



Challenging Christians to Pray

Prayergram[®]

September- October 2026



WHO'S YOUR INFLUENCER!

Who's like unto our God who reigns on high!

In our social media era, certain individuals are known as **'influencers'**. Today's culture revolves around personalities who promote a 'sandcastle mentality' where fleeting excitement and instant gratification take center stage. It doesn't matter who we are or what we have achieved here on earth, after the last breath a person is silenced forever. People who live outside of Christ will go on living their lives the way they see fit without giving any thoughts to the life to come. In a twinkling of an eye life ends, and the next life begins. Multitudes are now busy, spending all their energy, time and knowledge to prepare for this life which means everything to them, neglecting the most precious thing, their final journey and eternal relationship with God. In our culture of many conveniences, people seem to be very acclimated with fleeting things and perfectly happy without God. Though it is not a sin to care for this life, it is a horrendous mistake to reject God's precious gift of eternal life. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ asked the question, **"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul"?** (Mark 8:36)

It's undeniably obvious, we hear so many voices, but what do they offer! Society offers much but often leaves us unsatisfied; only the Creator comprehends our deeper disillusionment. Even with a wealth of information, people keep searching but rarely feel fulfilled, often experiencing isolation and disconnect from reality because they have rejected God being in the center of their lives. So, they are compelled to resort other means of self-gratification. Man is made in the image of God to have fellowship with Him and since that fellowship was broken in the garden of Eden, man became a restless soul. As in the words of St. Augustine famously stated, **"Oh, Lord, our hearts remain restless until they find rest in You."** Why do many who have achieved great wealth and notoriety in life are still not satisfied and fulfilled in their life? Our God is ever merciful and always lavishing His loving kindness and tender mercies upon us as we fall short. He never leaves us, always willing to help no matter how much effort or time required. God exists beyond time, while humans live within it.

As Christians, how can we navigate our lives in this 'Digital Culture', without abandoning our biblical morals and precepts! It seems we are so inflated with our self-worth and go all out to negate the simplicity of our forefathers or those who have gone before us! Lately, I have been thinking a great deal about the erosion of our cherished values such as kindness, gentleness, nobility, service, meekness, etc. It is no exaggeration to say that this is a selfie generation, and we are in love with ourselves. I hear people talking about how many followers they have on social media platform. It would be nice to hear someone says that they are deeply in love with God rather than being absorbed in the digital world in which they live. Is it any wonder that we are creating a culture of 'anxiety and depression'? Are we seeking instant gratification over

the long-term benefits? For over fifty years, I have consistently emphasized the significance of dedicating time to being in the presence of God, even prior to the advancements in the technology world. Nevertheless, it appears that such perspective is increasingly regarded as outdated and old-fashioned. To maintain our spiritual perspective, our foundation must be built on Christ, the unshakable Rock, regardless of changes in our culture. It's foolishness on our part as Christians to shape the image of the Church into the image of the world. Currently, this is the church's greatest challenge. The jury is out, and some Christians are being persuaded by the world to place the culture above the Church. The case is underway, and the verdict will be interesting to observe.

It's true that the world is changing and some of the changes are very useful to humanity in many ways, but we cannot strictly rely on changing culture without a proper beachhead to land on! May I humbly ask, **What's the point of creating a great civilization if we do not have the moral and spiritual wisdom and fortitude to preserve it?** Preservation is the lifeblood of civilization. Alexander the Great conquered the known world, but became unhappy when he realized there was nothing left to conquer. With the popularity of social media, misinformation and fake news have become a way of life to many who put such things out in the public domain. **This might be an interest to some of you: Satan is the first mis-informer in the world when he devised a brilliant scheme to trap Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. It worked then and it is working today! Coincidence, of course not! This is all by design and make no mistake about it.**

Some might say, look at me, I have been living for myself and don't need anyone's help. I am doing great and very successful in the eyes of my peers. So why should I ask God for any help, and I will be just fine without any supernatural intervention. Such a notion may help bolster one's ego, but the day will come and when we meet God face to face, the question to ponder, **"Did I give any thoughts about God in my life!"** People come and go, sharing their knowledge and wisdom briefly and then disappear, but Christ remains the same throughout. Human beings die, Jesus lives forever because He is the true Light that lightens the entire human race. Beloved, we are not at the mercy of a nation or a culture; we are not bound by an ideology or philosophy or a particular teaching by a person—we are bound and drawn by the love of the Cross, the greatest symbol of love on earth. So, our focus must be on Jesus, the Light of the world that never flickers. Let us turn to Him, follow in His footsteps, and allow Him to guide and inspire us. Let's crown Him as Lord of our lives and worship Him only! Instead of seeking God's guidance, we are constantly on the lookout for the latest heroes who can provide us with some momentary thrills and frills. Our culture is drowning in information, and it is never enough. How much information can a person really take in, and where does it all lead—what is ultimately the end goal? **It is worth to ask, with all the technological advances we have, are we socially, mentally and spiritually better off as human beings in a world of robots and zombies?**

Follow me on 'social media' is today's constant refrain. We are bombarded 24-hours a day to click here, click there and use this app, that app and stop being a human being. In a culture where everyone is seeking short-time fame and notoriety and a compelling desire to follow human heroes, it would be refreshing to hear the One who calls and says, **"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."** (Matthew 11:28-30). We are admonished to follow the Lamb Who was slain before the foundations were laid. Following the Lamb, a Galilean from Nazareth—an obscure and modest village with an estimated population of 200 to 400—was often regarded as socially unacceptable and was viewed unfavorably by members of the ruling class. If I am going to follow someone, I want to make sure that person is truly worthy of following. We are always scouting for human heroes whether they are sports personalities, movie stars, well-known figures and even religious leaders. No one can take the place of our Lord who sustains us through life. If we are influenced by fickle and fallible people rather than the living God, then we are on a slippery slope and going through a mirage. The Living God of heaven and earth alone is worthy of our worship and adoration, as we read in the Scripture about Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet of Israel. **"And Hannah prayed, and said, my heart rejoices in the LORD, mine horn**

is exalted in the LORD...There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God” (1st Samuel 2:1-2).

As a young man I had the privilege of reading about the life of **George Muller**, a remarkable man of ‘faith and prayer,’ who excelled in his love and devotion to Christ. In our changing world, influencers come and go, but those who inspire us through their life and commitment to Christ and His kingdom truly can make a lasting impression. There is a vast difference between influencers and inspirers. Mr. Muller has been an inspiration to many the world over. How do I know this, when I was in Nigeria, West Africa some years ago, several pastors and evangelists told me that Mr. Muller’s exemplary life inspired them to develop a life of faith and prayer! Are you being influenced by a social media personality or deeply inspired by someone who walks with Jesus daily! It is one thing to admire someone but allow them to influence our life is quite something else. For this reason, we refrain from worshipping or praying to the saints and reserve our worship solely for our Lord and king. We need to be very careful who we emulate in life when eternal matters are concerned.

Many voices on ‘social media’ are clamoring for our attention, but what are they promising? There are some who ‘gin up’ division, spread malicious rumors, innuendos, and outrageous remarks based on hearsay. Furthermore, they are engaged in making shocking and outlandish comments that draw more attention, boosting their popularity. Someone has said that **“lies travel around the world twice before truth ever gets out of bed.”** The present day influencing becomes manipulation when it agitates the public with distorted logic, twisted ideology, and mind-numbing idioms. Is it any wonder that people feel disconnected and losing faith, hope and respect for their fellowmen! **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, a victim of Nazi persecution, warned that few can dominate by exploiting the foolishness of many: **“the power of some requires the folly of many.”** No one should control our minds, as they are given to us by God. There is no doubt in my mind that our world needs more role models who can inspire us in the way it helps the betterment of humanity. We seek individuals committed to justice, mercy, love, compassion, integrity and courage. Jesus, our Lord represents life, freedom, hope and a bright future for all. While friends and family may forsake us, God promises, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).** His love is eternal, enduring and everlasting. **That’s the good news!**

---Matthew Skariah

INTERCESSION, A HIGH/HOLY CALLING

Intercession never meant it to be a ‘slurp it down on the run exercise,’ instead, it meant it to be a heartfelt, passionate, ceaseless spiritual exercise that has enormous benefits on this side of eternity. Please don’t ever neglect the precious privilege of prayer, yearn for it and pursue it with all your God-given might and strength! Do not be weary in prayer! Keep interceding continuously. Intercession is immeasurable and incalculable. Eloquent words move men; but intercession offered in true brokenness and humility moves God. A prayerful person is a useful weapon in hand of the living God. Prayer provides support and comfort during difficult times. Wouldn’t it be so easy if we can obtain the power of intercession automatically by the flip of a switch without any disciplinary effort on our part! Prayer is truly an act of worship, and let us bow before Jehovah, the God of our lives and portion forever!

However, I should caution you that being an intercessor can sometime mean living an obscure life. You may be alone, yet you are not alone, because you’ll be ministered to by the Spirit of God, as Elijah was ministered to at the brook Cherith. If someone is called of the Lord to be an intercessor, they set aside their own needs and burdens and carry a deep concern for others’ souls, a weight that only those with similar experience can truly understand. In my humble opinion, perhaps intercession is the most unappreciated ministries of them all because it has no religious glamor or appeal. Intercessors are God’s unsung heroes, and they don’t mind who gets the credit or applause. **They are a breed apart!**

The most effective method of teaching about prayer is simply to engage in prayer. Examples are better than lectures. When it comes to prayer, a seeking soul should avoid all technicalities and excuses. Prayer builds intimacy with our heavenly Father who waits to hear from us. Have you ever experienced the 'power of prayer' without even uttering a word! Yes, I have! God's greatest blessings come through travailing prayer. **My father was not a preacher, but a humble believer whose deep prayer life became his legacy. He rarely used theological terms when praying; instead, his heartfelt sincerity and passion were unmistakable. He rose up very early in the morning to light up the 'prayer furnace' in our home, and I was deeply touched by his example. He is with the Lord now, but I can still feel the strength of his 'prayer-influence' in my life.**

Today, there is no shortage on theological discussions on the topic of prayer, but when it comes to actual fellowship with our Lord, there is such an aversion on the part of some believers. Prayer is the spiritual glue that holds families and nations together in times of social and moral upheaval. Prayer transforms a house into a home where Christ is loved and worshipped preeminently. It is the responsibility of the fathers to lead their family into a prayer chamber like our Master did. Never doubt the spiritual impact of praying fathers and mothers on their children! I plead with you my brothers and sisters, let us rise under the Lordship of Christ and take our proper place of prayer in our home! **Someone has very wisely said, "As the home goes so goes the nation!"**

Intercession is truly an act of worship, and intercessors are keepers of the flame. They seek no recognition or praise; they simply stand as watchmen on the wall and their mission is to stand in the gap for all those who are in spiritual need. **"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10).** Though it can be challenging and require patience, you can be confident that God listens and respond to our prayers in His own time and way. The passing of great many intercessors leaves a big gap to be filled; but whosoever answers the call of God in this vital ministry can be assured that they will have a very special place at the heart of God. Dear friends, let's pray as Jesus instructed us: "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). The days of discussions on the topic of prayer are over and done with, and it is time that we answer God's call with urgency and clarity. If you feel called to intercession, join others dedicated to praying for our nation and the world during this time of moral and social challenge. It's a high and holy calling! A sobering responsibility indeed! I know the Lord will bless you for it.

---Matthew Skariah



PRAYER IS THE MIGHTIEST FORCE -- 2 Chronicles 7:14

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