



How I Have Grown in My Prayer Life

By Vera Freed



Recently my dear mom was visiting us for a few weeks. She would awake at the crack of dawn every morning to take her prescribed heart medication. She would usually catch me heading out the door to 6 a.m. prayers up at our church. One morning she sweetly asked, "Do you pray every morning at the church?" I replied, "Just Monday through Friday." She responded, "You know, you don't have to pray your way into heaven every day. Jesus has already saved you!" Which led me to proudly proclaim, "Yes mom, I know. I'm praying **because** He has saved me!"

I wish I could say my prayer life has always been so extravagant and consistent, but that has not been the case. In my world of raising five robust sons, it has many times taken a back seat to everything else more pressing at the moment. Only recently as the boys have grown more inde-

pendent, have I been able to devote large chunks of my waking hours to sitting at the feet of Jesus in prayer. It has helped me grow in ways I've never thought possible! There is a special blessing bestowed upon all those that draw away from the world and self into the arms of Jesus on a **consistent** basis.

A couple of years ago, I went to Jenkins to help serve with the senior class during summer camp. I was not obligated to pray at 5 a.m. every morning with the Sisters of Charity, but I saw it as an opportunity to give my heart to the Lord every morning in prayer and to be ecumenical. While the sisters chanted their unfamiliar rote prayers, I read the Word of God and poured my heart out to Jesus, asking Him for more grace for the moment. The Holy Spirit showed me time and again that there is a unity in Him that allows each of us to come

to Him just as we are. He is bigger than any established form of religion that we practice.

But I am reminded too that prayer is not just another duty to add to my already busy schedule. I can practice prayer in action by offering up my daily work to God. 1 Cor. 10:31 reaffirms this by stating, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God." Many times when I am working in my vocation as a nurse, I find myself offering up prayers for renewed patience in dealing with difficult situations, extra confidence to perform technical skills, and the boldness to share the love of Jesus with my colleagues and patients. I sense His Presence alongside me as I navigate through the murky waters of daily life.

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God bless our Veterans! Thank you for Serving.



Results of a Life of Prayer are in Excess of the Effort Put In

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When my boys were younger, I used to struggle with feelings of guilt and shame at not having a designated "prayer time." But as I look back at all the diapering, loving, cleaning, nurturing, scrubbing, shopping, cooking, and doting I did, I can see how my life was a prayer in action! Each new season of our lives brings new opportunities for ways to enter into a new life of prayer.

I still remember the day many years ago when I was on my knees crying out to God to help meet the needs of our growing family. With less than fifty dollars in our checking account and ten more days until payday, I wondered how we would buy enough diapers for our newborn twins as well as one toddler still in diapers. Not to mention all the groceries that were needed, including all the Pepsi and ice cream my mother-in-law needed as she was living with us at the time (she only weighed 85 lbs.). And of course, this was the month we had two birthdays to celebrate! But God answered that particular prayer real quick—that afternoon the mailman delivered an anonymous letter with two-hundred dollars in it! This was a recurring event that happened over a period of several months. We found out years later that the money was sent by my brother-in-law.

There's no doubt that when God moves to answer particular prayers, it bolsters my faith! But His timing is perfect in all circumstances and those unanswered prayers are the ones that keep me on my knees. As much as we prayed for a healing miracle for my brother-in-law's inoperable stage 4, brain cancer, it never came. But God brought him ultimate healing as He called him home to Glory three weeks ago at the age of 52.

God has opened doors that have allowed me to share my faith with strangers and non-believers by praying to Him for their specific needs. This is what I love about these "treasure hunts" that our teens have recently been doing. Though I haven't found time yet to be able to join them on their "hunts," my son Samuel has been on a couple of these excursions. After praying to the Holy Spirit for direction, they load up in vehicles and arrive at their destination ready for God to use them. A simple question such as, "What would you like prayers for?" is a tangible way of loving others with the love of the Lord. We each have these opportunities if we will but ask Him to show us who in our daily circle of life needs it.

When Mike and I first started coming to prayer meetings in the Community, it was the first experience I had of listening to others pray in tongues. I think at first I was taken aback, not really knowing much about it, but eventually I prayed for God to bless me with that gift! After months of persistent prayer, I still remember the morning it finally happened. We may not all have or even want to have this gift, but I know for me it has been a big part of allowing God to use my tongue to mysteriously sing praises to His name without having to know exactly what I am saying. There is an intimate union with Him that takes place on this level.

God invites each one of us to "come home" to where we belong, to that for which we were created. In Richard Foster's book *Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home*, he says, "... the key to this home, this heart of God, is prayer." He goes on to explain that no matter what our station in life, "... the Father's heart is open

wide—you are welcome to come in. And if the key is prayer, the door is Jesus Christ." God waits for us in the inner sanctuary of the soul. He welcomes us there, where we can experience His continuous presence. The results of our willingness to practice a life of prayer are always in excess of the work we put in.

I am grateful to God for the ways He has allowed me to continue to grow in my prayer life. I know I have a long way to go. As we share this life of faith together, may we spur each other on to a greater awareness of the power of prayer and the transformation that takes place in us as we consistently seek His Presence in our lives!

Vera Freed, a Registered Nurse and the wife of an ordained minister of the Lutheran Church (LCMC), serves as Handmaid for the Alleluia Community, one of twenty-one women who provide overall insight to the Community Elders from a womanly perspective. She and her husband, Mike, have been Full Covenant members of Alleluia Community since 2010. They have five boys and attend Ascension Lutheran Church in Augusta, Georgia.



Upcoming Events

Alleluia Community
Fall Fare
Saturday,
November 15, 2014
8 a.m. – 1 p.m.



Deeper Union in Prayer With the Holy Trinity



By John Visintainer

When I consider my prayer life, I am reminded of the scene in the movie *The Lord of the Rings* where the Elf Legolas is able to see beyond human eyesight, far into the distance. He is on the chase! And while that which he is running after is far out of reach, his keen vision gives him focus, and spurs him forward. Looking back where I began, I can see I have made some progress on the path of personal prayer. I can also confidently say I have far from "arrived" at my final destination. But God has begun to awaken in me both the spiritual eyes to see how much further I can go, and the thirst to seek it out!

From my youth, I have been blest with a rich family prayer life, but my personal prayer times were off and on. Mostly off. Some days I was doing pretty well if I murmured a "Thank you Jesus" between the snooze alarm! At other times, I drank in Scripture and spiritual readings as they spoke directly to my concerns. In all of this, I continued to pursue — and struggle — to have a consistent prayer time. One thing for certain, I wanted to do better! So I made a commitment with Dan Almeter, my pastoral head and landlord at the time, to do just that. And then it happened. The Lord poured His grace upon me and ever since, while far from a perfect record, I've had a regular time of prayer. I recognize this desire for what it is: not a "you've arrived" attaboy, but a pure gift and an invitation to go, and grow, deeper with Him.

My personal prayer life has been a source of strength and inspiration. I love praising God, thanking him for all His blessings, having devotions, meditating on the Word and other spiritual readings, offering petitions and even the occasional penance. And while overall my prayer life was

more consistent, it still vacillated — going from energizing to dry, inspiring to routine. I was in a rut. Then a few years ago I heard about a book study group that happened to be at Dan Almeter's house. Lightning struck twice!

The book was "The Fire Within" by Fr. Thomas Dubay. Rather than go through the specifics of this book, which is about contemplative prayer, I'll spell out three things that it revealed to me. 1. God is inviting me to go so much deeper in prayer than I ever imagined. 2. Dryness in prayer can be God's invitation to quiet myself and wait upon the Lord with expectant faith that He will show up. 3. I need to make regular time for prayer, but ultimately God is the source and wellspring.

So now I'm experiencing a new

grace, a real awareness of *more* to be had! In a sense, I've been given "Elvish Eyes." For though still seemingly far off, I know in my heart and mind that a deeper union in prayer with the Trinity is attainable — and I desire it! More importantly, God desires this for me! I have far from "arrived," but I know as I give God more of my life, He will give much more in return. That knowledge gives flight to my feet! And with God's grace and your prayers, I'll keep up the chase!

John Visintainer is a computer programmer and serves on the Special Events Team for Alleluia Community. Married since 1996, he and his wife, Becky, have been Full Covenant members of Alleluia since 2000. They are the parents of three children and attend St. Joseph Catholic Church in Augusta, Georgia.

Discussion Coffeehouse

By Nicki Maniccia

After the All Saints party on October 31, the YAMS and high schoolers headed over to the Hazlewood home for our first Discussion Coffeehouse. After getting the night started with a bonfire, the kids headed inside for an informational presentation by me about physician-assisted suicide.

The YAMS and kids were able to learn the most common arguments for assisted suicide and how to easily refute them using information obtained through scientific studies and research, as well as how to defend our own Christian worldview. The remaining time was used for



Gathering at the Hazlewoods' home

question-and-answer and a beautiful prayer time for those facing decisions about physician-assisted suicide.

The evening finished off with more time around the bonfire, s'mores, a human pyramid building competition and great fellowship. Special thanks to the Hazlewoods for hosting this event, to all the YAMS for their hard work and dedication to our kids, and to Fr. Kevin O'Keefe (a former YAM) for helping with our question-and-answer session.

Parish Family Weekend an Experience With the Holy Spirit

By Lloyd Hedlund and Anne Seith



On the weekend of October 17-19, a team from Alleluia put on a Parish Family Weekend at the Anglican Church of the Holy Trinity in North Augusta, S.C. The team had 14 adults and 8 teens from Alleluia and was led by Lloyd Hedlund. The theme for the weekend was *Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit*. The pastor at Holy Trinity, Father Rob Hartley, started this Anglican parish worshiping in a warehouse around eight years ago with only a handful of members. It has now grown into a parish of about 150 members.

Many of this congregation had become inactive in their faith when they first started attending Holy Trinity. It is now a congregation that is searching for more of God, including especially the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in their life together. They are also a very close and loving congregation, which made it easy for us to interact with them. About 50 members attended the special Friday and Saturday events.

There were six tables with at least one Alleluia member at the table leading the discussion and any prayers after all the talks. There was also a Mega Table, which included all our teens. Unfortunately most of Holy Trinity's teens did not attend because of schedule conflicts. However their teen leader was there and thoroughly enjoyed being at the Mega Table with our teens.

The weekend kickoff included Evening Prayer and worship led by Steven Milligan, Ethan Balducci and our young folks, who did a great job all weekend leading music. Other youth on the weekend included Faith Harmon, Shayna Eyrick, JP Masak

and Rosie Phillips. Brad Vitetoe gave the first talk on "God's Plan: The Gift of New Life" which wrapped up Friday Night. Saturday was a full day starting at 9 a.m. with Morning Prayer, followed by Andy Beaudoin who gave an excellent talk on "Overcoming God's Enemies." Next up was Sherry Young who talked on "Working with the Holy Spirit" followed by Noon Day Prayer and lunch.

The afternoon was kicked off by Anne Seith and JP Masak who talked about "Repairing Wounds of Life." By this time, at least one man was prayed over for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Relationship healings had occurred and one elderly gentleman in the congregation was reporting significant healing in his lungs – he was feeling very good without his normal use of oxygen (this was continuing to be the case when Lloyd checked on the following Wednesday).

The rest of the afternoon was for rest or participating in a Treasure Hunt sponsored by the Alleluia Youth Team. Our adults, teens, and YAMS led the Treasure Hunt with a few of the Holy Trinity adult members going along. As always, the Treasure Hunt proved to be a wonderful experience for all.

We regrouped for dinner, Evening Prayer and Praise and Worship. Jim Dresser and Vanessa Milligan both shared their testimonies about how living in the Spirit had blessed their lives through committed relationships and personal growth. These talks were very moving to all. The night ended with the offer for us to pray over folks, and a significant number took us up on our offer. Phys-

ical and spiritual healings including knees, vision and relationships were received that evening.

On Sunday, another team led by Mark Shrewsbury provided music for the Sunday worship service with Andrew Fowler on drums and Brad on the bass again. Lloyd preached on the Holy Spirit's continued filling and transforming of believers for a mission-based focus when the children of God desire Christ above all else. At the Adult Forum after the service, several testimonies from the congregation gave clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's work throughout the Family Weekend.

All in all, our experience was wonderful. Holy Trinity was so open to the Lord. This yearly Parish Family Weekend for them was another step for them growing closer to God together. Father Rob is a wonderful and Spirit-filled pastor who loves and supports his people. His newsletter after the retreat included the following:

"Although the families in the Alleluia Community have different churches they attend, they have covenanted to be a community in Christ that supports one another in Christian living. They are a good model for the fellowship we seek here at Holy Trinity. The Lord did some wonderfully 'transformative' things among us as we submitted ourselves to God's power and presence over the weekend. Those who were at the Adult Forum that Sunday heard some of the amazing testimonies from our people. We all left the weekend healed in some way and energized for Kingdom Living."