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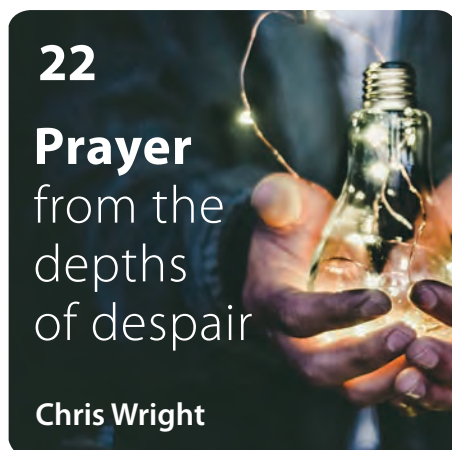
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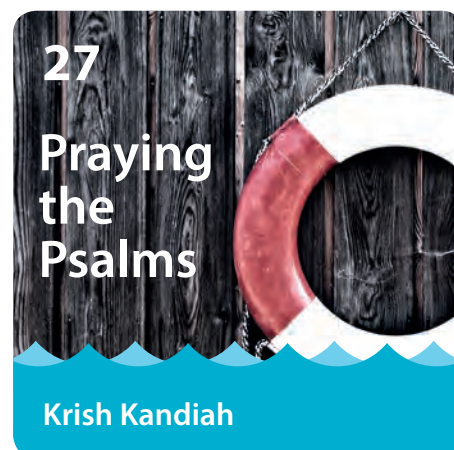
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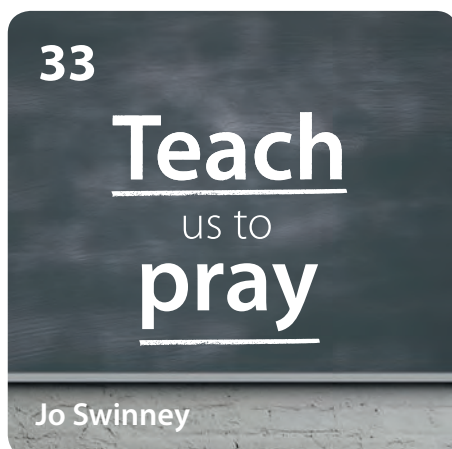
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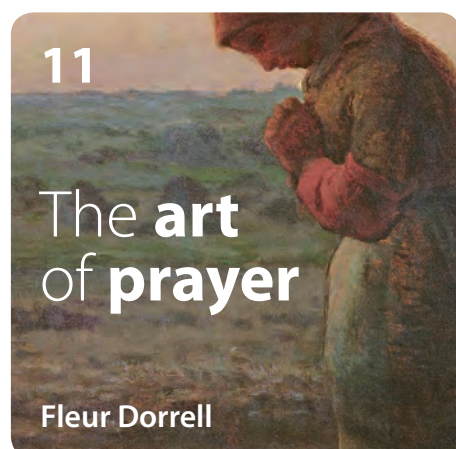
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Welcome

The Christian life is nothing like a gentle ride on an escalator. We don't step on and gracefully ride up into realms of spiritual maturity and godliness with no effort beyond a light hand on the rail to hold us steady. We find a lot of metaphors for the life of faith in the Bible; it is compared to a race, a battle, a journey, a seedling struggling to grow in adverse conditions. These pictures conjure struggle, a need for focus and determination, a willingness to make sacrifices. Our relationship with God, like any relationship, needs investment.

Followers of Christ throughout the centuries have found certain practices, sometimes called 'spiritual disciplines', to help in

the pursuit of a stronger, deeper faith. One of these practices is prayer: our primary way of communicating with God.

Our hope is that this issue of the *Lyfe Journal* will catch your imagination, provoke your spirit and get you praying. There are stories of people whose entire lives have been shaped by prayer, explorations of some of the prayers recorded in the Bible, ideas and resources to take away and use. For many of us, life is busy and full and we simply don't have time to work through weighty tomes on spiritual matters. What you have here is easily digestible, pithy, concise wisdom, with plenty of space to make notes, jot down thoughts

and record your ideas and responses. Use it as a springboard to launch you into a more prayerful way of living. We have a God who loves us, who is with us and who listens when we pray.

'You are near to everyone whose prayers are sincere. You satisfy the desires of all your worshippers, and you come to save them when they ask for help.'
Psalm 145.18-19

Let's get stuck in!

Jo Swinney
Editor



Lyfe Journal

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Personal prayer assessment

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on your current attitude and practice of prayer. Grab a hot drink and spend a quiet 20 minutes here before you go any further. You might want to revisit your answers once you have finished working through the *Lyfe Journal* and before you go through the questions on page 48.



1 Why is prayer important?

2 Complete the following: Prayer is

3 What are my preferred times, places and methods of prayer?

4 I would describe my prayer life as (choose best word): delightful deep dull dutiful daunting difficult dynamic

5 What do I enjoy about prayer?

6 What do I find difficult about prayer?

7 What key things have I been praying for over the past few months?

8 What answers to prayers have I received recently?

9 How do I hear God speak? What role does listening play in my prayer life?

10 What changes do I want to see in the way I pray?

11 What am I hoping to get from using the *Lyfe Journal*?

Living on a prayer

An interview with Pete Greig, founder of 24-7 Prayer
Interview by Jo Swinney

“
Prayer is the articulation of desire. It is not the accreditation of success. We pray out of our desperation and our brokenness.
”

Pete Greig is one of the founders of 24-7 Prayer, a prayer, mission and justice movement working in more than half the world's nations. He is the author of several books, most recently *Dirty Glory: go where your best prayers take you* (Hodder & Stoughton 2016), and is a Pastor of Emmaus Road in Guildford. I got together with him in a rooftop café in central London and grilled him about whether it is *really* necessary to pray in the middle of the night, how he copes with having to pray in public when he's known as a prayer-guru, and what it means to become the answers to your own prayers.

JS – Is it a bit awkward to be known as the guy who started a prayer movement? When you pray in public, do you feel the pressure to be a really good pray-er because people might be analysing how you pray and expecting you to be amazing?

PG – It is so weird being described as being the leader of a prayer movement when you only got into it because prayer was the thing you were worst at. To be honest I do get sick and tired of going to people's houses and having them say, 'Pete ought to do grace'. I normally just say 'Ta Pa', because I want to defuse any pressure.

Having said that, I have learnt and grown in prayer over time so my message is really not, 'oh I'm so bad at prayer'. I've learnt new ways of praying, I've learnt to hear God's voice better, I've matured a little bit in prayer. But yes, it is weird and my older brother, who's a very respectable lawyer, still says to me whenever I see him, 'Have you got a proper job yet?'

JS – I wrestle over the fact that your movement is about praying around the clock. I know it's not a gimmick but what is the deal with those early morning slots? Are those people who sign up for them holier than those of us who can't get up for anyone, not

even God? I'm such a sleep addict... Are they better than me, the ones who do the 2am slots?

PG – Prayer is the articulation of desire. It is not the accreditation of success. We pray out of our desperation and our brokenness. No one has a prayer problem. We just have a complacency problem and so if I get a terrible diagnosis from the doctor, I'm not going to say 'I ought to pray about this but I can't, I'm bad at prayer', I'm just going to ask for help. So there is a sense in which prayer is the overflow of desire. And actually one of the joys of the 24-7 model is that firstly, some people love praying at night, some love praying early in the morning: we're all wired differently. Secondly, it facilitates half nights and full nights of prayer, which Jesus considered essential and he was busier than any of us, and had more excuse than any of us not to do them. There is perhaps something we could learn from him about sometimes devoting our sleeping hours to prayer. Having said that, some of my favourite slots in prayer rooms are the 11am slots when mums and kids have come in and done pictures of Jesus stabbing Satan; different people pray at different times. Hopefully [our model] is a gracious canvas for a diversity of human souls to encounter God in a way that is appropriate to their own psychology and circumstance.

JS – You say in *Dirty Glory* that you’ve developed in prayer over the years. These days what’s prayer like for you?

PG – I think as you get older you become more comfortable with paradox and complexity. These days I find great intimacy in the transcendence of God. Walking under the stars at night may be a cliché but I find God close to me in his sovereignty and his greatness in a way that I didn’t when I was a bit younger and maybe my life was a little bit simpler. I’ve certainly discovered the riches of contemplative prayer. My background led me to see prayer initially as a bit transactional. In the first prayer room, I think we thought there was some big switch called ‘revival’ and if we could stand on our tiptoes and flick it by praying hard enough, everything would happen. And then of course some of our prayers didn’t work and worse still some of them did work, and we had a sense of the implications.

So we began to discover the menu of prayer. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6 talks about ‘all kinds of prayers.’ What are the kinds of prayers? Well, there’s contemplation, meditation, spiritual warfare, petition, intercession, silence, listening to God, centring prayer, and we need all of those. Listen, if I took you to a restaurant and you opened the menu and found there was only one thing on it, you’ve got a binary decision: do I like it or not? Say you like it and order it and I bring you back to that restaurant the next day and the day after that, at some point you’re going to get sick of it, and even if you don’t it wouldn’t be a balanced diet.

Most Christian traditions have locked into one model of prayer and people are malnourished as a result. The Pentecostal traditions tend to be very external, very strong on intercession, petition and spiritual warfare; the contemplatives have been so focused on the inward journey they have lost some of the miraculous transformational potential of prayer. The danger is that prayer just becomes a form of meditation, with no cosmology. We lose Jesus casting out demons, healing the sick, turning water into wine in the midst

of this mystical Christian experience. It is with a balanced diet, where we can practice the *examen*, the *lectio divina*, but also do spiritual warfare, that we can live as healthy Christians, able to adapt to different circumstances in relationship with God.

JS – You talk a lot in the book about not just saying prayers but ‘becoming prayers in a thousand practical ways,’ and you say, ‘prayer alone won’t get the job done.’ So how do you understand the relationship between prayer and action, but particularly in the context of the whole body of Christ? We can’t all become the answers to our own prayers. Sometimes we can and we need to, but sometimes it’s someone else in the body who is the answer. I’m also thinking of housebound people for example, who perhaps are physically unable to do more than pray. Could you say something on that?

PG – I do think that one of the trajectories of the Christian life is that gradually we move from prayer as a verb to prayer as a noun. We move from prayer as something we do to something we are. But it’s very important that we don’t become individualistic in that. Professor Richard Lovelace said ‘You cannot be more filled with the Holy Spirit than the community of which you are a part.’ Sometimes we have portrayed Christian faith like those lines of payphones at Victoria Station, everyone talking to God on their own but not talking to each other. I actually think the power of prayer is about two axes: the vertical of aligning our wills with God’s, but also the horizontal of agreement with other Christians in prayer.

There’s a pastoral consideration here too, because there are times in all of our lives where we need to be carried in prayer and all we can do is rest in the promises of God. Sometimes we might find it very hard to find the faith to pray, but we can trust and rely on the prayers and the faith of others. So it’s a wonderful thing to be part of a praying community and not just feel that we have to be sort of spiritual lone rangers. Some of

us will be naturally more wired towards contemplative prayer, some of us will be more naturally wired towards spiritual warfare. I know that when I thought my wife was going to die, I did not want someone to lead us in a meditation technique. I wanted a Pentecostal who believed in healing. We need different charisms, and together we reflect and grow into the likeness of Christ.

As I dive into the underground on my way home, I find myself resolving to challenge myself to explore a wider range of menu items and wondering, uncomfortably, whether I’ve let sleep become an idol. The idea of setting an alarm for the middle of the night and getting up to pray makes me shudder; perhaps I need to reassess my priorities. ‘What do you think, Lord?’ I ask. There’s no audible response coming to me over the noise of the escalators but I sense my constant companion smiling. There’s no doubt I could do better, but in the school of prayer there are no detentions. Remembering this has the effect of stoking my desire to pray. Who knows? Perhaps tomorrow I might get up 15 minutes earlier and we can start from there.

For more information about 24-7 Prayer, visit 24-7prayer.com

