A Book to Do You Good

By William G. Johnsson

One of the biggest-impact books among Adventists this year isn’t available for cash.

In January several of us got together and came up with the idea of a book on answers to prayer by some of the best-known writers in the church. I sent out 20 invitations, asking if the writers would share from the heart something personal, something out of their experience.

Their responses came back and are wonderful. Some made me cry; some brought laughter; all did me good.

Jeannette Johnson shared her “most sacred experience.” Dick Duerksen told how God changed the words of his prayer, Hyveth Williams related how a crowded jumbo jet ready for takeoff turned back to the gate—because of her. Randy Maxwell and M anuel Vasquez shared accounts of battles with cancer. Roger Morneau told of the copier that kept on copying long after the toner ran out.

All these and more in this wonderful little book, God Answers Prayer. Robert Folkenberg’s amazing story of the $3,000 tractor-trailer, and answers to prayer that came to columnists Gina Spivey Brown and Loretta Parker Spivey, and to Charles Bradford, Chris Blake, Calvin Rock, and others—20 in all.

This book is being read and quoted and devoured around the country. It will do you good.

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Not long ago my prayers and devotions had become flat. The words that formed on my lips and in my thoughts barely scratched the surface of what I wanted to express to God—and I didn’t know how to release them.

After attending a prayer conference, I reluctantly decided to keep a journal, a “chore” I had been avoiding for 20 years. The first few weeks were rough. I wrote pages and pages without sensing that I had revealed even a small part of myself.

And then I opened my Bible to the Psalms—something the main speaker had encouraged during the conference. I began with the first and decided I would rewrite each one in my own words so that I might experience the height and depth of each emotion found there—from joy to despair. It worked!

Instead of the dry desert it had been, my devotional life became “like a tree planted by the rivers of water” (Ps. 1:3). I stopped the obligatory form of prayer I had been practicing—“touching all the bases”—and wrapped a part of myself around every word.

By becoming more willing to express any thought or emotion boldly to God, I entered a dynamic relationship with Him. Being authentic with myself and God has become an integral part of my being able to be generous with others. Perhaps that is the other lesson I found in the Psalms—that the songs expressed in solitude are as relevant to the community of believers as they are to each individual. Staying connected is the key.

Rebecca Brillhart owns and operates her own business in Columbia, Maryland.
When I study the Bible, I’m reminded of the youngster who heard the sermon begin while she played in the church’s mother’s room. Fascinated, she stared at the corner speaker, then turned to her mother and announced, “It’s the voice of God.”

In a way, she was right. The Bible is God’s Word. Though written in human language, it is a supernatural book. As Solomon says, God speaks to us through the sacred page: “For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6, NIV). By listening for His voice, we can hear—and learn—the truth of every text.

So every time I study God’s Word, I try to let Him speak for Himself. I do not come to the Bible to prove something I believe or to disprove what I do not. I come to learn.

That’s why I set aside my Presbyterian beliefs and put on spiritual ears when evangelist Jac Colon challenged me to show him from the Scriptures that the Sabbath had changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. Three days later I admitted that I could not—and eventually asked for baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Bible study continues to change my life. Each time I plunge into the ancient Book with its obsolete customs and old-fashioned personalities, the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever makes every word fresh and relevant. He comes alive with every transforming truth. I really do hear His voice.

Lee Gugliotto is senior pastor of the College Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church at Canadian Union College in Alberta with his wife, Jolynn. His Handbook for Bible Study (Review and Herald) won the 1996 Gold Medallion from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association in the category of Bible study.
In my formative years I was entirely comfortable keeping God at pew’s length. But as a young adult desperate to identify and meet my spiritual needs, I’ve found that God will go to great lengths to seek me out. Specifically, He’s assembled several of my peers who meet regularly to search spiritually.

This small group has made other believers real for me. No longer are they the one-dimensional smiles and handshakes that greet me from week to week—or the grungy rebel with the disinterested look. Each participant brings a unique perspective to our discussions. As I hear their questions, their struggles, I often find that I share them.

I come to the group to get real answers for my life. It’s where I seek God in an intimate way, where others will see my face and hear me stutter when I don’t have the right words, where my silence will be noticed.

I’ve learned that God likes us to ask questions and that He can give me answers through the people there. But I’m shocked to realize that God is also using me to help others. I’m no public speaker or Bible scholar, but I do have my own story. Just as I’ve gained direction from someone else’s story, I know that I must let down my guard and trust God when He moves me to tell mine.

I’m not alone in my quest to get closer to God; our small group has shown me that. By exposing our thoughts and hopes, our anger and fears, we can be supported in our weaknesses and challenged in our moments of strength.

And amid this raw exchange, God continues to pull me away from my frenzy and into His care.

Sherlyn Pang works as a recruiter at the Museum of Science in Boston, Massachusetts. Recently she helped organize Face It! (a lay young adult working conference held in Laurel, Maryland, focused on empowering young adults to take responsibility for the spiritual state of their generation). The next Face It! conference is scheduled for the fall in South Bend, Indiana. For more information, contact Sherlyn at pang@a1.mos.org.
I can't really say that I ever got into music. I do know that in some miraculous way, music got into me. Singing has always been spontaneous and enjoyable—especially when I found the right songs to sing.

For years I thought I was singing the right songs. My mom died when I was 3, and at this age I began to sing. My nephew, first cousin, and I would listen to and mimic various voices on our radio or record player, and our relatives got excited to hear the blending voices of their newly formed “trio.” Before long we were invited to sing in area churches and talent shows. Sometimes the audience would even throw money onto the stage. Throughout high school and college I sang regularly in nightclubs: rock ‘n’ roll, top 40, rhythm and blues, you name it.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ taught me a new song.

Listening to His voice and mimicking His tones have taught me the true meaning of song. I no longer have a need to sing for show or the applause of humanity. Instead of wanting money to be thrown at my feet, I now want to cast all of my praise and joy at the feet of Jesus Christ.

I am close to God when my spirit sings the words of John the Baptist: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” And I pray that my audience will look not upon the frail human instrument that I am, but instead, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.”

Charles D. Haugabrooks lives in Mount Dora, Florida, with his wife, Minerva, and their children, Esther, Ezra, and Sherrard. He works as a human resource specialist for a government defense contractor and, on the side, has recorded four albums: Songs Reflecting Him, Pleading Heart, One Step Closer, and God’s Touch Through You.
As I was growing up in the country near Paradise, California, my family instilled in me a love and respect for nature. My father, noted artist Clyde Provonsha, often incorporated animals and nature in his religious works. One of my favorite paintings is his Our Rejoicing Shepherd, which portrays Jesus rejoicing upon finding the lost lamb. This picture has been a blessing to people around the world.

I consider my move eight years ago from commercial art to painting wildlife to be providential. Doors opened that I never knew existed. As a result, I deal almost exclusively with people outside my denomination. Although I try never to be “preachy,” moments arise when I am asked why I portray animals so “up close and personal.”

I respond that in the Bible we are continually asked to look at nature as a pattern for conducting our own lives. That’s why I choose to portray the admirable qualities of animals that I believe God instilled in them—working faithfully, relying on one another, protecting their young, and having offspring only when they can be cared for properly.

The hidden images in my pictures are designed to provoke an awareness in the observer that many of God’s creatures live in danger and in need of our protection. As a Christian who believes that what God created He deemed “good,” my goal is for people to gain a greater appreciation and respect for His handiwork.

Judy Larson is an internationally known wildlife artist specializing in concealed imagery. She was named among the top 15 print artists of 1996 by U.S. Art magazine. She lives in Elsinore, California, with her children, Rakel, Erik, and Kristi, as well as two horses, three dogs, one cat, six fish, and two hermit crabs. She is published by Applejack Limited Editions of Vermont.
On a rainy-shiny morning I walked to Hawk’s Nest beach on the Australian coast north of Sydney. The huge sweeping arc of sand and surf split my gaze as I came through the dunes. Far to the south a headland terminated the curve; to the north the beach stretched on and out into infinity. Not
The sound of the surf sinks deep into your soul and wells up years later. You hear again the shrieking of the gulls and the splash—splash—splash of dancing feet, and you know that God is infinitely good and that you don't treasure Him as earth half as much as you should.

Open your eyes—God is all around. Open your ears—the air vibrates with His voice. Open your heart—walk in wonder. Tread softly on this earth, for it is holy ground.

I believe regular times for prayer and Bible study sustain the Christian life, that without them we will gradually dry up spiritually or wander off into false religion. For me, morning is key: start the day with God, give Him my first thoughts and my deepest desires. My mind works best early in the day, and I try to give Him the best portion.

But these programmed periods of personal devotion are only the appetizer of the feast God plans for us throughout the day—and night. I believe these regular times of prayer and Bible study can open our eyes and ears to God so that we may walk in wonder with Him every waking moment.

We needn't think that God is near only when we feel a spiritual "high." If we get online with God first thing—turn on the spiritual computer when we awaken—we can be sending and receiving messages constantly. Surely this is what the apostle meant by his admonition "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, KJV).

God is real; God is personal. He created the universe and sustains every whirling galaxy and every wriggling amoeba, but more—He walks and talks with humanity. He wants to be with us, to be our best friend. "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them," He instructed the ancient Israelites (Ex. 25:8), and He promised: "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jer. 31:33).

To know God—intimately, personally—is the essence of Christianity. To live as Paul described—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20, KJV)—this is the highest experience open to the human heart.

People who don't believe find this concept incomprehensible, foolish. But we who have taken the Lord at His word, who have tasted and found that He is good, have discovered that His word is true, that Christianity works, that in Christ Jesus every divine promise is Yes! and Amen! (see 2 Cor. 1:20).

In theological terms, the personal experience of God, being constantly online with Him, reflects the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Although the doctrine is mysterious, the one God is also the three—the Father, from whom all things come to be and to whom all return; the Son, eternal and self-existent, who came to this earth to walk in our shoes and to die in our place; and the Holy Spirit, who is God with us, God in us, working out His will and lovingly guiding us.

Just before Jesus, the Son incarnate, left this earth, He promised: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17).

Then Jesus said: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me" (verses 18, 19). So although the Holy Spirit is not Christ, He is the presence of Jesus, just as real and just as wonderful as if Jesus were in the room with us.

Godly men and women have known this reality throughout the ages. They have found in God their deepest longings, their highest aspirations. They have sung with the psalmist: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1). They have cried out with Paul: "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. . . . I
Lord's life was occupied in the humdrum, nonspectacular tasks and duties of life. He spent a full 30 of His 33 years in Nazareth—going about His job as a carpenter, eating, sleeping, bathing, talking. Even after He left His hometown for three-plus years of itinerant ministry, most of His time was taken up walking from place to place, simply being with people, living as a human.

Yet Jesus' ordinariness glowed with the divine. Constantly He communed with the Father—sometimes all night in prayer, but always online. His face was open to the sparrows and the ravens, to the anemones that grew wild on the Galilean hillsides, to the smell of the rain and the whip of the breeze. He walked in wonder.

How do you walk in wonder?

Begin the day with God—that's the first and most important point. But after that, and throughout the day:

1. Look for God in the ordinary.
   When you stand back and consider the life of Jesus, what strikes you is how ordinary it was. Oh yes, it had extraordinary moments, beginning with the miracle of birth and ending with the miracle of resurrection. But think: the great majority of our Lord's life was occupied in the humdrum, nonspectacular tasks and duties of life. He spent a full 30 of His 33 years in Nazareth—going about His job as a carpenter, eating, sleeping, bathing, talking. Even after He left His hometown for three-plus years of itinerant ministry, most of His time was taken up walking from place to place, simply being with people, living as a human.

2. Look for divine serendipities.
   God has a delightful way of surprising us. He comes to us in the most unexpected ways, at the most unexpected times, in the most unexpected places.

   Remember Jacob, that smoothie, too clever by half? His schemes went awry, his world fell apart, and he had to flee for his life. Alone in the bush, feeling a fugitive from the family of God, he lay down to sleep with his head against a stone. But in the night he dreamed of a stairway reaching from earth to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending on it and the Lord above it all. When Jacob woke up, he said to himself, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it” (Gen. 28:10-19). Setting up a pillar, Jacob called it Bethel—house of God.

   I remember how moved I was at the first symphonic concert I attended. I had no inkling that the great music would unleash creative energies within me, galvanize me to attack tasks that I had felt too burdened to contemplate, send me out into the world with a heightened awareness of God. Since that experience I have turned again and again to music for refreshment, comfort, and inspiration.

   I vividly recall also the sense of wonder when I saw my firstborn, a son, emerge from the womb, and two years later, a daughter. The world held its breath; time stood still. In the presence of new life I felt the mystery of our coming and our going, of time and eternity. We are bound up with the life of God, in whom we have been, are, and will be.

   I live in Maryland, and as I write, the deer population is multiplying along the eastern seaboard of the United States. There are deer in woods behind the street next to ours; I ran into a deer on crowded Interstate 95.

Your work may be menial, or it may be professional. But if you walk in wonder, even the dishes in the sink or the video teleconference may glow with the presence of the living Christ.

Ellen White, pioneer and shaper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, knew God personally. She kept online with the Lord; she walked in wonder. Over and over she called, and calls, the Adventist people to “heart religion.” Listen to the breathtaking ideal she holds out before us: “If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses” (The Desire of Ages, p. 668). “Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached” (Education, p. 18).
Deer are everywhere, but you have to know how to look for them. You have to look for horizontal lines among the vertical, and expect to find deer. They are there—if you can see them.

3. Look for God in the darkness.
   This may be the best news of all: God comes to us in the night as well as at noonday. Even when, crushed and broken, we don’t want to live another day. Even when, bowed down by worry and care, we don’t want to trudge another mile.

   Jesus—God of ordinary grace. But think of the last moments of Jesus, of that lacerated body crying out for water from the cross, then that moan of dereliction, of God-forsakenness—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46, KJV). Here is the Saviour of the world drinking the cup of our woe, our pain, our guilt, to the last dregs. At that moment He could not see beyond the portals of the tomb.

   But God was there, even at the soul’s darkest midnight. God was there, although bleeding body and fevered mind sought to deny it. God was there, suffering with the Son.

   It’s hard to believe from the belly of the whale. It’s easy to doubt when our house comes tumbling and our bodies are so broken we don’t know who we are or what we are saying. But God is there.

   Friday afternoon Jesus died in agony. But Sunday morning Jesus rose in glory.

   Faith is the finger reaching out through the darkness, stretching to touch God. Faith is the confidence that the God who has walked with us in wonder all our days has not forsaken us now.

* All Scripture references come from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

William G. Johnsson is editor of the Adventist Review.
When it comes to our relationship with Jesus, choosing to pray—to be with Him—is often the greatest battle. I may have the best of intentions, the warmest feelings, but I must choose to talk to God every day. There are no shortcuts.

Once we’ve made the choice, however, what can we do to shake ourselves out of the doldrums and experience some fresh, new approaches to God in prayer?

**Pray whenever you think about it.** Jesus, in answer to a theological question put to Him by the woman at the well, replied, “A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks” (John 4:23).¹

The Samaritans (and the Jews, for that matter) were hung up on the right place to worship. They were sure that the true God could be approached only at the “right” spot. Hence the Samaritan woman’s statement: “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem” (verse 20).
Jesus adjusted her attitude by revealing the truth about God—that He is spirit and not confined by human-made temples or times. God is an ever-present reality. And true worshipers of the true God can make contact with Him anytime, anywhere.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you can pray only at certain times and in certain places. Pray when you think about it. In your car, in a meeting, in bed when you can't sleep, as you mow the lawn or wash dishes, while brushing your teeth.

The natural man or woman doesn't desire prayer. "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you" (Rom. 8:9). If it's on our minds to pray, it's the Holy Spirit calling. Don't put the King on hold!

I used to fall into the trap of telling myself, "I'll pray about that later." I'll be mowing the lawn, thinking of someone I need to pray for. I'll mentally review the details of that person's need and even rehearse what I plan to say later during my "prayer time." It's then that I catch myself and smile at how foolish it is for me to pray later about something I'm thinking about now!

If you kick yourself for forgetting to pray for people whom you've promised to pray for, learn to pray when God puts it on your mind—when you think about it.

**Pray about a variety of things.** My wife and I used to talk and pray about the new minivan our family of five so desperately needed. Today we're praising the Lord for the Grand Caravan we cart our "tribe" in. Before the answer to our prayers was realized, however, Suzette and I talked about it a lot—but it wasn't all we talked about.

We talked (and still do) about the kids, schooling, the church, vacation plans, family members, music, bills, romance, TV programs, work, etc. And guess what? We don't try to talk about everything all in one sitting. We pace ourselves. Talking about this now, that later; this thing today, the other thing tomorrow.

**Do the same with prayer.** Don't pray about the same things all the time, and don't try to cover everything in one prayer. Vary your conversation. Pray about the supervisor who gives you grief today, and save time for the missionaries tomorrow.

Pray different types of prayers. Try praying a prayer of praise without any petitions. Put away your shopping list and just spend time praising God for who He is in your life.

**Or sing your prayer to God.** Paul admonishes us to "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). There are times when we pray by singing favorite praise hymns, such as "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" or "I Love You, Lord."

During sung prayers I sometimes experience the presence of God more profoundly than when I'm at my "regular" prayers.

**Pray without words.** You don't always have to have something to say in order to be with God. I know this may seem odd to some, but sometimes it's perfectly all right to "be still, and know that [He is] God" (Ps. 46:10).

One morning not long ago I had a deeply moving encounter with God without saying a word. It was one of those extremely rare times when both the house and my spirit were quiet. I sat in the stillness and just allowed my heart to be an open book to God. As I
Don't be afraid of silence.

sat there with the first rays of dawn spilling onto my office carpet through the tiny slits in the miniblinds, I knew I was in the presence of God.

Don't be afraid of silence. In our culture we drown out silence every chance we get. We feel compelled to quench quiet with sound. TV, radios, CD players, Walkman stereos, Game Boy video games, our own chatter. On airplanes, while exercising, at the dinner table, in the restroom, and on elevators, we have to have some kind of music, noise, or other auditory distraction grinding away in the background.

Learn to “be still, and know.” Quiet can be profound. Don’t feel like you “fail” if words escape you occasionally when you pray. Remember, there are times when “we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit searches our hearts knows the mind of God” (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Keep your prayer time and Bible study time separate. This suggestion may get me in trouble, but it’s worth trying.

It’s been my experience that when I bring quarterlies, commentaries, and multiple translations of the Bible into my devotional time, I spend little time in prayer and much more time in study.

Prayer is primarily meeting with God. Reading and studying during this time may not always be required. Whether you’re just being quiet with Him or focusing on your own needs, you’re still meeting with Him. This is not waste time.

Pray for your spouse. Not in a general, vague way, but in specific terms, claiming certain Bible promises for him or her that are tailored to individual needs.

I like to do this for Suzette and sometimes will leave her a note with the verse that I’m claiming for her on it. She saved one of these notes and kept it on the bathroom mirror, where she could see it, for several days. It read: For you today: That your delight will be in the law of the Lord, that you will meditate on it day and night. That you will be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season without withering. And that whatever you do will prosper (Ps. 1:2, 3). Love ya.

You love your spouse. He or she has struggles, frustrations, goals, hopes, and needs that you probably don’t know about. Take those things to God in prayer. Lift your husband or wife before the Father, and ask Him to meet his or her needs according to His unfailing love.

Search the Word for specific verses that fit his or her situation, and pray those verses back to God, inserting your spouse’s name in the appropriate place. I did this recently for my wife while I was out of town and she was nervously awaiting the results of some medical tests back home. We were both on edge, and I went to the Bible for a word of encouragement from the Lord. I found it in Psalm 33:18-22. I claimed the promise for Suzette and then prayed it back to God something like this: Suzette waits in hope for You, Lord; be her help and her shield today. Let her heart rejoice in You, and help her to trust in Your holy name. May Your unfailing love rest upon us both, O Lord, even as we put our hope in You (verses 20-22).

Later I called home and told her I was praying this promise for her. I could tell she was pleased. Nothing brings you closer together as a couple than praying earnestly and specifically for the man or woman who shares your life. (You can pray for your children the same way.)

A nd singles, the absence of a spouse doesn’t indicate the absence of other individuals who love you and need your prayers. Claim promises on behalf of your best friend, coworker, family member, nieces and nephews, or pastor, and let them know that you are praying for them. Any relationship will be strengthened by this prayerful act of love.

Pray (or speak) a blessing on your family members. In the sixth chapter of Numbers we come across the priestly blessing that Aaron and his sons were instructed to bless the Israelites with: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Num. 6:22-27).

You can pray that last part: God said that the priests—Aaron and his sons, in this case—were to put the Lord’s name (the promises that are inherent in His attributes, His nature, and His character) on the children of Israel by speaking these words of blessing.

As recipients of the new covenant, we who have received Christ as our Saviour are part of a new breed of humans on earth. Regardless of race or gender, we have been made into “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9). Additionally, we are the spiritual children of Abraham, inheritors of the promises to Israel. These two facts provide us with the commission, qualification, and authority to bless, as priests under the old covenant did.

My wife and I have done this together. With our hands placed gently on the heads of our girls, I’ve prayed this blessing on them: “Candice, Crystal, Danielle: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.”

You can’t imagine the intensity of hugs and beaming faces that come
after a prayer like this. Your children won’t forget, and neither will you. It’s not something to be done casually. But this is what a life of prayer is all about. It’s not just words and requests and routine. It’s love and power and relationships and heart and soul.

One word of caution: be sure your life supports whatever your lips speak. Words spoken in blessing are invalidated when a child (or spouse) hasn’t sensed the daily touch, concern, interest, availability, and care of the blesser. We must build a platform of relationship from which to bless. Remember, the life we lead backs up the words we speak.2

Pray through the newspaper. For those who have trouble coming up with enough things to pray about and for those who, like many people, are addicted to the morning newspaper, this can revolutionize your prayer life. The paper is full of needs, crises, hurts, and troubles that should cause the heart of the Christian to break. What fertile ground for prayer!

A sA adventists with an end-time mind-set, we often look at the news with a prophetic sense of inevitability. “More signs of the times,” we say. “Jesus must be coming soon.” Sometimes our “sign watching” instills a subtle indifference in our attitudes toward suffering humanity—or at the very least, a sense of helplessness. But there is something we can do. We can pray.

Each news story represents lives, real people who are hurting and desperate, and in need of Jesus. Read the paper with the eyes and heart of Christ, and ask God to intervene mercifully.

So there you have it. Seven suggestions for putting new passion into your personal prayer journey with God. Not an exhaustive list by any stretch. You may already be experimenting with several creative forms of prayer that aren’t even mentioned here. Great. Go for it. What ever you do, though, pray. Don’t just read about it or mentally assent to it. Pray. Be real. Be consistent. Be creative. But above all, pray. There’s so much in store for you if you do.

What? Pray for Larry Flynt?

BY RENÉ ALEXENKO EVANS

For whom do you pray?
Your sister and her husband and their struggle with infertility? Your best friend’s father and his unhopeful diagnosis? The publishers of pornographic magazines?
Say what?
I work with a freelance graphic designer who’s obviously a Christian. It says so right on his business cards. Proverbs 3:6. He works out of his home, and when I stop in, his open Bible is usually sitting on the table or kitchen counter. His framed baptismal certificate hangs over his desk.

Last week I dropped off a direct-mail piece for owners of high-performance boats, and as we talked about the job, I mentioned a magazine for “hot boat” owners published by Larry Flynt.

“Something’s about to happen with Larry Flynt,” he said. “Oh, really?” I asked, with no clue as to what he meant. “God’s gonna reach out and grab him.” “Oh?” I said again, a teeny bit incredulously.

“Yes,” he said firmly. “Larry Flynt is going to give his life to the Lord. My wife and I prayed for him and Hugh Hefner by name this morning.”

Now, to be perfectly honest, it had never even occurred to me to pray for either Larry or Hugh. Occasionally the name of an almost-forgotten acquaintance pops into my head, along with a strong conviction to pray for that person. But in general I have a hard enough time remembering to pray for people I know and like.

But what would happen if I—if you—were to break out of our comfort zone and take intercessory prayer to a new level? What if we were to decide that no one is off-limits? Even people who don’t like. Even people who have wronged, mistreated, or assaulted us or someone we love. Even people who do such vile, disgusting things as publish pornographic magazines. Especially people like that.

What would happen if just one Larry Flynt gave his life to the Lord? Imagine the potential in such a high-profile person. Sound far-fetched? I’m sure the disciples thought the same thing about Saul.

At the very least we would become more like Jesus, who with His dying words added to His prayer list the very men who were nailing Him to the cross.

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ADVENTIST REVIEW (721) 17
Roger Morneau, a Seventh-day Adventist, has written three top-selling books on prayer as well as his biography.* In preparing our special edition on prayer and spirituality, we felt it appropriate to include him. As the staff discussed how best to conduct the interview, I remembered that my upcoming vacation in California included going through San Francisco, not far from Morneau’s home. I called him and made an appointment. I also mentioned to him my discomfort with (and usual avoidance of) flying. He prayed for me, just as some of my friends were doing.

My husband and I arrived in San Francisco after a bumpy but pleasant trip and not even a twinge of my lifelong phobia. We found Roger and Hilda Morneau living in a small apartment in Modesto. It was in one of those two-story complexes, so familiar to California, built close together with sidewalks lined with rich, green foliage. The Morneaus greeted us like old friends. After visiting awhile, we began the interview.
This article focuses on intercessory prayer. Is there one incident that started you on this ministry?

In 1984 I was admitted to the hospital in Niagara Falls. I went in on a Saturday night with congestive heart failure. They worked to keep me alive. I was near to the nurse's station and could hear what was going on in the unit. About 8:00 p.m. on Sunday I said to myself, A lot of people here won't make it overnight.

I began to pray for these people. I said, "Lord, these poor mortals are going to their graves early." I talked to the Lord for them, asking for their forgiveness and His blood over them. From then on they began to improve.

You asked God to forgive their sins?
Yes, always do this. I was in the Woolworth parking lot one day doing a work report. A Mercury parked in front of me, and the husband and wife were fighting. The man yelled profanities at his wife. Without speaking a word, I said I was the one fighting. The man yelled at me, and the husband and wife were hugging each other. Sound as though you were doing intercessory prayer before 1984.

I prayed for people on my job. When I did that, the Holy Spirit would have the people open up to me. But this Woolworth incident was the beginning of a new experience in my prayer life. I told the Lord, "What a glorious experience You allowed me to have. I want to pray in a way that will honor You. You taught me today the most beautiful understanding that I could have on the power of intercessory prayer." I thanked the Lord and cried, I was so moved over this experience.

I wanted to see the Holy Spirit work on the lives of wicked and degraded people who have no use for God. I had seen good results before for some people. But after that I saw more. I learned by experience how God honors certain prayers and not others— I guess this sounds weird.

Tell us what you mean.
I found that I do not pray for anyone unless I have prayed for myself. I need to pray that my own sins be forgiven and acknowledge His claim on me through His death.

Then I pray for the people. I pray that their sins be forgiven, and ask Jesus to appropriate His divine blood shed at Calvary for their salvation. Then I ask to see the Holy Spirit move in and do something special for these people. See The Desire of Ages, page 671.

What is a typical prayer session for you?
Every day I receive a stack of mail through our post office box. I don't have time to read them all, but Hilda reads them to me while I eat. Hilda is my right-hand person. We take these letters and open the Bible to Matthew 27—the power chapter of the Bible. Years back I read it—now I know it by heart.

We put these letters on the open Bible. We commune all morning about the names. This has been done with all 17,000 on the list. I usually do the praying, saying something like "Dear Jesus, we have read these letters, and some have made us cry." Each refers to specific problems. "They need Your help, not mine—grace, divine strength, and Your sacrifice on Calvary." A lot of them don't understand that their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical faculties need re-creating. So many kids have been destroyed by drugs and other things. They have the capacity for destruction, as we all do. They need to be re-created." Christ didn't give up on people, even though many brought disease on themselves. He cared for their spiritual disease as well.

So you see people as whole beings who need re-creating mentally and emotionally as well?
Yes, in the field of human behavior we find that extremism and fanaticism cripple the intelligence. People's minds need to be re-created according to God's standards. They need to appreciate what God is doing for them. When the fallen heart becomes attuned with God's heart of love, things happen. They are ministered to according to their faith.

Today people are fascinated with the supernatural. Demon spirits are conditioning people. Through hypnotism they can take control of the mental capacities. And demons have the capacity to flash false thoughts into minds and create strong feelings. They can make people miserable, and they love to play with Christians. But people still have choices.

What about inherited weaknesses?
These also need to be re-created. The Lord says He has given all a measure of faith. Many have thrown it to the winds. They don't love God and couldn't care less. We get so many letters from parents.

I noticed it's difficult to get you by phone.
Until 1996 people got our number when they asked. But I can't do it anymore because of my heart. I get calls from Australia and Europe in the middle
of the night and sometimes slept only two hours. I didn’t have as much pressure then—now I am writing books.

**How do you handle all the mail?**

I asked the Lord how to keep the mail from getting out of control. I was blessed with a computer three years ago. But I needed help.

I am on Social Security; my wife is also and gets a small pension. When I became disabled at 59, I had no company pension because of the way they had formulated the contract. We could meet our obligations, but had no way to pay for help with the computer. I talked to the Lord about getting a computer analyst to help me. That was 10:00 a.m. Monday. By about 5:00 p.m. I called the man and said, “You are a direct answer to prayer. I don’t have any money, but could pay your gas. You can stay with us.” This man blessed my life, and I now have 37 buttons that do beautiful things.

I have stored 100 letters for certain needs, so I don’t have to start from scratch with my answers. Then I have a special two-page letter that gives encouragement. I let people know I am praying with and not just for them. I have 500 paragraphs that I can add or replace in the letter. I also use a one-page letter when the pressures are great.

**What about postage?**

I spend $60 to $75 a month. I use writing royalties to pay phone bills and postage. When I run out of money, someone will send me just enough in the mail.

**You don’t ask for funds?**

N ope. I say, “Lord, You know my needs.”

**Do you keep a list of these 17,000 names?**

A t first we had a beautiful red book. Then we started putting the letters in boxes, then in stacked trays that I call my “prayer tower.”

**How can you pray for 17,000 people?**

It started with one person. After about 50 I knew I couldn’t do all of them. I think of my intercession like the feeding of the 5,000. When I pray, I believe God is attentive to all these people. Jesus said bless the food and pass it on—He didn’t ask them to re-create it. I pray for the Lord to focus my attention on persons who need special grace at times. People I haven’t heard from in five years will pop into my mind. I understand this as an SOS for a soul in distress.

**How do you tell people to start to pray regularly in our fast-paced world?**

I often send a one-page article entitled “A Four-Minute Audience With Christ.” A teacher wrote me and said to have it put in the Adventist Review. I said, “If the Lord wants articles run in the Adventist Review, He will have them contact me. I have already talked to Him about it.” But she said she would send it in anyway.

**Give us an example of an answered prayer by letter.**

There was a woman with five children—professionals and all out of the church. I gave her encouragement and sent her the two-page letter.

I said, “You must promise me that you will not try to do the work of the Holy Spirit. In bringing your children back to the church, don’t talk to them about religion. If they bring it up, that’s OK, but they have had more of it than they can stand. They probably have spiritual indigestion.”

Six months later she phoned and said it is working—three of her children came back to church, two are being baptized, and the family of the other one is attending.

**How do you remember all the quotes you use?**

When I became an Adventist Christian, I realized I had to break from my past. I had to keep my mind on heavenly things, so I started memorizing verses. I prayed about them first. I memorized, while driving or walking the dog, more than 2,000 over the years, many in French.

**Tell us about the photocopy machine. That’s a story some find too incredible to be true.**

The Lord produced toner for a little more than two years. We moved here in April of 1992. I was working on a book, and my copier ran out of toner. (I keep copies of all letters sent out.) We didn’t have the $70 for a new cartridge. I talked to my Problem Solver. “Please honor me by creating toner so I can use my copier till the next check.” I told Hilda we were going to see a miracle. We went to the copier and put the power on, put a letter down, and made a clear, sharp copy. I said, “Glory to God.” Hilda was so stunned she couldn’t say anything for a moment. After the three weeks was about done, I had my check.

At that time I had a lot of letters from people stressed over the time of trouble. One woman said her minister talked a lot about the subject, and it stressed her daughter. I told the Lord, “Lord, have the Holy Spirit create toner for several months, and I will tell people that this miracle took place as an assurance that He would be with His people during the time of trouble.” The machine continued for 721 days. I had a plaque made for the copier. Then one day I made the mistake of doing 130 pages without putting the lid down, and it caught fire. That was the end of the copier. Someone donated another one.

**Tell us about the new book you have been working on.**

It’s called Beware of Angels. Angels come in two kinds. I had experience with evil angels in the 1940s. In the past few years people, even Adventists, have been seeking out angels, and they have appeared. A mong other things the book...
tells of two women in Oregon. I interviewed them in prison. They felt the time to see angels had come. Their desire was self-motivated. The angels came—beautiful creatures—and gradually deceived them into killing two people.

I know you write to inspire people to pray. Are you hopeful that this is happening?

What is happening in certain parts of the world is wonderful. In 1995 a Korean evangelist stopped by on his way to Korea and China. He wanted to translate the prayer books into Korean. Two months ago he came back. He told us people in Korea were praying and having divine interventions. He also went to China, and the same thing happened. He flew to Japan, and they had the same experience. Buddhists don’t change overnight, but when people pray for their relatives, many become Christians.

A woman in Saudi Arabia writes frequently and tells me how a number of Muslims attend church as a result of prayer.

I don’t ask for royalties in other languages. I’m just a person telling people what Jesus has done in my life. I’m an old guy brought up as a French Catholic in Canada. My editor understands me. Recently he had a surprise for me. By midsummer the prayer books will have Adventist terms taken out and be printed as one book for public and Christian bookstores. The Spirit of God is doing some marvelous things.

We finished our interview, then visited awhile, and Roger Morneau prayed something like this: “Now that You have forgiven our sins and iniquities and have appropriated to us the divine merits of Calvary for our salvation, may the Holy Spirit surround these people with a glorious atmosphere. Do something special for them today.” And He did.

On the flight home I decided I rather liked airplanes. Was that a coincidence? I don’t think so.

Incredible Answers to Prayer, More Incredible Answers to Prayer, A Trip Into the Supernatural, and When You Need Incredible Answers to Prayer. Ella Rydzewski is editorial assistant at the Adventist Review.
Shoot for the Moon

We both wanted the same thing, but Dad’s vision was much more inspired than mine.

BY SARAH E. COLEMAN

Dad, I ventured one winter evening when he came in from the shop, “can I ask you something?”

He looked up from the work boot he was untlying. His curly red beard held tiny frozen water crystals that sparkled in the lamplight. “Sure.”

I took a deep breath and looked away, hoping he couldn’t read the hope in my face. Trying desperately to sound casual, I posed my case. “Well, you know how sometimes the weather gets nasty?”

He nodded, his blue eyes brimming with laughter. “I mean, even in the summer. It just rains and rains and, well, I was wondering if you could give me a few old boards to make a roof with.”

To my surprise, Dad began to chuckle. I turned to face him, afraid he’d already rejected my request. “Just a roof?” he asked. “What about walls?” Dad, a general contractor by trade, couldn’t resist asking the obvious question.

“Well, uh, I didn’t think you’d have time to help me out,” I stammered. “Besides, I just want something to keep me dry when I’m writing outside.” At 12 I already knew that writing had become my passion, and I longed for somewhere private to conduct my experimental scribblings.

“I could put it way off in the ‘boonies’ and it wouldn’t bother anyone . . .” My voice trailed off as Dad bent over his boots again. Was this the rejection I expected?

I stared at the top of his head, noticing the ridges and valleys his curly hair formed against it. What was he thinking? Shifting my weight to the other foot, I waited dejectedly for my verdict.

Finally, oh, finally, Dad removed both boots and set them against the wall. Carefully he adjusted their stray laces and after an eternity of silence stood up and looked me full in the face.

“Why do you want old boards?” he asked softly. I caught my breath, prepared to suggest even the rotten boards he’d already thrown away. Before I could answer, however, he continued, “Why do you want old boards when you know I can get you new ones? You want somewhere to write, don’t you? Why not make it special? Shoot for the moon.” He flashed me a fatherly I’m older-and-wiser-but-I-love-you-anyway smile and started down the hall toward his bedroom.

“Wait!” I grabbed his flannel sleeve just in time. “What do you mean, shoot for the moon?”

Our conversation that chilly January evening sparked a creative streak in both of us that continued into the summer. For a week of evenings we pored over various designs for a small, weather-tight structure. Dad’s optimism left me awestruck. “Why not have a porch?” he asked one day. Later he announced that if I would dig the trench, he’d install electricity and a phone. And when I mentioned cutting a few holes in the walls to let in the light, he simply scoffed. “You’re going to have real windows, Sarah. With glass panes.”

The next months are marked in my memory by milestones such as: deciding on a color to paint the exterior of my little cottage, choosing the perfect material for my curtains, and carpet-sale hunting for the ideal color.
and size of remnant.

But nothing in my craziest dreams prepared me for the miracle that met my eyes late that summer. After weeks of oil-based paint, rough-wood slivers, and carpet-fitting dilemmas, I opened the front door into perfect bliss. Situated near a stream and surrounded by cottonwoods, the house even smelled of nature. One window faced the trees; the other greeted the sunset. Through my curtains sunlight laced its way across a broad, smooth desk, a sturdy bed, and freshly painted walls. Beneath the window an electrical socket waited expectantly to power anything I plugged in. More than I'd ever dared to hope, this little writer's cottage left me breathless and smiling.

“Thanks, Dad,” I said, turning toward where he stood on my spacious porch.

He smiled. “All you need now is a lawn chair.” I laughed and followed him toward our family house. “No, I’m serious!” he continued. “A lawn chair and a little stone walkway would be nice. We could put a birdhouse just outside your window . . .”

Shoot for the moon. So often I approach God with requests that insult His abilities. I feel as though I shouldn't bother Him with my concerns. I'll take whatever You have left over, I promise, but don't let me interrupt Your work.

But I am His work! More than anything else, my Father wants to make me happy. What could thrill Him more than the opportunity to become deeply involved in my life? If I restrict Him to the role of a used-goods supplier, He won't overstep those boundaries. But if I take His advice and “shoot for the moon,” I turn Him loose on the project of His dreams.

God has limitless capabilities. John reminded me of this when I read his words: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him” (1 John 5:14, 15, NIV). Why should we limit our requests to our perception of His will, as I did when I asked only for used boards from Dad? Why not make His will our prime desire and, at the same time, ask for what we really want?

Why not try this approach with God? The Bible encourages it. What can you lose? Either you'll receive the thing you asked Him for, or He'll give you something that in the end will make you happier than what you originally wanted.

Either way, it's simple, open communication with God. Why not shoot for the moon? After all, you're talking to its Creator.

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