

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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in Your
Season of
Transition

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**BEHOLD, HIS AWESOME
HOLINESS**

BY DOUG BEACHAM

This Christmas, MEDITATE on His Awesome Holiness

In Luke's gospel,
Elizabeth and Mary
call us to worship the
holy Savior.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

*“For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name.” (Luke 1:49 NKJV)*

We are now coming to the closing weeks and months of 2016. The IPHC has spent this year focusing on our foundational *raison d’être*: holiness. We were founded in 1898 as one of numerous revivals, movements, and denominations birthed from a revival of holiness, particularly Wesleyan holiness. Our understanding of holiness flowed from Scripture, John Wesley, and writers and preachers in the late nineteenth century holiness revival.

We have additional resources at iphc.org/holiness. I encourage you to visit this site and take time to read the PDF of N.J. Holmes’ [God’s Provision for Holiness](#). Written in the early twentieth century, Holmes writes as one sanctified during this period.

As we come to the end of 2016, with Advent and Christmas in mind, I offer a few thoughts on holiness for 2017 as we prepare to focus on our fourth core value: *We Prayerfully Value Christ’s Kingdom*.

St. Luke’s account of the advent of the Messiah is unique among the four Gospels. Within the narratives of the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, Luke includes two poems/songs incorporating Old Testament themes. I think of these as introductory psalms to the advent of the Messiah. They are New Covenant psalms, rooted in



God's purposes in Israel, finding their miraculous fulfillment in the wombs of two women.

The first woman, representing the Old Covenant, is Elizabeth. She is an older woman, who like Sarah nearly 2,000 years earlier, is thought beyond the age of conception (see Genesis 17, 18, 21). The second woman, representing the New Covenant, is Mary, a young woman—the virgin prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 some 700 years earlier, and unmarried. The older woman carries the scandal of childlessness; the younger carries the scandal of a child conceived by someone other than her betrothed husband.

The older woman's life proclaims the power of Israel's God to break through human emptiness, barrenness and unfruitfulness. The younger woman's life proclaims the power of Israel's God to transcend human sinfulness and social custom.

Unlike the ridicule they encountered (and that women continue to encounter today), God speaks blessings to these women. The men in their lives come to discern, respect and protect the power of God at work in these women.

While numerous themes from the Old Testament are named in these psalms, my focus is on how holiness is reflected in both of them.

The first psalm is in Luke 1:46–55 and is from the lips of the Virgin Mary. Earlier the angel Gabriel appeared to her with the announcement that she would be overcome and overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (1:35) who supernaturally caused conception of a baby in her womb. Gabriel informed Mary about Elizabeth, who was already six months pregnant (1:36). Mary recognized the miracle quality of that announcement and responded with faith to the angelic message (1:38).



Mary's visit to Elizabeth confirmed the double miracle occurring in their lives (see Luke 1:39–45). Elizabeth's praise response is one of confirming blessing, and affirming the power of believing what God has spoken (1:45).

It is in response to Elizabeth's confirmation and affirmation that Mary breaks forth in the psalm called *The Magnificat*, (Luke 1:46–55). Though Mary acknowledged her unique status of blessing, her psalm is a litany of praise to the Lord.

The New King James Version uses the personal pronoun He or His fifteen times in her reference to the Lord God of Israel—God is mighty and merciful; He has shown strength, put down the mighty, filled the hungry, and helped Israel. God has done all of this in accordance to covenant promises made “to Abraham and his seed forever” (1:55).

Mary's reference to holiness is related to God's mighty nature enabling Him to do great things beyond human comprehension (Luke 1:49). Divine transcendence, above

and beyond the sin-stained condition of humanity, is able to penetrate this darkened world with light, life and redemption. Mary's faithful response to receive the blessing and nurture the blessing is rooted in the holy power of Israel's God.

The second psalm, known as *The Benedictus*, is proclaimed by Elizabeth's husband Zacharias (Luke 1:67–79). The aged priest responded to the miracle of his son's conception and birth by affirming God's holy faithfulness through the prophets and the covenant with Abraham (1:70, 72, 73).

The proper response to such a display of holy faithfulness is that “we

“Jesus is the One who brings the Kingdom of God in human flesh into the midst of the kingdoms of this world.”

Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

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might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives” (1:74–75).

Note that the word translated holiness in Luke 1:75 is not the usual Greek word *hagios*. Rather, it is *hosiotetes* and describes personal piety reflecting holy transformation in the heart and life towards God. The same word is used in Ephesians 4:24: “That you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (*hosiotetes*).”

Elizabeth's child John is the prophet announcing the One in Mary's womb who is Author of the new creation (Hebrews 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus is the One who brings the Kingdom of God in human flesh into the midst of the kingdoms of this world. Sanctification, holiness, piety, justice and righteousness embodies and points to His holy kingdom which shines forth, as we live in this present darkness.

As you celebrate the coming of the Christ Child during the Christmas season, I pray you will be filled with wonder—and that you will experience a renewed desire to serve Him in holiness. □



Are You Caring for Your Soul?

Leaders often make a fatal mistake: We care for everyone else while neglecting our own spiritual health.



BY BECKY SHIREY

BECKY SHIREY is a speaker and writer with a passion for encouraging others in their journey of faith. She has spoken in venues across Europe, in Asia, and throughout the United States. Becky and her husband, Lou, are members of America's National Prayer Committee and presenters for Galatians 6:6 Retreats for ministry couples.

Recently I met a pastor who admitted working in excess of 125 hours per week. He feels trapped in his work schedule but hasn't figured a way out. The demands of family, ministry and a secular job are draining him physically, exhausting him mentally, conflicting him emotionally and depleting him spiritually.

This pastor is searching for solutions because he realizes his pace is unsustainable. Perhaps he is an exceptional case, but I doubt it. Extreme busyness seems to be at the fabric of today's leadership culture.

BUSYNESS VS. HURRY

Busyness by itself isn't fatal, but when busyness merges with hurry it become a dangerous combination. It pushes God to the side, squeezing him from center place.

Dallas Willard gives this advice: "Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

Willard explains: "Busyness is an outward condition of the body. Hurry is an inward condition of the soul." Hurry causes our life to take on a frenetic quality, keeping us from being fully present with God and with other people. Hurry is soul draining, and spiritually depleting.

Richard Foster writes in *Celebration of Discipline*: "In contemporary society our adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in 'muchness' and 'manyness' he will rest satisfied."

THE PATTERN OF JESUS

Jesus modeled soul care. The first five chapters of Mark pictures Jesus engaged in miraculous ministry followed by intentional retreat. He lived

with perfect rhythm between work and rest, and he led his disciples to do the same.

In Mark 6, after the disciples return from their first mission trip, they are excited to give Jesus the report about miracles they had seen and demons they had cast out. But Jesus was more interested in their rest, replenishment and renewal. His word to them was: Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest (Mark 6:31).

The beauty of Christ's leadership, and evidence of his unhurried lifestyle, is he was not dismayed by interruptions. When Jesus and his disciples arrive at their place of solitude, more than 5,000 people greet them. Jesus performs a miracle of multiplication, providing food for the people and increased energy for the disciples. Afterwards, he was once more focused on rest.

"Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray" (Mark 6:45,46).

Did you notice Christ's wording? He didn't ask the disciples or suggest to the disciples. He *made* the disciples get into the boat. He commanded rest for them and him.

HOW IS IT WITH YOUR SOUL?

Early Wesleyans asked this question at the beginning of every small group meeting. "How is it with your soul?" Is it thriving or dying?

A healthy soul operates from under care and connection to God. Don't confuse soul-care with self-care. When we focus on ourselves, we're more likely to neglect our souls. The soul requires rest in the presence of God to remain healthy.

David writes about rest in the presence of God in Psalm 23:1-3a.

□ **The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.** I shall not want for any good thing. He is the source of every provision.

"It's widely believed that the universal signal for distress, S.O.S., stands for "save our souls." And how we need it!"

□ **He makes me lie down in green pastures.** Jesus made his disciples get into the boat. The Shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures. It's a requirement, not an option. Green pastures are a place of cool, refreshing rest.

□ **He leads me beside still waters.** The still waters invite us to lie down. Still waters are not rushing streams, nor are they stagnant pools. They are refreshing, life giving.

□ **He restores my soul.** A restored soul is revived, awakened and returned to health. As the Lord shepherds us, our soul is restored.

David wrote another psalm about quiet and stillness. "But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Psalm 131:2). The nursing child is impatient, demanding and restless. The weaned child is calm and content, mature and trusting—satisfied in his mother's presence.

Soul care happens in silence and solitude. It's not a matter of your prayer life, though it's wise not to neglect personal devotion. It's the fine art of sitting in God's presence, doing nothing. Instead, it involves allowing Him to do his work in us.

SAVE OUR SOULS!

It's widely believed that the universal signal for distress, S.O.S., stands for "save our souls." And how we need it! Only Jesus, by his divine work of grace, can save our souls. But you, and you alone, are

responsible for the well being of your soul.

John Ortberg says: "Our souls are on loan to us. One day, God will review with us what our souls have become. That is what will matter from our lives."

I pray the overworked pastor I mentioned earlier in this article finds relief from his schedule so he can attend to his soul. I think of him, and others like him, when I read these words: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

A jar of clay is fragile. It's like us—a mixture of dust and water. It's been fired in the kiln, but it's brittle and subject to breaking. Neglect rest, and our dustiness overwhelm us. Because we are jars of clay, we are containers for a spiritual treasure. We are vessels of light. Neglect soul rest and his light dims within us.

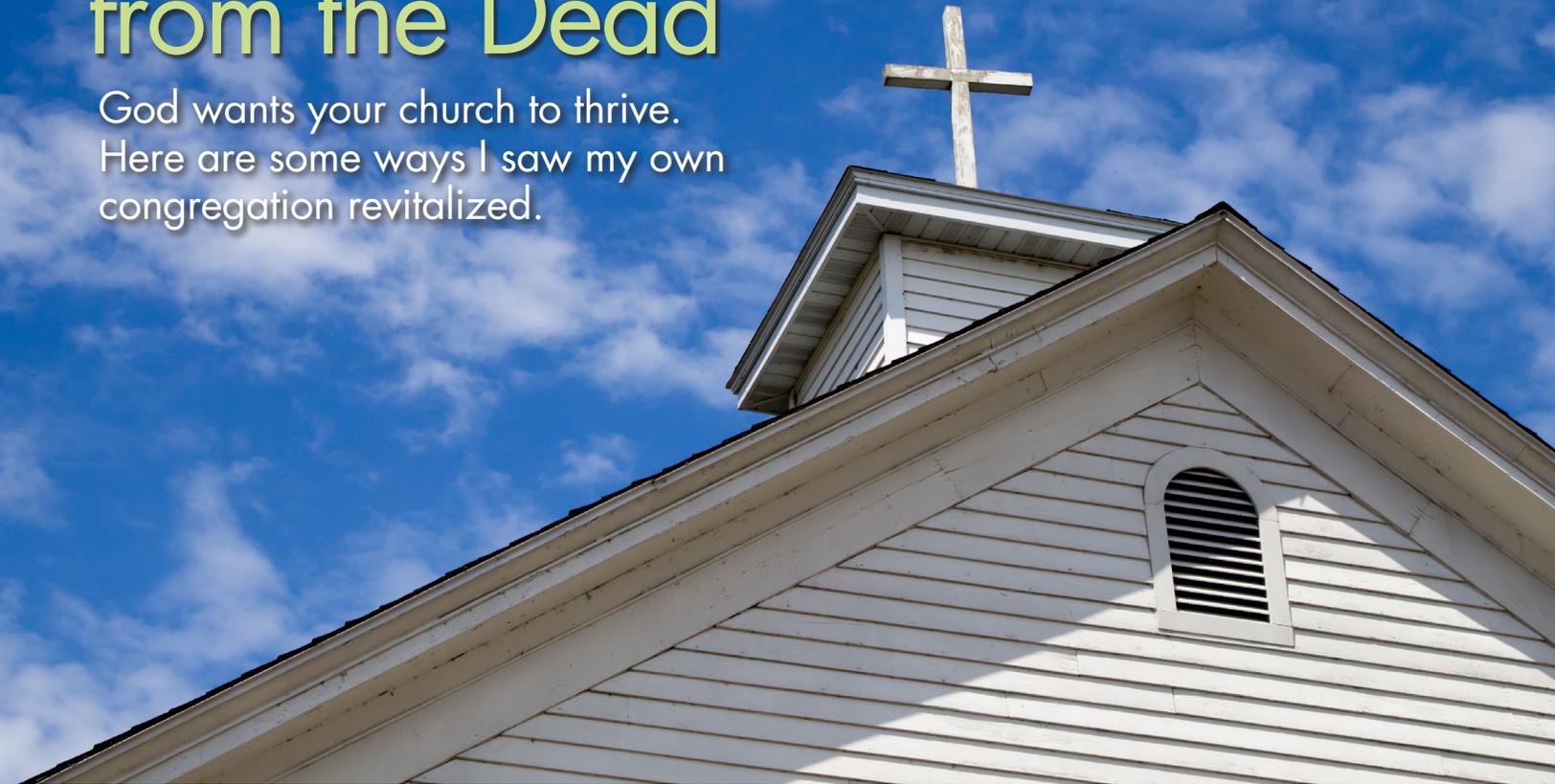
Richard Kreigbaum, in *Leadership Prayers*, prays about weariness. He writes: "I worked as though I had no normal limits. I'm sorry for it, Father...I ask your Spirit to guide me back to my proper boundaries, not for my ease or comfort, but so I can lead in humble faith."

If you would like more resources on soul care, the author recommends *Soul Care* by John Ortberg, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* by Ruth Haley Barton, *Leadership Prayers* by Richard Kreigbaum and *The Four Dimensions of Extraordinary Leadership* by Jenni Catron (available at [LifeSprings Resources](#)).

□

Seven Ways to Raise a Church from the Dead

God wants your church to thrive. Here are some ways I saw my own congregation revitalized.



BY JASON
COOK

JASON COOK is a husband, sportsman, and Harley motorcycle rider. A graduate of Emmanuel College, he now serves as pastor of The Refuge, a diverse PH congregation in two locations in Conway and Murrells Inlet, South Carolina. He is married to his sweetheart, Chloe. You can learn more about the church at: www.refugeconway.com. If you need more information about how he revitalized The Refuge, contact him at Jesus servant18@yahoo.com.

When I became pastor of the Conway First Pentecostal Holiness Church, I went in with so many aspirations and a genuine love for people. Conway First PH Church was renamed The Refuge in 2012. It also became multiracial, tripled in size, and began to reach way beyond the walls of our church.

There have been many articles and books written about church revitalization in recent years. Reading these concepts can be exhilarating and intimidating at the same time. Often it can make a local church pastor feel he cannot keep up. We get so bewildered by details that we lose sight of what it is God wants us to do to impact our local communities. Here are seven simple ways I've learned to effectively breathe life into what the enemy wants to kill.

1. Quit Stressing Over Music

So much emphasis has been placed on worship styles over the past twenty years. I personally am a whole lot more interested in the One I worship rather the types of songs and musical instruments used to do so.

Many have begun to select music based on what their congregation likes, rather than what will give God the most glory. Yet Ephesians 5:19 (NIV) declares that we should incorporate various forms of music. It says: “Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.”

In my congregation, we sing all types of worship music. The key is not the song; the key is the Savior. Don't feel like your music is what will make or break your church. Music is a tool that ushers in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Disagreements over it should never be allowed to create a warzone. Don't be afraid to update songs, and use them to praise our Savior. He loves worship!

2. Your Building Matters—Take Care of It

When I came to Conway, the building was in bad shape. Inside, the church was beautiful, but the yard outside was in bad shape. The hedges were covering the sign, and it looked as if the congregation had lost interest in the church.

When people are driving around looking for a church, they pay attention to the grounds. Ignored grounds means a lack of concern for details. A young family wants to know you care about the details.

Spend the time and energy to make sure your facility look the best it can. An old church doesn't have to look abandoned and forgotten. We cleaned up the yards immediately. People that drove by noticed the church looked different, and because of this we began to receive visitors. With very little financial resources, you can make your building look great.

3. Use Websites and Social Media

It cannot be said enough that a website is essential. Websites are cheap (the Refuge website is less than \$25 a year), while Facebook and Twitter are free. Use the tools that the Lord has given us. The internet has its quirks, but it also has its perks. Use the free advertisement tools at your disposal to promote what God is doing locally at your church.

4. Take Care of Your Seniors

Our culture idolizes youthfulness and older adults have been ignored. It's implied that their opinion doesn't matter and that they aren't valued. In Christian communities this must not be! We ignore their experience and wisdom to our peril.

My oldest three attending members now are in their nineties. They are precious! Most folks will follow a leader they know loves them.

My oldest member is named Mr. Big (a.k.a. Wilbur Lewis), and he is absolutely one of my favorite people on planet earth. He followed me through the church

“Children don't need big and flashy entertainment; they need authentic leaders who care about them!”

transition because not only did I love him, but also he saw my love and concern for his grandchildren. They got saved as a result.

People who are elderly love their families, so they will follow a leader who cares about them and their families. Love them, and they will follow you even when they are scared of change.

5. Don't Neglect Outreach

A church that does no outreach will die. Folks are not impressed with noise, nickels or numbers. There are simple, cost-effective ways to bless your community. Feed the firefighters, buy the police officers a box of chicken, give packs of pencils to your struggling school, set up a donation point for blankets for the homeless, or offer a soup kitchen to feed the hungry.

There are many ways to do outreach. The love of Jesus must shine through for the lost to desire to be a part of your fellowship. Be warned, they will not act right, talk right, or look right, but when Jesus is finished with them, they will look like Him.

6. Invest in Students

Children's ministry is one-third of our Sunday morning congregation now. When I arrived, there were less than five kids. I didn't have anything to do with the growth of our RefugeKidz ministry. All I did was find a leader who cared about kids.

From that, our youth ministry was born. Children don't need big and flashy entertainment; they need authentic leaders who care about them! Teens want a safe place to share, and to have leadership who is concerned with them. Invest in them, and they will follow you.

7. Be Yourself

Don't try to imitate someone else's style of ministry. We can learn from others, but each minister must adapt what is learned for their unique situations. God uniquely created you for a reason, and your church is not charged with being like the one down the street. You are charged with preaching Jesus the way He created you to. When Jesus is exalted, He draws the people and He builds the church. □



Finding Grace in Your Season of **TRANSITION**

Relocation can be difficult, especially for leaders. But the stress can be minimized if the Spirit is leading you to move.



BY J. LEE
GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an ordained IPHC minister who directs The Mordecai Project, an international outreach focused on confronting gender-based violence. For 18 years he served as an editor with Charisma magazine, and he is the author of several books including the newly released *Set My Heart on Fire*, a Bible study on the Holy Spirit. He and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia.

In August of this year my wife and I packed our belongings and made the biggest move of our lives. After living in the Orlando area for 24 years we pulled up our roots and relocated to Georgia. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done because I'm a sentimental guy who gets very attached to people and places. Yet I found extra grace for this transition because I knew I was following the Holy Spirit's leading.

Counselors say relocation is one of the most stressful things in life—ranking right up there with the death of a loved one. It weighs us down because it's a huge combination of stressors—selling a house, buying or renting a new house, hiring movers, leaving friends and stepping into the dark unknown.

It can be even harder for those of us in ministry. We've invested our time and emotional energy in people who have become very close to us. Then we have to leave it all to invest in people we don't know. This is not fun stuff, in my opinion.

Yet many people who are reading this are about to step into a transition—or are already in the middle of one. I have taken much

comfort from the fact that the Bible is full of people who were called by God to move. Abraham, the father of our faith, began his spiritual odyssey when the Lord said: "Go from your country, your family, and your father's house, to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1).

Has God ever called you to pull up your roots and move? It's painful!

Think about it. When God wanted to do something really important in the Earth, like start a new nation that would serve Him, it began with a relocation. Spiritual blessings often are not realized until someone moves! Moses had to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. David had to move to Jerusalem. Nehemiah had to relocate to his homeland. And Jesus' last words to His disciples were about moving to foreign countries.

If you are in a season of transition, you will want to consider these guidelines:

HAVE COURAGE.

When Joshua was preparing to relocate the people of Israel to Canaan, God said three times: "Be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:6,7,9). Moving requires a leap of faith, and doubters always get cold feet. Has God given you a big promise about the land you are about to possess? Don't be surprised if the devil tries to make you fearful. Take a deep breath, resist fear and forge ahead.

TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Moving isn't just one decision, it's a tangled mess of many decisions that can overwhelm you. You don't have to handle everything at once. The Bible says you are not on your own; you don't have to figure out your relocation plan by yourself. You have a Shepherd, and He is good. He leads you "beside quiet waters" and He guides you "in paths of righteousness" (Ps. 23:2-3). Trust your Shepherd's leading. He will make your transition peaceful; and He promises that "the steps of a good man are made firm by the Lord" (Ps. 37:23).

LET GO OF THE OLD.

When God wanted to bless Naomi, He told her to leave the forsaken land of Moab and move to Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth pledged to go with her, but her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, stayed behind. Orpah couldn't tear herself away from her culture and her lifestyle, even though God was visiting His people in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:14-16).

"When the Holy Spirit says go, He goes with you. If you invite God into the process it becomes a thrilling adventure."

Sometimes when God calls us to a new place in the Spirit, we discover that we are hindered by many soulish distractions. You must love Jesus more than you love your comfort zone. It's good to have roots in a place, but you must never let those roots become stronger than your willingness to follow God anywhere.

CRY IF YOU NEED TO.

Back in August, after we finished loading every piece of furniture onto our moving van, I walked through my house in Florida one last time and locked the front door. Then I sobbed in my car as I remembered playing with my young daughters in the back yard, hanging Christmas decorations on the shrubs and burying our family dog in the back yard.

It's totally normal to feel sadness when we move. The best way to process your feelings is to let the tears flow.

BE OPEN TO GOD'S DETOURS.

One important lesson I learned in my transition is that we must never lock ourselves into "our" plan. You may sense the Lord leading you to leave where you are, but when you begin moving to your new destination God may redirect you.

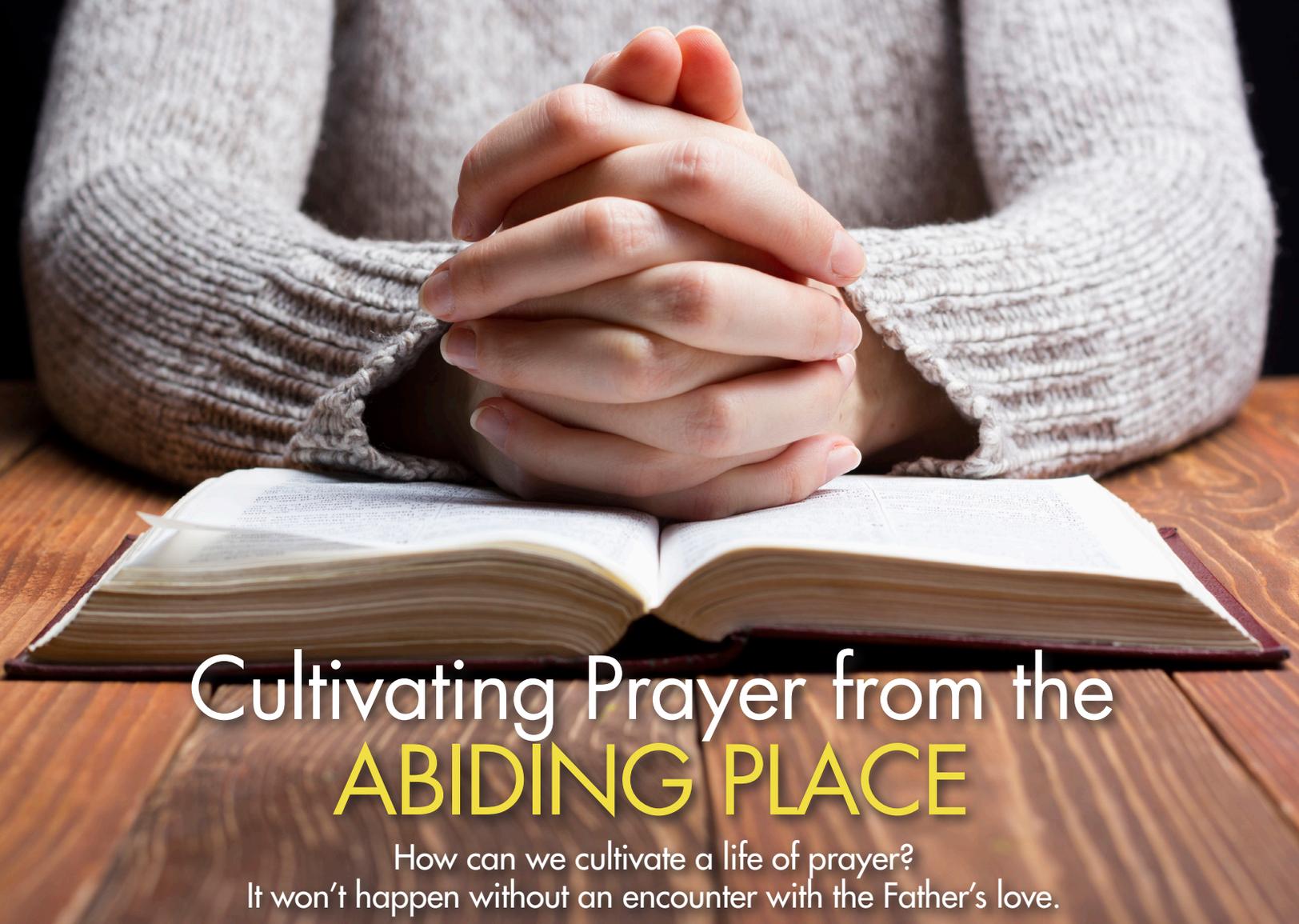
The apostle Paul was heading to Rome to preach the gospel, but a shipwreck took him to the island of Malta—and thus he led a successful but unscheduled revival. My wife and I were planning to move to Athens, Georgia, on the east side of Atlanta. But an unplanned emergency with my elderly father redirected us to LaGrange, Georgia, on Atlanta's west side. Yet today we know we are right where we need to be.

Don't be so headstrong about your destination that God can't gently nudge you 15 degrees to the right, or take you on an unexpected detour.

EXPECT MIRACLES ALONG THE WAY.

When I knew for sure God was calling my wife and I to Georgia, we asked our friends to begin praying with us. I shared with them seven specific prayer requests, and the first item on the list was: "Quick sale of our house." Guess what? Our house sold in less than 24 hours—to the first people who walked in the door! Since then, all but the last request on my list has been answered.

Moving can seem like a chore, but if you invite God into the process it becomes a thrilling adventure. When the Holy Spirit says go, He goes with you. When He calls you to leave the old and step into the new, He pushes you to a new spiritual level. ☐



Cultivating Prayer from the **ABIDING PLACE**

How can we cultivate a life of prayer?
It won't happen without an encounter with the Father's love.



BY
**MICHELLE
HILLIARD**

MICHELLE HILLIARD graduated from Emmanuel College with a degree in Christian Ministry and Biblical Studies. Ordained in the IPHC, she is founder and director of the Lavish Love retreat ministry. She serves as Prayer Consultant for the World Intercession Network, and as a founding board member of Ekklesia International Tanzania. She served at the International House of Prayer Atlanta, leading internships, offering pastoral oversight and teaching in the school of ministry. She often travels and leads teams overseas to serve in missions.

Since I've been a part of prayer ministry in different contexts, I'm often asked about its purpose and expression. I'm also asked for ideas on how to cultivate a lifestyle of prayer. While practical tips are helpful, the foundation of any prayer ministry must start with our relationship with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Simply stated, prayer in conjunction with His Word is the means that God has given us to enter into the knowledge of His heart.

Prayer is primarily motivated from a desire to encounter God, to know Him—His heart, His character and nature. Prayer cultivated in the lives of individuals and within biblical communities is born from the first and greatest commandment, loving God and others.

As a child of God, being loved by Him gives us the place of identity. As an intercessor, we set our hearts to love God and to know His heart so that we can offer prayer on behalf of ourselves and others according to His will.

Paul says, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know the

hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people” (Ephesians 1:17–18 NIV).

This is a prayer that we also, can continually pray over our own hearts, churches, region, nation and world. The prayer and declarations from the first chapter of Ephesians brings wisdom, connects us with identity in the hope of His calling, being sealed by His Spirit, and chosen in the Beloved.

Likewise, Ephesians 3:16–19, records Paul’s prayer which connects us with intimacy in the love of God. He wrote: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthened you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.”

From this scripture we see that we can actually know “this love which surpasses knowledge.” Yet in order to love others, we must receive love.

We love because He first loved us. This is a foundational point for growth in our walk with God. Our hearts can find rest and peace in the light of the revelation of God’s vast, extravagant, lavish love for us.

He is the One who speaks tender words of life over us. He is the One that in His Light we see light. (See Psalm 36:6–10.) He is the One who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). He is the One who has poured His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

How do we live in the light of His love? How do we offer what has freely been poured into us? Encountering God’s love is supposed to be our reality in the day to day circumstances.

Even in the midst of pain, Scripture tells us that God is near to

the brokenhearted. (Psalm 34:18) This gives us great hope. He is the One who lifts us out of the mud and the mire, and sets our feet on the rock (Psalm 40:2). He delivers us because He delights in us and leads us out into a spacious place (Psalm 18:19).

Often we think of the Kingdom in terms of the “narrow way.” This is accurate as Matthew 7:13–14 states, “Enter through the narrow gate...But small it the gate and narrow the road that leads to life...” Yet, I offer that it is the narrow way into the spacious place in God.

“Prayer is primarily motivated from a desire to encounter God, to know Him—His heart, His character and nature.”

Jesus said in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” In God, we have a spacious place and abundance. He is the lifter of our head, our deliverer, our healer, and the One who restores and redeems. Romans 8:28, tells us that “in all things God works for good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose.”

The summer of 2011, was a difficult time in my life. I was crushed underneath pain, grief and loss in that season. I was discouraged and downtrodden, but still had ministry responsibilities, which proved difficult to accomplish.

When I looked to the Lord, He began to speak to me that others, particularly those in ministry, were experiencing similar feelings. While different circumstances caused their pain, they were underneath the same heaviness that life can sometimes offer.

I asked the Lord, “What can I do—how can I help?” Out of this, a retreat ministry was birthed called Lavish Love. I was compelled to offer others a space that He could come and do His work within their hearts.

As I encountered God’s love for myself, sharing that love became the natural outflow. “Freely you have received; freely give (Matthew 10:8).” This is a practical expression of intercession—since my mother often instructed me to “put feet to your prayers.”

When we understand our place of identity and cultivate intimacy, intercession and obedience simply flow from that place. There are many models of prayer such as contemplative prayer, meditation, prophetic declaration, and travail. I have found that worship-led prayer reminds us of the truth that Jesus is the desire of all nations, that He is worthy of worship and that He has orchestrated His Kingdom in such a way that we partner with Him for that Kingdom to increase, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Prayer, rooted in identity and intimacy, from the abiding place of the true vine of heaven (John 15:1–6), cultivates fellowship with God’s Spirit and bears fruit that remains. □