



EVERYDAY
PRAYER

with the

PURITANS



DONALD K. MCKIM

More than a collection of Puritan prayers, this book presents Puritan insights into God-centered, biblical spirituality in order to enrich our prayers. Donald McKim's brief but profound meditations are very helpful in the cultivation of what the Puritans called "a suitable frame of heart" to speak with our Father in heaven.

—**Joel R. Beeke**, President, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

The Bible describes the prayers of the saints as the incense that continually rises from the golden censer on the altar before the heavenly throne of the triune God. Donald McKim's *Everyday Prayer with the Puritans* provides the right kindling so that we can fan the embers of faith into a flame from which the incense of our prayers can rise into the heavenly holy of holies. He gives the church an excellent resource for both the joys and trials of life—Christ-focused prompts and prayers from our Puritan forebears from which we can all profit.

—**J. V. Fesko**, Harriett Barbour Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

A devotional that aims to help us pray with help from the Puritans should be enough to convince readers to "take up, read, and pray." But what I especially enjoyed about this book is how manageable it is: short devotions that strike the right balance between the Scriptures and the helpful theological ruminations from Dr. Donald McKim and the Puritans. If you struggle with prayer, you may find that this book is a helpful tool to make prayer a rewarding and soul-enriching daily habit. Even seasoned prayer-warriors will not fail to learn more about "familiar conversation with God" from this book.

—**Mark Jones**, Senior Minister, Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church, Vancouver

We all know prayer matters, but since we struggle, sometimes we either end up avoiding it or making it overly complicated. In

this wonderful little devotional, Donald McKim draws on both his deep knowledge of the Puritans and his deep knowledge of God, offering us not only well-earned wisdom and sensible encouragement on prayer but also gentle questions to make sure we are making connections ourselves. His goal is not merely to teach us more about prayer but to help us actually to pray! McKim does not overwhelm but offers just enough to point us in the right direction and get us started. I hope it encourages you as it did me.

—**Kelly M. Kopic**, Professor of Theology, Covenant College

From the church fathers onward, theology was understood to be inseparable from worship and prayer. This connection has been eroded over the past few centuries. Don McKim's work is helping to repair this breach. Using his own reflections on the prayers and observations of major Puritan writers as a way to root good theology in Christian piety is a task he performs magnificently.

—**Robert Letham**, Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology,
Union School of Theology

Dr. McKim offers a worthy companion to his earlier works encouraging everyday prayer. Between these covers, praying readers will find meditations on God's Word, pithy quotations from Puritans, and encouragements in the form of reflection questions and prayer points. Read this book on your knees and you will draw closer to the God of the patriarchs, the prophets, and other parents in the faith.

—**Chad Van Dixhoorn**, Professor of Church History, Westminster
Theological Seminary

EVERYDAY
PRAYER

with the

PURITANS

EVERYDAY PRAYER SERIES

Everyday Prayer with John Calvin
Everyday Prayer with the Reformers
Everyday Prayer with the Puritans

OTHER DEVOTIONAL WORKS BY DONALD K. MCKIM

Advent: A Calendar of Devotions 2017
Breakfast with Barth: Daily Devotions
Coffee with Calvin: Daily Devotions
Conversations with Calvin: Daily Devotions
Living into Lent
Moments with Martin Luther: 95 Daily Devotions
Mornings with Bonhoeffer:
100 Reflections on the Christian Life
The Sanctuary for Lent 2017:
Devotions with the Protestant Reformers

EVERYDAY
PRAYER
with the
PURITANS

DONALD K. MCKIM



P U B L I S H I N G
P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

© 2021 by Donald K. McKim

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior permission of the publisher, P&R Publishing Company, P.O. Box 817, Phillipsburg, New Jersey 08865-0817.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations marked (RSV) from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: McKim, Donald K., author.

Title: Everyday prayer with the Puritans / Donald K. McKim.

Description: Phillipsburg, New Jersey : P&R Publishing, [2021] | Summary:

“The Puritans found God’s goodness in day-to-day life; through meditative readings and reflective points, Donald McKim explores their teaching on prayer to inspire and inform your own devotions”-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021008617 | ISBN 9781629957708 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781629957715 (epub) | ISBN 9781629957722 (mobi)

Subjects: LCSH: Prayer--Christianity. | Prayer--Biblical teaching. | Puritans--Doctrines.

Classification: LCC BX9323 .M44 2021 | DDC 248.3/2--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021008617>

To Ford Trowbridge McKim

May he be blessed with a living Christian faith

CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Preface | 11 |
| A Note on Puritans | 15 |
| Using This Book | 17 |
| <i>A Brief Prayer for the Morning</i> | 20 |
| Kept from Being Overcome by Fears | 21 |
| Leave the Means to God | 22 |
| The Signature of Our Prayers | 23 |
| Mercies Come Thick | 24 |
| God's Glory and Our Good | 25 |
| Everything to God's Praise | 26 |
| <i>A Prayer for the Evening</i> | 27 |
| Commend All Things to God by Prayer | 28 |
| God's Sense out of Our Non-Sense | 29 |
| God Hears Our Tears | 30 |
| Hearts Fixed upon the Lord | 31 |
| Begin by Confessing Sins | 32 |
| An Ark in Christ | 33 |
| <i>A Prayer before a Sermon</i> | 34 |
| Prayer under Affliction | 35 |
| A Gracious Answer in Due Time | 36 |
| Confessing Our Sin | 37 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Our Confused Prayers | 38 |
| The Lord of Our Times | 39 |
| An Absolute Promise | 40 |
| <i>A Prayer after a Sermon</i> | 41 |
| The Cause of Comfort | 42 |
| The Words of My Mouth | 43 |
| Prayer Is the Breath of Faith | 44 |
| The Chief Effect of Prayer | 45 |
| Your Everyday Prayer to God | 46 |
| Delayed but Not Denied | 47 |
| <i>A Prayer of Adoration of God</i> | 48 |
| Open Your Mouth to Be Filled | 49 |
| Prayer Lightens Afflictions | 50 |
| Observing God's Answers | 51 |
| Prayers Loaded with Mercy | 52 |
| The Two Wings of Our Souls | 53 |
| Prayer and God's Will | 54 |
| <i>A Prayer for When We Are Dull in Prayer</i> | 55 |
| Trying Your Affections | 56 |
| Praying for Right Direction | 57 |
| God Chooses the Best Time | 58 |
| To Wait on God | 59 |
| God's Promise—Our Hope | 60 |
| Graces in the Heart | 61 |
| <i>A Prayer for Drawing Near to God</i> | 62 |
| Even the Best Need Forgiveness | 63 |
| The Foundation of Our Works | 64 |
| God Takes Note and Listens to Us | 65 |
| Words and Heart | 66 |
| Begging God's Blessings for All | 67 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Amen! | 68 |
| <i>A Prayer for Christian Living</i> | 69 |
| God's Goodness in Teaching Us to Pray | 70 |
| Pray to Do God's Will | 71 |
| Practice What You Pray | 72 |
| In the Day of Temptation | 73 |
| Why God Desires Our Prayers | 74 |
| Praying and Living | 75 |
| <i>A Prayer for All Times</i> | 76 |
| A Gracious Calm in the Soul | 77 |
| Love to Neighbor and Love to God | 78 |
| By Prayer We Learn to Pray | 79 |
| Hallowed Be Thy Name | 80 |
| Pray for the Spirit | 81 |
| Praying for the Wicked | 82 |
| <i>A Prayer for God's Help</i> | 83 |
| Lifting the Heart to God | 84 |
| The Spirit Brings Things to Memory | 85 |
| The Breath of the New Creature | 86 |
| Difficulties Overcome by Prayer | 87 |
| Remarkable Providence Leads to Prayer | 88 |
| The Hand of the Soul | 89 |
| <i>A Prayer That Christ Be Formed in Me</i> | 90 |
| Pray with Confidence | 91 |
| Christ's Prayers Bring Acceptance of Ours | 92 |
| The Voice and Flame of Faith | 93 |
| For the Spirit of Illumination | 94 |
| Benefits of One Another's Prayers | 95 |
| The Power and Promise of God | 96 |
| <i>A Prayer for the Spirit and Following Christ</i> | 97 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Wait on God's Time | 98 |
| Talk Less and Pray More | 99 |
| Making Requests and Offering Thanks | 100 |
| Casting Our Care on the Lord | 101 |
| Effects of Our Prayers | 102 |
| Prayer and Thanks | 103 |
| <i>A Prayer to Do God's Will</i> | 104 |
| Pray Continually | 105 |
| Prayer Sweetens the Mercy | 106 |
| Pray for Others | 107 |
| Pray for the Saints of All Nations | 108 |
| With Holy Ardor and Desire | 109 |
| The Intercession of Christ in Heaven | 110 |
| <i>A Prayer for the Church</i> | 111 |
| Benefits of Christ Come through Prayer | 112 |
| Providence and Promises | 113 |
| True Prayer | 114 |
| A Stock of Prayer Going for Me | 115 |
| The Ears of God | 116 |
| A Heart Fit for Prayer | 117 |
| What God Wishes to Grant | 118 |
| <i>A Prayer for Obtaining a Lively Hope</i> | 119 |
| | |
| Index of Quotations | 121 |
| Writers | 127 |
| Selected Resources for Further Reflection | 133 |

PREFACE

THIS book follows *Everyday Prayer with John Calvin* (P&R, 2019) and *Everyday Prayer with the Reformers* (P&R, 2020) to express the theology and practice of prayer as understood by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Puritans.

Puritans as a whole stood in the Reformed theological tradition of the Protestant Reformers and John Calvin (1509–1564). For them, prayer was a central reality in the Christian life. It is the means by which Christian believers can carry out Paul’s instruction to the Philippians: “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). This book presents quotations from these Puritans and my comments about their meaning and significance for Christian people who today live lives of faith and who pray.

My approach here is to provide a series of short devotional reflections on quotations from Puritan writers. Some prayers from Puritan writers are included as well. An identification of the writers of these quotations and prayers is provided at the end of the book.

As I have mentioned before, my vocational passion for providing books to introduce important theologians through comments on their quotations has grown over the years. My hope is that these books will open the treasures of theologians to those who are not familiar with their writings. The fact that their theological comments can nurture and benefit our Christian lives

today shows that their theologies can live in the church and with Christian believers in the present time. Perhaps readers of the devotions will go on to explore more insights from these theologians. I hope so.

Prayer is a prime topic for theological reflection. Christian people pray. They pray in faith and move on toward understandings of prayer, based on Scripture and their experiences. Part of their experiences can be reflection on the nature of prayer as presented by others who have gone ahead in the faith and have provided theological thoughts about prayer.

My thanks again go to the fine folks at P&R Publishing for their interest and splendid help with this project. Dave Almack has been an insightful dialogue partner. Amanda Martin has been a wise and strong supporter, while Emily Etherton always provides perceptive suggestions. I would also like to thank my friend from college days, Bryce Craig, president of P&R Publishing, for his encouragement of these projects.

This book is dedicated to our grandson, Ford Trowbridge McKim. We welcomed Ford's birth soon after this manuscript was completed. We love him and pray for him to learn to pray and be a person of prayer throughout his life. May God bless Ford.

As always, my love and gratitude for my family runs deep. I could not do what I try to do without their love and support. LindaJo and I have been blessed by our family, and I am blessed by her love, care, forgiveness, and good humor in all our days. I cannot thank God enough for our lives together. Our sons and their families are wonderful blessings: Stephen and Caroline with our grandchildren, Maddie, Annie, Jack, and Ford; and Karl and Lauren are God's great gifts to us. They enrich us in so many ways, for which we give greatest praise and thanks to God.

My hope is that this book will introduce readers to Puritan writers who have significant and meaningful things to say about prayer. These writers can nurture and strengthen our faith as we

PREFACE

pray by calling on God and thanking God from whom all blessings flow. May our faith grow and our devotion be deepened, and may we pray, “Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth” (Ps. 54:2).

A NOTE ON PURITANS

WHILE defining sixteenth-century English “Puritanism” is a complicated issue, the theologians cited here are ones regarded as “Puritans” by historians of the period. In particular, most are found in the splendid work by Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*.¹ The book ahead quotes only from English and Scottish—rather than American—Puritans.²

Puritanism arose during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603) as a movement within the established Church of England. It sought “reform” of the church, especially around elements of liturgy and worship (including vestments worn

1. Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006). For a thorough discussion of the complexities of defining Puritanism, see Randall J. Pederson, *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Revolution, 1603–1689*, Brill’s Series in Church History 68 (Boston: Brill, 2014). Also highly useful is the fine discussion and presentations in Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

2. Primary writings of Puritans can be found in electronic form at the Post-Reformation Digital Library: <http://www.prdl.org/index.php>. The most extensive digital collection of materials from this era is in Early English Books Online (EEBO). This source is available only through institutions that hold subscriptions to the collection, or through membership in the Renaissance Society of America (<https://www.rsa.org/default.aspx>). Also, texts can be found through the University of Michigan Library (<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/>) and at The Digital Puritan (<http://digitalpuritan.net/>).

by clergy). With varying degrees of intensity or “hotness,” the movement was primarily “Reformed” or “Calvinist” in its theological outlook. It stressed a wedding of doctrine and life and a concern for holiness and piety in Christian living in devotion to Jesus Christ, so the nation and church could be renewed in all aspects. In all this, there was strong concern that church reform be based on the Word of God in Scripture.

There were variations in “the Puritan movement.” These were especially among those who shared common goals about the importance of sound doctrine, lively piety, and personal and social renewal but disagreed on what polity or form of church government the national church should practice. The divisions were among proponents of the episcopal form of the Church of England; Presbyterians, who wanted the church to be led by “presbyters” or elders; and “Independents,” who advocated a congregational form of church government in which individual congregations established their own leadership and autonomy without official connections to a hierarchy of leadership or other church bodies.

The Act of Uniformity was passed in 1662. It reasserted that the form of prayers in church worship, the administration of the sacraments, ordination by bishops, and other rites of the established church be practiced in the ways prescribed in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Those who did not adhere to this could not hold government office or positions in the church. Non-adherents were ejected from the Church of England and lost their church positions. They became known as “Dissenters”—many being called “Puritans”—and established their ministries in whatever ways possible. This period marked the establishment of Baptist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian churches.

The Act of Toleration (1689), passed during the early reign of William and Mary, permitted these groups to exist and practice freedom of worship. But it also firmly sanctioned the established Church of England.

USING THIS BOOK

THIS book introduces reflections of English Puritans on Christian prayer. Quotations from the Puritans are drawn from primary sources. The goal of this book is to present Puritans' understandings of prayer and show how these can nourish our Christian faith today. This book can be used for individual devotional reading as well as with groups.

The format of each devotion is the same. A Scripture passage is provided for initial reading. The context and emphases of the passage are mentioned in the text of the devotion. The order of the devotions in the book follows the biblical or canonical order of these Scripture passages. Some prayers of the Puritans are also given in the book.

The comments of the Puritans on prayer are provided, along with my reflections on their meaning and importance for contemporary Christians who pray.

Each devotion ends with either a prayer point or a reflection question. Prayer points suggest ways to use what has been described in a prayer. Reflection questions suggest further dimensions to what has been described, for reflection or group discussion.

I recommend the following approach:

1. *Read.* Read the Scripture passage at the top of each devotion. You can meditate on this Scripture before reading the devotion and keep it in mind as you read

- the devotion. Each devotion is compact; every sentence is important. Contemplate each sentence as you read it.
2. *Meditate.* After reading the devotion, meditate on its instruction, asking questions such as the following:
 - What has the Puritan conveyed here in the comments on prayer?
 - In what ways can the church's life of prayer be deepened by the Puritan's insights?
 - What do the Puritan's observations mean for my life of prayer?
 - What new directions for prayer does this devotional call me to understand?
 - What ongoing changes in the practices of my prayer life are pointed to by the Puritan's words?
 3. *Pray.* Whether or not a specific prayer point appears at the end of the devotion, spend time in prayer reflecting on the Scripture passage, the Puritan's insights, and the comments in the devotion. Incorporate all you experience in your conversation with God in prayer.
 4. *Act.* These insights about prayer may lead you to move into new directions or act in new ways in your life. Be open to the new dimensions of Christian living to which your prayers move you.

The title of each devotion expresses a main point of the devotion. As you read and reread these titles, recall what the devotion says and means to you.

If you keep a journal, incorporate insights about your encounter with prayer daily or at special times in the week. If you keep a prayer list, expand this to include what God's Spirit tells you through your devotional readings. These materials may be reviewed later and appropriated again for your life.

The devotions of the Puritans and their prayers can be read daily or upon occasion. I entrust this book to God's providence

and the work of the Holy Spirit to be read and received in your life—whenever and wherever you read the devotions. Use the devotions prayerfully and in anticipation that God can—and will!—speak to you through them.

In some instances, I have modified spellings in quotations or provided definitions of archaic terms to enhance our understanding today. Citations are provided at the end of the book, indexed by author name and page number. Selected resources for further reflections are also provided to enable additional study of the Puritans.



O MERCIFUL Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, I beseech thee, forgive me all my known and secret sins, which in thought, word, or deed, I have committed against thy Divine majesty, and deliver me from all those judgments, which are due unto me for them. And sanctify my heart with Thy Holy Spirit, that I may henceforth lead a more godly and religious life.

And here, O Lord, I praise Thy holy name, for Thou hast refreshed me this night with moderate sleep and rest.

I beseech thee likewise defend me this day from all perils and dangers of body and soul. And to this end I commend myself, and all my actions unto Thy blessed protection and government, beseeching Thee, that whether I live or die, I may live and die to Thy glory, and the salvation of my poor soul, which Thou hast bought with Thy precious blood.

Bless me therefore, O Lord, in my going out and coming in; and grant that whatsoever I shall think, speak, or take in hand this day, may tend to the glory of thy name, the good of others, and the comfort of mine own conscience, when I shall come to make before Thee my last accounts.

Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ Thy Son's sake. Amen.

LEWIS BAYLY



KEPT FROM BEING OVERCOME BY FEARS

Genesis 8:1–5

THE story of Noah and the ark in the midst of the great flood that covered the earth is dramatic. It shows God preserving God's people when they face the most devastating situations (see Gen. 6–9). God was faithful. Noah was told by God to build the ark. Now the people had only the security the ark provided. But their fears were overcome, and they came to safety.

God “remembered” Noah and his family and the animals in the ark. Through the winds that blew, “the waters gradually receded from the earth” (8:3). This did not happen all at once. But “at the end of one hundred fifty days the waters had abated.”

William Gurnall applied this to our lives of prayer. He wrote that in prayer, we have “the bosom of a gracious God” to empty our “sorrowful heart into.” “And though praying does not drain away all [our] fears,” yet it keeps us—does it not—“from being over-flown” with fears, which we could not avoid without faith. Prayer offered in faith is our only hope for overcoming fears.

Praying may not unburden our souls of all our fears at once but “keeps the soul's head above the waves” and “gives a check to them that they abate (though by little and little).” Through faith we see the floodwaters of our lives subsiding as we continue to pray and keep on praying. Prayers offered in faith keep our heads “above the waves” and overcome our fears.

REFLECTION QUESTION: When have you experienced your fears being overcome as you maintained your prayers to God?

LEAVE THE MEANS TO GOD

Genesis 17:15–22

WHEN we pray, we tell God what we want. We may also tell God the ways we want God to answer our prayers! We are not the first to have these thoughts.

After Abraham was called and received God's covenant promise that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3), Abraham complained to God he was "childless" (15:2). Yet God promised Abraham's "very own issue shall be your heir" (15:4). After Ishmael was born to Abraham with Sarah's slave girl (16:3–4), God said Abraham's wife Sarah would bear a child to be the heir. But Abraham was concerned Sarah was too old and pleaded with God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" (17:18). Abraham wanted to do it his way!

But we should leave the means of answering our prayers to God. We use the means God gives us, but, as John Preston urged, we should "keep our dependence" on God, and we should "leave it to him to use this, or that means, as it pleases him." Sometimes, said Preston, God may take away "that which we are about"; sometimes God "leaves us partly destitute, and finds a way of his own, that we might trust to him, and consider his power, and his wisdom, what he is able to do."

We pray to God, then "sit loose" on the ways God will answer our requests. God can do what God promises. We leave the means of answering our prayers . . . to God!

PRAYER POINT: In each of your prayers, pray for God to answer however God wills, and then be aware of the means God is using to answer your prayers.

THE SIGNATURE OF OUR PRAYERS

Genesis 24:42–49

THE English Puritans strongly believed in the providence of God. They believed God ordained events in human history and human lives, leading and guiding them to fulfill the divine will. Prayer is a means by which God’s purposes are known. Through prayer, persons are led to live out the will of God. Providence and prayer—prayer and providence—are linked together.

When Abraham’s servant helped to find a wife for Isaac, at a well he prayed, “Let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, ‘Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,’ and who will say to me, ‘Drink, and I will draw for your camels also’—let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master’s son” (Gen. 24:43–44). Rebekah came to the well, and she responded exactly as the servant had prayed. Thus Rebekah and Isaac were married, and God’s story of salvation continued.

John Flavel wrote, “Prayer honors Providence, and Providence honors Prayer.” For “you have had the very Petitions you asked of him. Providences have borne the very signatures of your Prayers upon them. O how affectingly sweet are such mercies!”

Our prayers seek God’s will and providence. When we pray, we will find God’s providence leading us, and God’s providence may show us what we had asked for in prayer—in ways we never expect! God’s providence is the signature of our prayers. This is God’s sweet mercy!

REFLECTION QUESTION: What are ways you have seen your prayers answered in what you believe to be God’s providence leading and guiding you?

MERCIES COME THICK

1 Samuel 2:18–21

ONE feature of the Christian experience of prayer is what the Puritan theologian Thomas Goodwin called “overplus.” By this he means that God may grant “above what we did ask.” Sometimes we’ve received over and above what we directly prayed for in our petitions to God. This is a sign, Goodwin wrote, that God hears our prayers.

A biblical example is Hannah, mother of Samuel. She had prayed for a son (1 Sam. 1:10). God granted her prayer, Samuel was born, and she dedicated him to the Lord. Goodwin notes that Hannah had requested one male child, but God gave her three sons more and two daughters (see 2:21). This led Goodwin to say that “when prayers are answered, usually mercies come thick, they come tumbling in; the thing we prayed for comes not alone.”

Have we thought of how “mercies come thick” to us when God does “far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20)? God’s mercies are so deep, wide, and embracing that we find ourselves giving thanks for the superabundance of what God has done in answering our prayers!

This shows us that God exceeds our expectations. When we pray, we never know the ways God will answer or the ways those ways may lead to many other things—which will be yet more mercies for us. “Mercies come thick”!

This should give us confidence when we pray—and hope that God’s merciful blessings will surprise us with an “overplus” beyond our imaginings!

REFLECTION QUESTION: What does it mean to you that God’s “mercies come thick” and that you receive more than that for which you have prayed?

GOD'S GLORY AND OUR GOOD

1 Chronicles 17:23–27

A KEY element in the Old Testament is God's covenant with David (see 2 Sam. 7:1–17; 1 Chron. 17). This covenant was in the form of God's promise to David that “the LORD will build you a house” (1 Chron. 17:10) and that God would establish the throne of David and his offspring “forever” (v. 14).

This covenantal promise led King David to go immediately to sit before God and to pray. He thanked God for being who God is—“there is no God besides you” (v. 20)—and for making Israel God's people (see v. 22). He said that God had revealed God would build David's house and “therefore your servant has found it possible to pray” (v. 25).

The great Puritan theologian William Ames wrote, “Our prayer is a necessary means for God's glory, and our good.” David prayed, giving glory to God for the promise God made in covenant with David. God's goodness in the promise led David to pray. God's providential promise made David's prayer possible and enabled David to apprehend it by faith. So, wrote Ames, God's providence does “not make the true believers slothful, but doth more stir them up to prayer.”

Through prayer we give glory to God and receive the benefits of God for our own good. Through prayer as conversation with God, we offer our praise and receive God's blessings. Prayer is the means by which our conversations with God occur and by which we speak to God and listen to God. Praise God!

PRAYER POINT: Pray that God will make you more faithful in prayer—both to speak to God and to listen to God.