray that when [teen] leaves home it would be with eternal perspectives and values.

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8).

Gerald Norrington wrote the original article for “Resource” magazine from which this article has been adapted. Gerald is chaplain for Vitas Health Care in Orlando, Florida, and is on staff part time at Orlando United Church of the Nazarene.

UPCOMING EVENTS...

SDMI 2016
Spring Emphasis
April 3-May 1, 2016
"To Make Christlike Disciples
in the Nations"
For more information, go to
sdmiusacanada.org

SDMI New Chair Orientation
&
District Leadership Conference
October 10-13, 2016
Save the date!
More information coming soon.
sdmiusacanada.org

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TEACH 2016

A national lay ministry conference for Sunday School,
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Opening Speaker: General Superintendent David Graves



AUGUST 12-13, 2016
Springdale Church of the Nazarene
Cincinnati, Ohio

NOVEMBER 12, 2016
Canada (Location TBD)

More information coming soon at
sdmiusacanada.org

Explore best practices for making
Christlike disciples through...

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- Bible Quizzing
- Marriage & Family Ministry
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SDMI USA/Canada Regional Office CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

USA/Canada Region
Nazarene Global Ministry Center
17001 Prairie Star Pkwy
Lenexa, KS 66220



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SDMI USA/Canada

877-240-2417
913-577-2802

FAX: 913-577-0866
Email: sdmi@nazarene.org
Website: sdmiusacanada.org