

The  
Hour That  
Changes  
the World

*A Practical Plan for Personal Prayer*

Dick Eastman



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To  
the memory  
of a wonderful friend  
Jean Baumgardner  
who 25 years ago  
inspired the writing  
of this book.

May God honor Jean's memory  
with a glorious new army  
of mighty praying warriors!

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# Before You Begin

## *Thoughts from Joni Eareckson Tada*

It was the summer of 1984 and I was catching up with an old friend over lunch. When she asked me about my journey with the Lord Jesus, I smiled and replied, “I am convinced there’s so much more to know, so much more to enjoy and understand about the Lord, and I’ve been asking Him to show me how to go deeper.”

My friend grinned and said, “Joni, I just happen to have something that may be an answer to your prayer.” She then pulled out of her handbag a copy of *The Hour That Changes the World*.

At first I was skeptical. It was such an unpretentious-looking little book. After I read it, however, I realized its insights and directives were *just* what I needed. The following week I made a copy of the page with the prayer plan, asked my husband to tape it to my bedroom wall unit, and then every night I dived into praise and waiting, confession and Scripture praying, watching, intercession, and all the rest. Little did I know that I was embarking on the most marvelous, awe-inspiring adventure of my Christian walk.

From that time on, my bed became an altar of praise. As a quadriplegic I cannot sit in my wheelchair too long, and I used to resent the early-to-bed routine. But when I began

to see my bed as a prayer platform, when I realized that lying down gave me a “looking-up” position (a great prayer stance!), I started to look forward to 8:30 P.M.

The hours I spent communing with the Lord Jesus catapulted me into a whole new dimension of joy in the Lord. Those hours—and many hours since—have ushered me into the deep recesses of my Savior’s heart. My time of prayer became the hour that changed not only my world but the world of our mission at Joni and Friends as we strive to reach for Christ thousands of people around the globe with disabilities.

I am sure this explains why, years later, I always keep a couple of extra copies of Dick Eastman’s little masterpiece on my office shelf. I do so for those occasions when my conversation with a visitor to our office turns to deeper and more personal things in life. It happened not long ago when a young college student asked, “How can I know Jesus better? How can I make a difference in the world?” Sometimes it can be a tired saint who wonders, *How can I regain my first love?*

*The Hour That Changes the World* may appear small and modest, but don’t let its size fool you. Full of biblical insights about prayer, packed with testimonies of prayer warriors from years past, brimming with practical suggestions that will help you carve out a purposeful time of praise and intercession, Dick Eastman’s book is arguably the most significant book on prayer written in modern times. It may look small, but in every way it is definitely *large*.

It is a hurting world around us, and this poor planet, splitting apart at the seams, needs prayer. From Afghanistan to Africa, hurting people need someone who will intercede for them. Even here in America—from schoolteachers to hairstylists, from grocers to gas station attendants, from policemen to the people over your backyard fence—our world is desperate for a prayerful touch. Together may we seek the Lord in prayer as to how we can fit into His strategy to reach

Thoughts from Joni Eareckson Tada

for Christ those who are helpless and hopeless. And in so doing may we discover that our hours in praise, confession, and intercession change not only the world beyond us . . . but *our* world, too.

Joni Eareckson Tada  
Agoura Hills, California

# A Quarter-Century of Blessing

## *Thoughts from the Author*

I grew up singing the old hymn “Draw Me Nearer,” and particularly recall the stanza that begins “O the pure delight of a single hour that before Thy throne I spend.” Yet it was not until my early thirties that I discovered how this delight could touch every day that I lived, in a practical way. That discovery changed my prayer life.

Moved by Christ’s appeal to Peter in Matthew 26:40, “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (NKJV), I embarked on a journey of blessing that has touched every day since.

Twenty-five years ago this simple challenge to set aside an hour a day to be with the Lord, in His Word, was born. It resulted from those early days of seeking to develop a consistent, daily, devotional hour. Because of a special burden for world evangelization, my hour included a plan to pray for the nations each day, thus becoming a daily hour that let me partner with God in changing our world.

It is with my deep gratitude to the Lord for His blessing that this special twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *The Hour That Changes the World* is being published. I have been encouraged that some fifty printings of this book have been released in numerous languages over these twenty-five years.

I believe God is raising up an entirely new generation of faithful, fervent warriors of worship and intercession who will truly change our world through their prayers. If they are like me when I started out, they will appreciate a few guidelines to help them begin—and to stay faithful. I pray these pages will help.

In addition to the hundreds of thousands who have read this simple book, the circle of prayer, central to this study (with twelve prayer focuses of five minutes each), has been reprinted in magazines, newsletters, prayer guides, and church bulletins. It has also been photocopied all over the world, often presented to groups with accompanying teaching, even in such places as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Jordan, and Cuba. This training has touched people of various languages, including Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Swahili, Lingala, Farsi, Hindi, Indonesian, Tagalog, Nepalese, Burmese, Thai, Korean, and Vietnamese, as well as more familiar languages like German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian (to name only several).

Now the book is becoming a helpful tool for those joining continuous “Walls of Prayer.” In churches and communities, believers are committing at least one different hour a week in prayer to fill all 168 hours with nonstop praying. (I explain this concept more fully in chapter 14 of this special edition.)

It seems that God is clearly calling His people everywhere to prayer, and as Matthew Henry said generations ago, “Whenever God is preparing to do something great in the earth, He first sets His people a-praying!” Truly something great from God must be at hand! The Church is certainly praying as never before.

I am particularly grateful to Baker Book House for first publishing this challenge 25 years ago and to Chosen Books for releasing this special 25th anniversary edition. Most of all, I am grateful to God for the many people I have run into over the years—like Joni Eareckson Tada, who kindly

shares her testimony in the foreword—who have experienced how these biblical steps of prayer have helped them get started and keep going in daily prayer.

For me, I cannot imagine a day without the worship and wonder of waiting on God's presence for a single hour. I invite you to share in this joy. It could change your life, and your world as well. I'm convinced it will make your day!

Dick Eastman  
International President  
Every Home for Christ

# 1



## Prayer

### *The Slender Nerve of Power*

*“Oh! One hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world.*

David Brainerd (1718–1747)

Prayer is the divine enigma—that marvelous mystery hidden behind the cloud of God’s omnipotence. Nothing is beyond the reach of prayer because God Himself is the focus of prayer. E. M. Bounds agreed when he wrote, “Prayer is the contact of a living soul with God. In prayer, God stoops to kiss man, to bless man, and to aid in everything that God can devise or man can need.”<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon adds, “Prayer is the slender nerve that moveth the muscles of omnipotence.”<sup>2</sup>

Prayer! What exactly is it? Basically, prayer is the simplest act a creature of God can perform. It is divine communion with our heavenly Father. Prayer does not require advanced education. Knowledge is not a prerequisite to engage in it. Only an act of the will is required to pray.

But prayer is more. Prayer is the vision of the believer. It gives eyes to our faith. In prayer we see beyond ourselves and focus spiritual eyes on God's infinite power.

Prayer is also man's ultimate indication of trust in his heavenly Father. Only in prayer do we surrender our problems completely to God and ask for divine intervention.

But, sadly, few make prayer a part of their daily experience. They pray only if extra time is available or if their emotions draw them to prayer. Oh, that Christians would see prayer in its proper perspective!

Prayer is not optional. On the contrary, it is quite obligatory. Where there is an absence of prayer there will be an absence of power. Where there is frequency of prayer there will be a continuing display of God's power. God said, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

## The Searching Instinct

But where do we begin in our quest for spiritual power? We need only follow the instinct of the heart to pray. This searching instinct fills the human spirit. The moment we turn to Christ it comes alive. We suddenly yearn to fellowship with the Father. As Charles Spurgeon said, "To seek aid in time of distress from a supernatural Being is an instinct of human nature. I believe in the truthfulness of this instinct, and that man prays because there is something in prayer. As when the Creator gives His creature the power of thirst, it is because water exists to meet its thirst; and as when He creates hunger there is food to correspond to the appetite; so when He inclines men to pray it is because prayer has a corresponding blessing connected with it."<sup>3</sup>

This prayer instinct is somewhat difficult to understand and to explain. Somehow, the simple act of prayer links a sovereign God to a finite man. When man prays, God responds. Difficult situations change. Unexplained miracles occur.

But when we neglect the closet of prayer we remove ourselves from the focus of God's power. Dr. E. Stanley Jones explains, "In prayer you align yourselves to the purpose and power of God and He is able to do things through you that He couldn't do otherwise. For this is an open universe, where some things are left open, contingent upon our doing them. If we do not do them, they will never be done. For God has left certain things open to prayer—things which will never be done except as we pray."<sup>4</sup>

## Men of Prayer

Look again at the lives of God's warriors from past generations. What qualified men like Wesley, Luther, Finney, or Brainerd for their high calling in Christ? J. C. Ryle, the nineteenth-century Bishop of Liverpool, provides a worthy answer: "I have read the lives of many eminent Christians who have been on earth since the Bible days. Some of them, I see, were rich, and some poor. Some were learned, some unlearned. Some of them were Episcopalians, and some Christians of other denominations. Some were Calvinists, and some were Arminians. Some have loved to use a liturgy, and some chose to use none. But one thing, I see, they all had in common. They all have been men of prayer."<sup>5</sup>

No matter our position in life or natural abilities, to be mightily used of God we must first understand a fundamental principle of spiritual power. What we do for the Lord is entirely dependent upon what we are in the Lord. Further, what we are in the Lord wholly depends upon what

we receive from the Lord. And what we receive from the Lord is directly proportional to the time we spend alone with the Lord in prayer.

To spend little time with Jesus is to accomplish little in Jesus. Simply stated, there is no *true* spiritual growth apart from the devotional habit. Consistency in prayer is the evidence of true commitment. As David Hubbard shares, “Our prayer expresses our commitment to Christ. By talking to God we affirm our basic decision to depend on Him.”<sup>6</sup>

If I seldom talk with God, it indicates He plays a secondary role in my life. Soon the world commands more of my attention than does God. Adam Clarke warns, “Apostasy begins in the closet. No man ever backslid from the life and power of Christianity who continued constant and fervent in private prayer. He who prays without ceasing is likely to rejoice evermore.”<sup>7</sup>

## The Gift of Time

Once we determine that prayer is important, our spiritual battles begin. Professor Hallesby explains in his classic book *Prayer*, “The first and decisive battle in conjunction with prayer is the conflict which arises when we are to make arrangements to be alone with God every day.”<sup>8</sup>

The moment we determine to pray daily, Satan fills our path with distracting hindrances. Job responsibilities increase. The children demand more time. It seems we are more weary than usual.

As Dr. Hallesby further suggests, “The carnal mind will always instinctively and automatically mobilize every possible reason it can possibly conceive for not praying at a particular time. For example, you are too busy; your mind is too preoccupied; your heart is not inclined toward prayer; later on you will have more time, your mind will be more

calm and collected, and you will be able to pray in a more devotional frame of mind. Before we know it, the entire day is gone, and we have not had a single quiet hour alone with Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

Carefully mark this in your mind: *It is possible to make time for prayer!* Consider Susanna Wesley. The mother of nineteen children, including John and Charles, Susanna Wesley still found time to pray daily. This godly saint seldom gave the Lord less than a full hour each day for prayer.

“But I have no place to get away for prayer!” some might object. Susanna Wesley, likewise, had no specific place for prayer. So, at her chosen time for spiritual exercise she would take her apron and pull it over her face. Her children were instructed never to disturb “mother” when she was praying in her apron.

Like Susanna Wesley we must *make* time for prayer every day. Until we do, prayer will never become the force God intends it to be in our daily walk. Only as we apply our knowledge of prayer to the actual practice of prayer will we discover the practical power of prayer.

Fletcher of Madeley, a fellow worker with John Wesley, illustrates the importance of making prayer practical. This dedicated warrior had a most unusual conclusion to many of his lectures. Often, after discussing themes on prayer and spiritual growth, Fletcher would say to his students, “That is the theory; now will those who want the practice come along up to my room!”

Often all of Fletcher’s students would quietly follow this godly saint to his room for one or two hours of actual practice in the art of prayer. They knew the secret was in “doing,” not merely in “knowing.”

Prayer is much more than mere theoretical power—it is practical power. But to tap this practical power we must willingly sacrifice much time. Samuel Chadwick cautions, “In these days there is not time to pray; but without time, and a

lot of it, we shall never learn to pray. It ought to be possible to give God one hour out of twenty-four all to Himself.”<sup>10</sup>

## A Pattern for Praying

To be effective our sixty minutes with God should be carefully arranged. Systematic prayer adds health to the devotional habit. It helps us get started and keeps us going. Most tasks in life are accomplished systematically. In fact, without a systematic approach to life, many goals would remain unreachd.

The same is true with prayer. The devotional exercise needs careful planning and preparation to function properly. Harold Lindsell cautions, “Prayer does not come naturally to men. It must be learned. Learning to pray . . . includes knowledge of the laws governing prayer as well as experience gained in the practice of prayer. Prayer must be nourished and cultivated if it is to grow.”<sup>11</sup>

Scripture is filled with numerous concepts related to prayer that should form the basis of the devotional habit. *The Hour That Changes the World* is an attempt to present these major elements so each may be applied systematically, on a daily basis.

Although each element is clearly based on Scripture, the particular order in which they are employed may vary. To spend five minutes on each of the twelve aspects of prayer will take exactly one hour. However, some prayer warriors may desire to spend more time on certain elements than others. On occasion only eight or nine of the twelve elements may be included during your devotional hour.

Especially be careful not to become a slave to any “prayer system.” Indeed, prayer is not a system at all but the development of a relationship between man and God. The highest goal of the devotional habit is to strengthen this relationship.

## Prayer Works

When the question surfaces, “Why pray?” a twofold answer must be our response. First, because *Jesus calls us to prayer*. Secondly, because *prayer works*.

How well the author recalls the impact of a personal experience concerning the first reason for engaging in daily prayer. I had always believed God answers prayer, but my prayer life was never consistent. During a devotional transformation, I was gripped with the realization that Jesus asked His disciples only one question specifically related to the subject of prayer. During His intense experience in Gethsemane, Christ approached His sleeping disciples. Speaking first to Peter, Jesus asked, “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40 NKJV).

Suddenly I realized Jesus was speaking to *me*. I, too, was a follower of Jesus. I was being challenged to make a daily sacrifice of at least one hour of my time specifically for prayer. It was my choice. No one would force me. I could either sleep or pray. I chose the latter—a decision I shall never regret. Although the battles have sometimes been difficult, the victories have always been sweet.

But there is a second reason why daily prayer is profitable. *Prayer works!* Dr. Walter Judd, missionary to China, frequently enjoyed sharing his prayer experiences from missionary days. Of these experiences the doctor related, “There would come into my spirit something that supported and helped steady me, gave me confidence and assurance during the day. I can’t explain it. I can’t explain how some of the food I ate tonight for supper becomes brain, some blood, some bone, but I haven’t stopped eating just because I can’t explain it! In the same way, I can’t explain this. It is not in the realm of explanation yet, or of logical proof. It *is* in the realm of demonstration; prayer works.”<sup>12</sup>

America’s Attorney General, John Ashcroft, visited President George W. Bush several weeks after the tragic events

of September 11, 2001. With him was a long-time friend. The friend told the President, “My mother is ninety years old and she prays for you every day.”

A tear came to the eyes of the President as he took the man by his arm. “You tell your dear mother two things for me: First, it’s working. Second, don’t stop!”

From the first pages of Genesis to the last words of Revelation we see scriptural evidence that God answers prayer. Bishop J. C. Ryle adds these insights: “Prayer has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air, earth and water. Prayer opened the Red Sea. Prayer brought water from the rock and bread from Heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still. Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah’s sacrifice. Prayer overthrew the army of Sennacherib. Prayer has healed the sick. Prayer has raised the dead. Prayer has procured the conversion of countless souls.”<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, all of God’s Word makes it clear that nothing lies beyond the potential of prayer. But a key question awaits all who claim Christ as King: Are we ready to tap into prayer’s potential by making this devotional discipline a passionate daily priority?

## Accepting the Challenge

Would you consider giving God a daily, sacrificial gift of time? Not just a few spare minutes here or there, but a substantial gift—perhaps even as much as sixty minutes every day? It would be time spent alone with God in personal worship, prayer, and the reading of His Word.

Before you cry “Impossible!” and toss this book aside, please turn to page 27 and look briefly at the diagram. It shows a basic, workable plan for daily prayer.

This plan is designed to place special emphasis on affecting the world we live in through various aspects of prayer.

When properly focused, prayer does more than just change one's life. Prayer reaches out in love to our neighbors and the nations and says, "I care!"

*"But why set one hour daily as my goal?"*

The most reasonable answer, as stated earlier, is that Jesus used this time frame. It was in a lonely garden under a heavy Judean sky that Jesus pleaded with His disciples, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40 NKJV).

Our Lord knew that prayer is the only answer to our daily confrontations with the enemy. This is why, when reading the gospels, we constantly find Jesus praying. He prayed among the hypocrites in the temple, in crowds, on hillsides cluttered with disciples, in a crowded upper room, and alone on mountains outside Jerusalem. Prayer was more than a part of Christ's life, it *was* His life.

Sometimes Jesus spent whole nights praying. In His moment of greatest need, He asked His disciples to watch with Him for just one hour; but it was night and the temptation for sleep was too great. The sheep were sleeping and the Shepherd had to wage His war alone!

*"But how can anyone possibly pray an entire hour?"* is another recurring question. It was a question I, too, had to answer from the moment I determined to personally accept Christ's call to "watch" with Him daily for at least one hour.

Seeking an answer, I brought the matter before God in prayer. After all, if prayer really works in the first place, then to pray a prayer concerning "how to pray" ought to be the first order of business.

God answered my petition with a simple plan. He drew my attention to Paul's words spoken to Ephesian believers: "Pray . . . with all kinds of prayers (Eph. 6:18 NIV). The Amplified New Testament translates this phrase, "Pray with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty." Based on those words, the Lord showed me how to structure my devotional hour into twelve scripturally based aspects. Since I started using the plan it has seemed impossible to miss keeping this daily

prayer appointment. My devotional exercise became the delight of my day. On occasion the time allotted to each aspect of prayer has expanded quite by accident, transforming an hour into a whole day. It is difficult to explain fully, but the delight steadily increases, even after 25 years.

To begin using this simple plan you can divide your hour into twelve five-minute “points of focus.” This allows a specific amount of time for each aspect of prayer. (If an hour seems too lofty a goal—start with twelve minutes. Spend one minute in each of the twelve areas.) At times some areas may require only a few moments, while others—like interceding for lost souls—may require far more than five minutes. In other cases you may omit or combine some of the areas.

This plan will also help “watchmen warriors” develop a meaningful hour of prayer, whether daily or weekly, as they help fill a continuous wall of prayer each week for their city or community—a concept I explain further in chapter 14.

Regardless of how you apply these prayer elements, you will most certainly find them fresh and exciting. And think of the impact this daily gift of sixty minutes will have on our troubled world. One hour each day for an entire year equals 365 hours, or 45 continuous “eight-hour” days. Imagine asking your employer for six weeks off work next year so you can spend the time with Jesus praying for the world. That’s the power of giving God just sixty minutes a day (when projected for a full year).

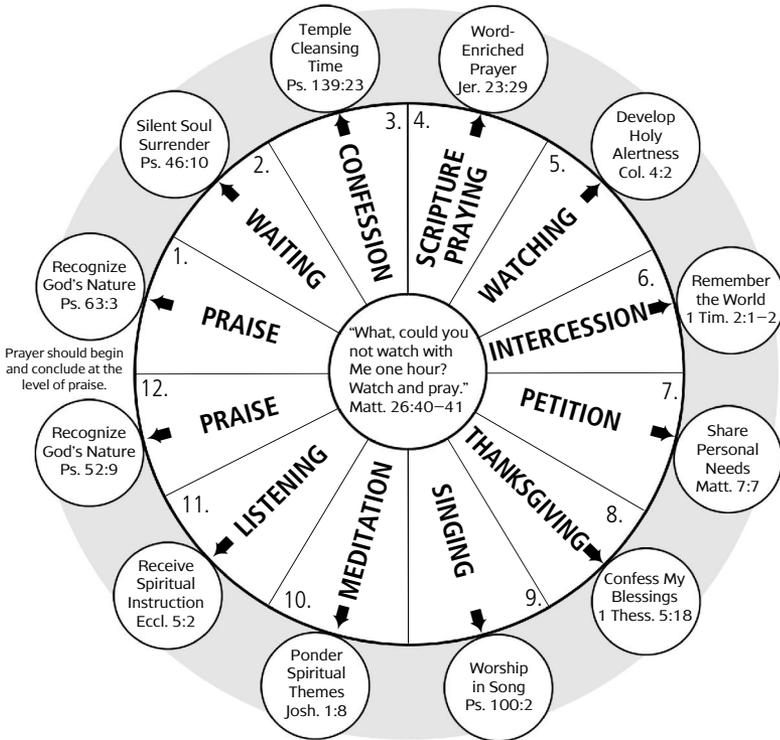
So, let us go forth in joyful anticipation to discover new secrets of “world-changing” prayer. Soon we shall sing with fresh excitement:

Oh, the pure delight of a single hour  
That before Thy throne I spend,  
When I kneel in prayer  
And with Thee, Oh, God,  
I commune as friend with Friend.

## Prayer

To help us begin this journey to the joy of daily intimacy with God, let us ask with fresh confidence.

Lord, teach me to pray!



**IMPORTANT:** The twelve-step prayer plan in this book should be applied with spiritual liberty rather than regimented legality. After using these steps for several days or weeks, allow your own prayer program to develop.