

*He Knows
My Name*

Karen Pearson
EDITOR

Prayer—Priority or Problem?

“Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

—Luke 8:14, NKJV

If I could give you a spiritual thermometer and ask you to take the temperature of your prayer life, what would it look like? Would it read hot, cold, or lukewarm?

When you take time alone with God, time when you open your heart to Him and share everything that concerns you or brings you joy, how much time do you spend in prayer?

Life is busy, too busy. It seems we are always moving; whether at home or outside our homes, we never stop. Even at our desks, we are constantly moving, typing, answering the phone, checking emails . . . and the list goes on. Sadly, many of us allow the busyness, the cares and trials we face, even the things that give us pleasure, to fill our every moment so that time with God is choked out of our life.

How can we live successfully in a sinful world without the One who has conquered sin and has the power to make us overcomers while living in this world? Where do we begin to recover time for prayer? Time with our Savior?

Let us look at three Bible verses to help us refocus. First, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10, NKJV). Second, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33, NKJV). Third,

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done
And on the labor in which I had toiled;
And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind.
There was no profit under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:11, NKJV).

Both the psalmist and Matthew encourage and admonish us to make time to spend time with God, to give Him first place in our lives. Solomon’s dire warning reminds us that at the end of our lives, we will regret the time we spent trying to improve our lives. The unasked question is this, will we regret not spending more time with Jesus, preparing for eternity?

I challenge you, at the start of a new year, to examine your lives and ask, “Is prayer a priority in my life? If not—how can I change that today? I am praying for you, my friends. May we all grow closer to Jesus this year!

Heather-Dawn Small

January 2

My Word for the Year

*Teach me your ways, O LORD,
that I may live according to your truth!
Grant me the purity of heart,
so that I may honor you.*
—Psalm 86:11, NLT

Do you choose a word for the year, a word that defines your focus for the next twelve months? While I do not do it every year, this year, I have chosen *follow* as my word. I want to follow the Lord so closely that everything I do, all that I am, will bring honor to His name.

So what does that look like?

Jesus gave us a perfect example of what it means to follow. Isaiah paints a beautiful picture of how the Messiah would do this. “He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ear to hear as a disciple [as one who is taught]” (Isaiah 50:4, AMPC). Though fully God, Jesus was also fully man. What an incomprehensible mystery! And as a man, He lived in constant communion with His Father, often waking before dawn to meet with His Father in prayer—to listen as a disciple.

A disciple is a follower. I want to listen as Jesus did and follow as He did.

The coming of Messiah, portrayed as a shepherd, is one of the most prominent depictions of Christ in the Old Testament. The New Testament captures the fulfillment of this truth. From the symbolism of the sacrificial system to Calvary’s cross, Jesus was both Shepherd and Lamb. He wants His disciples to follow Him as their Shepherd. “My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me” (John 10:27, CEB).

How do we listen to Jesus’ voice? Just as Jesus listened to His Father’s voice—by spending time in prayer and in the Word. We read His words whenever we open our Bibles, and we see His heart of love toward us and hear His voice—for being in God’s Word is the listening part of prayer. And after we listen, we pour our hearts out to Him. Thus, quietly, daily, we grow as we listen, and we come to recognize the voice of our Shepherd.

“Each morning he awakens me eager to learn his teaching” (Isaiah 50:4, CEV). My friends, can we decide that by God’s grace, we will meet with Him each morning? To listen. To learn. To come to know His voice. I want to follow Him more closely, listen more carefully, and walk through this year as a disciple who follows her Lord. Won’t you join me?

Karen Pearson

Beginnings

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

—Ephesians 1:17, NIV

As we begin another new year, let us take a minute to think about what we would like to see happen this year. January not only marks the start of a new year but also is my birthday month. God promises new beginnings every morning. He is the One who wakes us each day with life and health. Never has good health held more meaning than during these past years when COVID-19 has gripped our world. We have family and friends who have been laid to rest while others continue to suffer from long-term illnesses that will lead to death unless God intervenes. Our most pressing prayers are for God to heal them for eternity, even though we would like them healed here on earth. But we need to trust that God sees the big picture. He says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8), so we need to learn to think differently. I believe God wants each of us to *think differently* during this new year as we read His Word prayerfully, focusing on the words as if reading them for the first time.

God has inspired musical artists to write wonderful hymns, psalms, and gospel songs that share the good news of our Savior. Some are pure praise to God for what He has done and continues to do in our lives. Still, others talk of our walk with Him and His saving power. Spend time lifting your voice to Him each day.

May this be the year we become more involved in the many ministries already in place in our churches. Or you might be impressed to begin one where you see a need in your church or community. Pray for direction from God. There are many mission ministries that reach people where you and I will never go, like ADRA, Adventist World Radio, HOPE TV, or 3ABN. Choose one or more to support financially this year.

“Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life” (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20, NIV). May we each be blessed as we *think differently* and determine to begin a deeper relationship with our Savior and Friend, Jesus Christ.

Louise Howlett Driver

January 4

Choose Your Network

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

—Romans 12:2, NKJV

Have you found yourself trying to choose a Wi-Fi network to connect to? Maybe you are trying to send a message to a loved one, find a document, or access the Women’s Ministries website! Even if you do not have a device, you have made choices in life. Some may even have been life-or-death choices.

Israel had to make choices at every step of their journey toward the Promised Land. Every morning, their choice was to either accept God’s provision and collect the manna or do as they pleased—and go hungry! They could either accept God’s leading through Moses or go back to what they had left behind—slavery! Before entering the Promised Land, they were presented with the two most important choices in this world. Through Moses, God presented the options: life or death, blessings or curses. With tender, unselfish love, He urged them, “Now choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV). He presented Himself to them as their option for life, “for He [the Lord] is your life” (verse 20, NKJV). Jesus came as “the life” (John 14:6, NKJV). He desires us to “have life, and . . . have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV).

Our world is the stage of a fierce battle with mighty, invisible forces. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV). By default, our minds are set to connect to the devil’s network, Satan’s deceitful worldview, which leads to death and destruction. Ellen White wrote, “As we near the close of time, the human mind is more readily affected by Satan’s devices.”¹

To guard our minds, we need to be connected to God’s network. “The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7, NIV). God is our peace of mind. If we let Him, He surrounds and guards us.

Every morning, choose to give God control of your mind, your will, your plans, and your choices. His invitation to connect you to His network comes with the promise that you will “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2, NIV).

Nilde Itin

1. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1930), 57.

It's Your Decision

*“Enlarge the place of your tent,
stretch your tent curtains wide,
do not hold back;
lengthen your cords,
strengthen your stakes.”*
—Isaiah 54:2, NIV

From the moment we open our eyes in the morning, we begin to make decisions. Decision-making is not a new thing—we all do it. Everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior knows the importance of beginning each morning with Him. Matthew records, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33, NIV). Yes! This is the secret.

Jesus showed us “what humanity might become when united by faith with divinity.”¹ Our part is to follow His example, decide each day to believe the promises in God’s Word, and with His help, rise above the circumstances that come our way. God cannot make these decisions for us. We decide what thoughts control our minds, what words are spoken. God wants to bless us each morning. He has promised to do so. His strength is at our disposal—but we decide whether or not we will accept all He offers.

Pay close attention to what you feed your mind. Are you storing up more positive than negative thoughts? You cannot make good decisions if you feed your mind with negative thoughts. Choose your attitude for the day. Tell yourself, “I will enjoy my day. I will be happy. I will smile and be loving. Today I choose to be content even if I must face negative circumstances.” It is ours to live a life of abundance in Jesus Christ.

Be wise, make good decisions, and do not listen to Satan’s lies. Live above life’s problems with a positive attitude. Remember, circumstances should not determine your attitude; rather, your attitude should determine how you face your future.

We will face difficulties every day. God will not always remove them. Instead, He will use them to make us stronger and to bring something new into our lives. By God’s grace, we can learn to be grateful for our difficulties, for if we allow it, they will teach us much.

May God help us today to imitate Him, leaving in His hands all the details of our life. Let us surrender our decisions at the foot of the cross. Jesus says to us today, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

Teresa Dixon

1. Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1973), 74.

January 6

Making the Right Choice

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

—Jeremiah 29:11, NIV

We have all had a moment in time when we made a choice that changed our lives forever. In April 2013, my husband and I made such a choice. We packed up our home and rented it out to a family. After five or six months, while living in a small basement room filled with boxes, we received our visas to live and work in India with the Adventist Child India program. This program helps children from very poor Adventist homes by placing them into Adventist boarding schools. They receive a sound education, enjoy a safe place to stay, and receive three meals a day. They participate in worship, Sabbath School, and church, and our greatest prayer is for all of them to choose Christ and walk with Him.

After almost nine years of being away from family and friends, I really wanted to go home. But I kept having second thoughts and was not sleeping well. I had a nagging feeling that us going home would not be the right thing to do. So, one morning I spoke with my husband and shared my feelings with him. After we had talked and prayed over it, we decided to finish the current five-year term. Our biggest reason for doing so was that we believed God performed miracles that helped us get our five-year work visas.

The first miracle occurred when a young boy wanted to help. He asked his Sabbath School teacher to have a special prayer for us to get our visas. His teacher called us and said he would help—can you believe he knew the Indian ambassador? We received our visas soon after.

Our second visa miracle happened because another friend knew the current Indian ambassador through his friends from India. Without the help of these two men, we believe we would never have been able to reach India. In both instances, there is a longer story of God’s leading—but we believe God used these men to help us carry out His will.

So did we make the right choice back in 2013? We believe we did. We are much closer in our walk with our Lord because we followed His plan. It all began with surrendered hearts. Bill and I have learned that when your heart is surrendered to God, your mind and feet will follow. May the Holy Spirit lead in your life, today and always!

Nancy Mattison Mack

God's Promise

*I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for
a token of a covenant between me and the earth.*

—Genesis 9:13, KJV

I take a walk around my neighborhood most days of the week. I live in a lovely rural area with beautiful scenery, people to greet, animals that make me smile, and just enough hills that I get a good workout.

I have discovered that if I set out for my walk on an overcast day and it isn't raining—yet—I should probably take an umbrella. If I do not, it seems to be a law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be altered, that it will begin to rain at the exact geographic midpoint of my walk.

One day recently, I began my walk under those overcast skies, but I felt optimistic and had high hopes that the rain would hold off. Of course, as usual, I felt the first raindrops as I neared mile marker one! It was really more of a mist than a determined, serious rain, so I did not mind too much, but it was still a bit annoying. And then I saw it!

As I turned into a cul-de-sac along my route, there in front of me was the brightest, most spectacular rainbow I ever remember seeing. Not only that, there was a faint second rainbow beside it, which is something I have very rarely seen. My day immediately became better, and my spirits lifted.

Many times, I spend far too much time during my walks thinking about the trials and tribulations of life and not enough time thanking God for the abundant blessings He provides for me all along my way. At that moment, though, it was as if my eyes were newly opened to His wondrous love and care for me. Yes, others may have seen those rainbows, but they may also have been provided for my eyes only. I will never know for sure this side of heaven, but I like to think God was winking at me and saying, "I have got you in My powerful hands, Robin. You do not need to worry about a thing!"

We do, indeed, serve an awesome God! He loves each of us more than we could ever imagine, and He delights in showing us that love in ways both big and small.

Robin Widmayer Sagel

January 8

The Rainbow

*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through
the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*

—2 Peter 1:2, KJV

A rainbow is a multicolored arc that forms in the sky when the refraction of the sun's rays hits raindrops, spray, or mist. A rainbow is often seen following a rainstorm but can also be simulated with a glass of water and a flashlight when the light shines through the water at the correct angle.

My grandson, Mason, is fascinated by solar systems and rainbows. He can amuse himself for long periods of time studying the sun, moon, and stars. But his greatest joy appears whenever he locates a rainbow. He knows how to position himself when the sunlight comes into our family room in order to see a rainbow. He gets very excited and almost demands that I gaze at it as attentively as he does. As a result of his interest in the rainbow, he learned his colors early. Since learning colors, he has begun to explore ways to mix them to produce different colors. I must admit that I am not at all knowledgeable about this.

As I thought about Mason's interest in God's Creation, it occurred to me that there is a lesson we can all learn and appreciate. Just as the seven rainbow colors can be mixed to produce additional colors, so our spiritual life can develop and multiply. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2, KJV).

Rainbows are often seen after a rainstorm. The Bible reminds us of the significance of the rainbow in Genesis 9:13, KJV, when He promised the earth would never again be destroyed by water.

Our purpose on earth is to serve God and mankind. We serve by being obedient to God's commands and sharing with others what we have been blessed to receive—not only spiritually but financially as well. When we have been blessed, may we not forget to share the blessing and extend a helping hand to those in need. Just as the colors of the rainbow can be mixed to produce additional colors, so will our blessings be increased as we prayerfully share with others what God has blessed us with. "Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to him" (Hebrews 13:16, TLB).

Mary Head Brooks