

When You Need
to Move a
Mountain

Keys to
PRAYING with POWER

Linda Evans Shepherd



a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Shepherd, Linda E., 1957– author.

Title: When you need to move a mountain : keys to praying with power / Linda Evans Shepherd.

Description: Grand Rapids, MI : Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group, [2019] | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018045115 | ISBN 9780800723903 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Intercessory prayer—Christianity. | Prayer—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV210.3 .S54774 2019 | DDC 248.3/2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018045115>

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Published in association with the Books & Such Literary Agency.

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19 20 21 22 23 24 25 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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To my wonderful team of intercessors!

Thank you for all your prayers for me, this book, and those who read it. You have carried me on the wings of your prayers. I cherish and value every one of you.

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Introduction

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

I am like a prayer investigator.

I had to be because I had a mountain to move.

After a violent car crash put my eighteen-month-old baby into a coma, I needed to know what it would take to touch my daughter through the power of prayer.

Since that fateful day, I've made it my mission to understand prayer. I've spent hours scouring the Word to discover and understand the prayer secrets it contains, and most importantly, I've prayed. I've battled. I've contended. I've sought God. I've claimed promises, and I've prayed through roadblocks. I've experienced breakthroughs and felt the heartache when God says no. I've worked with prayer teams and prayer partners, fought the enemy,

and prayed with countless people. And yes! I have seen God move. I have seen God answer prayer.

As I share what I've learned, I'll show you how you can become not only a person of prayer but also a person who can use prayer to reverse the works of the enemy, to save lives, to be blessed with provision, and to flow into God's best for your life. If you take this journey with me, you will be encouraged by amazing stories and the truths hidden in God's Word, and you will pray. Together we will use prayer to move the mountains that block destinies, health, provision, and the salvation and welfare of loved ones.

Are you in?

I hope so, because through the pages of this book, you will discover that you are a mountain mover. You will join with the move-the-mountain prayer team of readers who will pray for you and your loved ones as you pray for them. You will realize your particular prayer giftings and discover that all things are possible through Christ, especially when you pray. Let's pray now.

Dear Lord,

I am in! I want to do all I can to make a difference for the sake of my loved ones, a lost world, and your kingdom. I want to stand in the gap with you, for such a time as this. Help me learn the deeper secrets of intercessory prayer so I can. Open my heart and the eyes of my faith so I can see all that you want to show me.

In Jesus's name, amen.

1

The Secrets of Intercessory Prayer

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4:2

Imagine this: enemy troops are planning to march down your street looking for homes to attack. Though a protective brick wall surrounds your house, you worry. *Will it stand against an assault?*

That depends. What exactly is holding your wall together? If you did not use a binding agent, like a strong mortar, your bricks could easily tumble to the ground. The enemy could breach your wall with a simple push.

But let's say you're a wise builder. You've carefully spread a bonding mortar between every brick, every gap, to create a solid fortress your enemy cannot topple. You were thorough because you knew if the enemy came to your home, he would search for

weaknesses or gaps in your wall. If the enemy found such a flaw, he would use it to break through and rush in to steal, kill, and destroy.

Intercessory prayer is like the mortar in a protective brick wall. Prayer binds God's promises into a fortress of protection. Prayer not only fills each gap so we can keep the enemy out but it also locks down the secret passages the enemy had planned to use in his attack. The real beauty of intercessory prayer is that when we pray, we are uniting with Jesus. We stand with him as he stands in the gap interceding for us, our families, our loved ones, our concerns, and our world.

According to vocabulary.com, "The verb *intercede* comes from the Latin root words *inter*, meaning 'between,' and *cedere*, meaning 'go.'" The site further explains, "Acting as a go-between is exactly what you do when you intercede. . . . Sometimes people pray that God will intercede in their lives, meaning bring change that improves a situation."¹

This is a great explanation of the term, but it doesn't explain every mystery of prayer. Part of that mystery is that we intercede with a God we can't control. We are confused when we don't get exactly what we asked for every time we pray. We lament, "If God really loved me, he would do *all* I asked."

When we fall into this line of thinking, we forget one thing: God is our Creator, not our puppet. We may have been made in his image, but we are not an exact replica of *all* that he is. For who among us has the ability to create a thing as small as a bumblebee, much less as huge as a 160-ton blue whale? Yet how marvelous it is that though we don't control God, the God of the universe *amazingly* listens to and works through our prayers. It's no wonder God is worthy of our praise.

Max Lucado said, "You may not understand the mystery of prayer. You don't need to. But this much is clear: Actions in heaven begin when someone prays on earth."² I think actions in heaven

equate with miracles on earth, like the time my friend Kari prayed over a pot of spaghetti bubbling in the school kitchen. She'd expected only fifteen sets of parents to show up for the spaghetti dinner fundraiser that night, so she'd skimped at the grocery store, buying as few supplies as possible. After all, her small Christian school had only fifteen students, so there was no need to go all out for the fundraiser, not if she wanted to raise money for needed supplies. How surprised she was when wave after wave of hungry families showed up for dinner. Each time a new surge of people repopulated the tables, Kari ran back to the kitchen to pray over the still-bubbling spaghetti pot. The funny thing was that even after feeding 115 people that evening, she had enough leftovers to send bags of food home with the families and to feed the fifteen students another meal at school the next day. How could her meager supplies feed so many?

Because of prayer—answered prayer, to be exact.³

Intercessory Prayer Partners with God

You're reading this book because of your love for others, or because you need God to move in your own life, which is why you're exploring your calling into intercessory prayer. You already know your call is a few steps up from simply saying grace at dinner or reciting the ever popular "Help me!" prayer. You know your prayers can make a difference, and you want to figure out just how to use prayer to push away the mountains that stand in your way or in the way of a loved one's health, mental wellness, provision, salvation, or breakthrough. You want to discover how to lock the enemy out of your life as well as the lives of your loved ones.

You also want to discover your prayer giftings and explore how you are most anointed to pray. But even if you know your prayer

warrior gifts, always remember this rule: though you can't control God through prayer, you can partner with him in prayer. Author Sheri Schofield explained, "Intercessory prayer is handing people and situations over to God for help and walking alongside those people in God's presence."⁴

That's it exactly. Intercession is pushing the enemy out and inviting God's presence in. It's trusting that God will change troubles into blessings.

This reminds me of the time a group of friends went to Jesus with a request on behalf of a friend. The story starts with an unexplained tragedy. Maybe this friend fell from a tree, tripped over his dog, or perhaps was run over by a Roman chariot. We don't know the details, but we do know this man's resulting paralysis was the very thing that led him to the Savior.

Of course, everyone in Galilee had heard of Jesus; he was the young rabbi who'd fed thousands with a few fish and a couple loaves of bread. These friends may have even known people whom Jesus had healed. Maybe that's why they were so certain that if they brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus, their friend could be healed too.

When they heard Jesus was teaching in a home in the town of Capernaum, they carried their friend to see him. How disappointed they were when they found the house already filled to the rafters with people. There was no way to get inside. There was no way to reach Jesus—well, except for one.

These four friends climbed onto the roof of the house and dug a hole through the sun-hardened mud mix of twigs and branches. Can you imagine what it must have been like for the fifty or so people crammed inside? Suddenly, they were pelted with mud clods, and as they watched, a hole opened in the ceiling and sunlight streamed onto Jesus.

I can just see these four friends lowering their paralyzed friend to Jesus's feet. Their actions took guts. But they had the resolve

to act because they had faith; they knew Jesus could change their friend's life.

Was Jesus put off by their brazen act? Not at all. Jesus was so impressed by their faith that he told the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven."

Can you hear the throats clearing around the room? Can you see the eyes rolling? Did you notice the sideways glances darting through the crowd as they collectively judged Jesus? "Forgive sin? Who does this rabbi think he is?"

"Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up, take your mat and walk"? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home'" (Mark 2:8–11).

The crowd gasped as this man stood to his feet. They knew this fellow's story, and they knew Jesus had healed him.

What does this mean for us? It means we need to realize who Jesus is and what he can do. For starters, Jesus is God's Son, our intercessor before the throne, as Romans 8:34 explains: "Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us" (NLT).

Jesus prays for us because he loves us and wants us to have life and to have it abundantly. He wants to see us healed and whole. Knowing who Jesus is gives us the guts, the faith, to make the extra effort to hurdle any obstacle that would dare to block us from our Savior. How wonderful it is that we can use prayer to place our concerns and our loved ones at the feet of our Master.

You know what the friends of the paralytic knew. Only one touch or one word from Jesus is needed to change lives, hearts, and situations.

Be Ready to Be Part of a Miracle

Joshua 1:9 reminds us of God’s continued presence: “This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (NLT). God is always with us, and he is always ready to hear our prayers. John explained it like this: “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 John 5:14 ESV).

Not only does God hear us, but he also answers prayer. I can’t guarantee you exactly how he will answer, for the perfect answer to your prayer may not come as you imagine. This is because God’s perspective is often different from our perspective. His answers will reflect his best solution, whether we understand his answers or not.

Learning to trust God is a key part of intercessory prayer, but when we do, we can be part of a miracle.

This is exactly what happened to JoAnne when she found herself intensely interceding for a woman named Deb who had a deadly disease. JoAnne said, “I was not close to Deb, but God told me to pray for her. So for the next two hours of that Tuesday evening, I prayed for her healing from every angle I could think of. Finally, I prayed, ‘Lord, if Deb is sick because she has sinned against anyone, I come to you on behalf of that person she sinned against and forgive her!’”

JoAnne paused to wonder if she could forgive on someone else’s behalf, but after she said those final words, she somehow felt peace and knew God was finally allowing her to stop praying for Deb.

The next Sunday Deb stood up in church and said that last Tuesday night she was in the hospital. The doctors told her she wouldn’t live until morning. But suddenly, the Lord healed her! She was completely cured.

“I later told Deb about how I’d prayed for her. She gasped and said, ‘Now I know why I had that disease!’

“I told our pastor about the prayer too. He frowned. ‘Deb has been the leader in a group of women gossiping about you, JoAnne! Maybe you hadn’t heard, but Deb’s told everyone in our church that we are having an affair.’

“I was stunned by Deb’s lie as much as I was by her healing. I was also stunned that God had led me to personally forgive her even before I knew her offense was against me. Remarkably, when I, the one she had wronged, forgave her, God healed her.”⁵

It turns out that through God’s leading, JoAnne’s Spirit-led prayer for Deb’s forgiveness was not directed at anyone but herself. JoAnne was the very one who needed to forgive Deb. JoAnne’s forgiveness was indeed the key to Deb’s miracle.

Holocaust prison camp survivor Corrie ten Boom said, “We never know how God will answer our prayers, but we can expect that He will get us involved in His plan for the answer. If we are true intercessors, we must be ready to take part in God’s work on behalf of the people for whom we pray.”⁶

The authors of *Trip Around the Sun* said:

You are someone else’s miracle. Corrie ten Boom’s plan was to be an apprentice in her father’s work. She wanted to be a watchmaker. God’s plan was for Corrie ten Boom to be an apprentice in her heavenly Father’s work. He wanted her to be a history changer. She went from being a prisoner of war in a German death camp to a beacon of forgiveness and hope in war-torn Germany. She went from living out the first forty-eight years of her life in the same childhood bedroom of her father’s home, to traveling the world, spreading the message of life and light to millions.⁷

When you choose to intercede, as Corrie ten Boom did, you may not know how God will answer or the exact impact your prayer will have, but you may be part of a miracle.

Overcoming Prayer Barriers

Perhaps, like many people, you have some concerns about going “all in” in prayer. I understand. The enemy works overtime to prevent us from understanding the following:

- Our prayers do move mountains.
- God wants us to pray.
- God calls us to pray.

Our Prayers Do Move Mountains

Have you ever been guilty of offering to pray but forgetting to do it? I have too. But what if we believed our prayers could have a real impact? Believing that prayer changes things helps us remember to go to our knees.

What if I told you to jump out of your chair and shove the person next to you? You’d probably roll your eyes and ignore me, right? However, if you believed the action could save a life, you might be inclined to do it. For example, let’s say your own child was standing in the path of a speeding bullet and you had a chance to save their life with a simple shove. I’m guessing you wouldn’t hesitate to leap into action.

Unfortunately, unbelief is often the reason many people don’t pray. They mull to themselves, *It probably won’t change anything, right? Besides, I’m cozy right where I am, and to be honest, God already knows everyone’s needs. Who am I to interfere with his plans?*

But how would our mind-set change if we understood that prayer can save a life, bring a soul to salvation, heal a marriage, or pull someone out of a lifestyle of drugs and heartache? Maybe the solution is to practice *more* prayer so we can experience *more* results so we can see that our prayers *do* move mountains. I have

to ask, with so much trouble swirling around us, what's stopping us from pushing into prayer immediately? Let's start by praying now.

Dear Lord,

I ask that you show me who you want me to pray for. Please open my eyes to the difference my prayers can make, the mountains my prayers can move. I invite you, God, into the details of my life as well as the lives of my friends and family. Push out the enemy. Shine your truth and evaporate lies. Move mountains. Bring hope and redemption. Change things for your good and your purposes. Use my prayers to make a difference.

In Jesus's name, amen.

God Wants Us to Pray

How amazing it is that the God of the universe wants us to pray. This is news to many people who think prayer somehow bothers God, taking up his valuable time. People have told me, "Oh, I don't want to trouble God with my needs. There are so many people who have problems much worse than mine. I can handle my little worries by myself."

Don't miss the boat. God is omnipresent, meaning he's always present. He's in the now, he's in the past, and he's in the future. He's even outside of time. So when we talk to him in prayer, it's not an "attention competition" with fellow intercessors. When we pray, we are not bumping anyone out of their spot in line. God always listens to everyone all the time.

God is very interested in the details of our lives and the lives of the people we love. He's so interested that he wants to be included in all the details, even the little ones. He is a jealous God (Exod. 34:14), meaning he loves us and wants to be the center of our

lives. This is why he wants us to bring all our concerns to him, for ourselves and for our loved ones.

In the Old Testament, we read about a prophetic priest named Ezekiel who was sent to God's exiled people. These people were suffering greatly at their own hand as a result of their sin. God told Ezekiel a startling thing that proves God wants us to pray.

God said to Ezekiel, "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one" (Ezek. 22:30). This is heartbreaking. No one was there to pray for God's people, and for this reason, many people suffered, even unto death.

Second Chronicles also records a similar message from God: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (7:14).

God wants us to intercede because our prayers really matter.

Dear Lord,

I know you want me to pray. Use me to make a difference, to build the wall, to push back the darkness. I humble myself and seek your face and turn from my wicked ways. I will hear from heaven and you will forgive my sins. Thank you that my prayers really matter.

In Jesus's name, amen.

God Calls Us to Pray

God called his prophet Elijah to pray for something only God himself could do: that a drought would scorch the land. God wanted to use this drought to get King Ahab's undivided attention. James explained what happened: "Elijah was human like us. Yet, when he prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell on the ground

for three-and-a-half years. Then he prayed again. It rained, and the ground produced crops” (5:17–18 GW).

Couldn’t God have turned his own waterworks off and on without Elijah’s help? Sure. But he didn’t because he wanted Elijah to be part of the miracle. God called Elijah to pray so God could answer his prayers.

Author Dutch Sheets said, “The only logical answer to the question of why Elijah needed to pray is simply that *God has chosen to work through people*. Even when it is God Himself initiating something, earnestly desiring to do it, He still needs us to ask.”⁸

God *needs* us to ask? Really?

I believe this is part of the mystery of prayer, a divine work of love based on a relationship with a God who loved us first and a God we love right back. When we are in relationship with him, we begin to move together. God answers the one who asks, the one who prays at the urging of the God who answers. Prayer then becomes a picture of love from the Creator to his creation and from his creation to the Creator.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for loving me. I love you right back. Help us to move as one. Put people on my heart you want me to pray for and remind me to pray. Give me your power to be obedient. Thank you for calling me to pray as I draw even nearer to you.

In Jesus’s name, amen.

INTERCESSION ADVICE

I’ve interviewed several wise intercessors and am so impressed with the breadth of their wisdom and experience. Each chapter

includes some of their best advice and insights for prayer that moves mountains.

Sheri Schofield advised, “Get to know God intimately.” She explained how she did. “After my husband was badly disabled, I would ask God to heal Tim and also to help me know how to raise our children up in him. I prayed this for about a year. God did not fully heal my husband. But he gave Tim the ability to work and support the family. He gave me wisdom on how to raise the children—pretty much on my own. How thankful I am that our two children grew up to be strong, compassionate Christians serving Jesus.

“During my hours of prayer, I experienced the presence of God like never before. One day I asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit, whatever that looked like. I wanted all of God, all that could be had this side of heaven. No reservations! I felt the Father’s presence on one side of me, Jesus on the other side, and the Holy Spirit like a warm breeze blowing in a whirlwind around me. I was so filled with joy that I laughed and cried at the same time. I entered into his presence fully, and that has brought me into a place of worship and dependence on God like never before.”⁹

Sheri’s tip is a wise one: go deeper into God and seek more of the Holy Spirit’s presence in your life. Don’t be afraid! Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, we have no power. With him, we have his power, his strength, and his insights—power, strength, and insights we could never have on our own.

All the heroes of our faith have known the Holy Spirit’s presence, including the prophets of old, Jesus himself, his disciples, and Christian leaders such as Billy Graham, who explained, “The Holy Spirit gives you power to serve Christ. ‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses’ (Acts 1:8). I couldn’t do the work I am doing without the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

The Christian leaders of today who are making a real difference for Christ rely on the Holy Spirit's presence and power. So can we, even if we don't consider ourselves a leader. That's because the Holy Spirit is for *all* believers who count Jesus as their Savior. Second Corinthians 1:21–22 says, "God establishes us, together with you, in a relationship with Christ. He has also anointed us. In addition, he has put his seal of ownership on us and has given us the Spirit as his guarantee" (GW).

Every born-again Christian receives the presence of the Spirit of God when they invite Christ into their life and ask for forgiveness of sins. However, like Sheri, we can always have *more* of the Holy Spirit. Don't hold back. Pray this simple prayer: "I need you, Holy Spirit. I need more of you in my life. Fill me to the brim with your love, your power, and your presence. Give me all that you have for me. In the name of Jesus, I ask."

DRAW YOUR SWORD

We'll conclude each chapter with a time of prayer as we unite to pray as an international move-the-mountain prayer team, reaching through time and locations to create powerful prayers for one another as well as for our loved ones. But before we pray, let's study the weapons of our warfare: promises from Scripture that we will use as we pray.

The first Scripture sword we should draw is the prayer Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9–13:

Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one. (NLT)

READY YOUR PRAYER STATIONS

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for inviting me to pray. Thank you for standing in the gap with me as I approach the throne of God. Together we unite to form a mighty move-the-mountain prayer team. We pray with our swords drawn and with and in the power of your Holy Spirit. We know you are in heaven. We want your name to be holy and pledge that we will keep your name holy. We pray that your kingdom comes soon! We ask that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Thank you that it is your will that we become more fervent intercessors. We pledge to serve you in this way. Show us and teach us to pray with your love and passion. Give us food and provision for today. Forgive our sins and forgive those who have sinned against us. Help us to not allow sin into our lives but rescue us from its grip. Rescue us from all the schemes of the evil one. We lift one another up as we read this book together and pray that you open the eyes of our understanding and teach us to pray.

In Jesus's name, amen.