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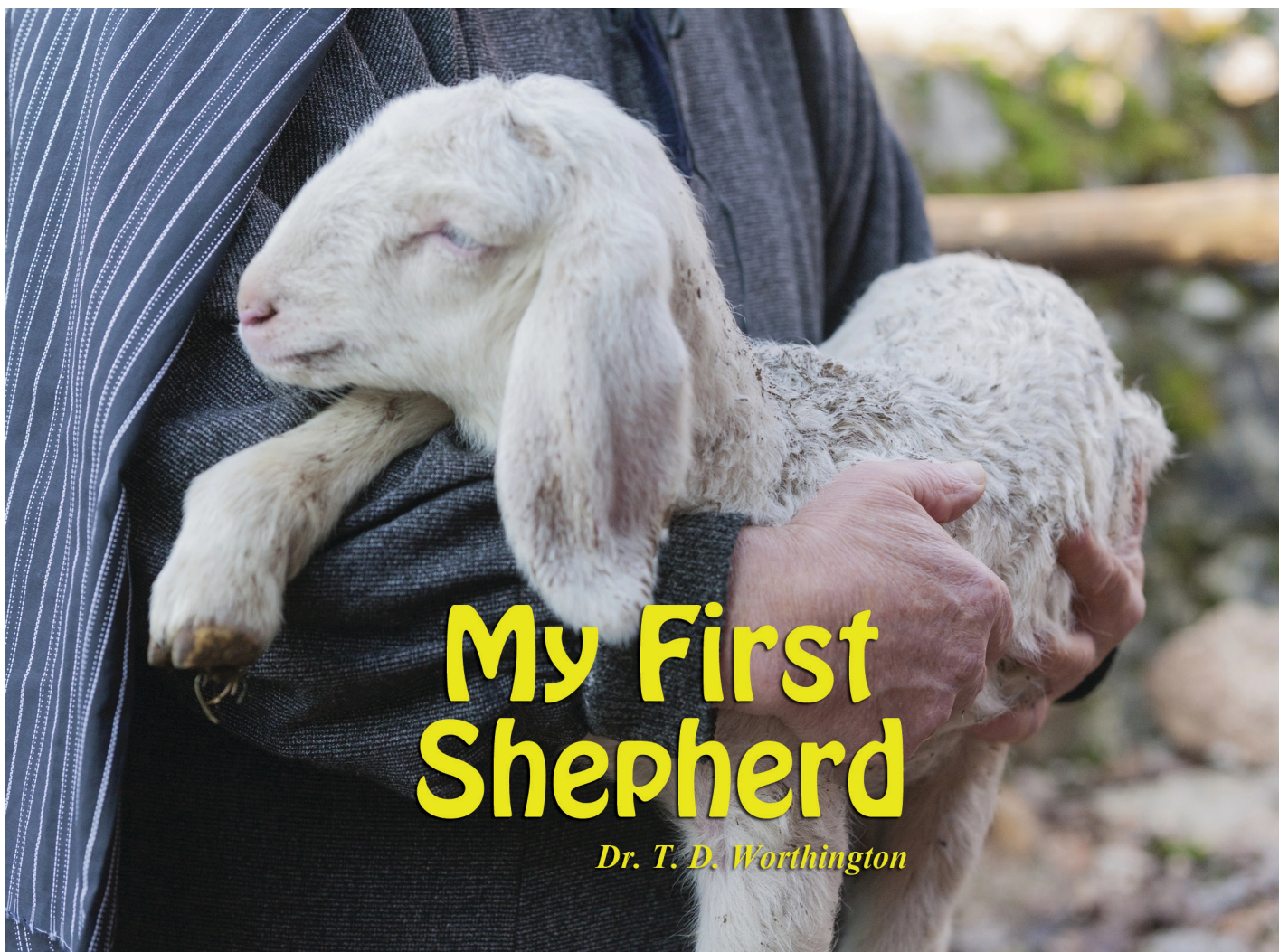
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My First Shepherd

Dr. T. D. Worthington

In the story of the Good Shepherd, Jesus describes Himself as the Shepherd and His followers as the sheep. His sheep listen to His voice, while others are not of His fold because they simply choose not to listen. Jesus assures us that if we are willing to listen to His voice, we can never be taken away from God the Father, since Jesus and the Father are one. Like any Good Shepherd, Jesus is dedicated to keeping all His sheep safe, even those who sometimes wander away.

Traditionally, it is men that are often seen as the shepherds; protecting, providing for, and loving those in their care. We picture men as the strong, sturdy shepherds described in the Bible. However, as we celebrate Mother's Day, I

see a strong connection between shepherds and mothers. Mothers have always guided and cared for their families, and today, they might even fill that role better than men.

For many of us, our first encounter with our Lord as the Good Shepherd came through a loving mother. We learn to trust God, who calls us by name and protects us, because we first felt that kind of unconditional love from our mothers. Imagine being loved simply because someone feels you are worthy. I am not trying to change how we see God, but in life, we often first experience God's love through our mothers. Quite often, it is later in life that we come to know God as the Good Shepherd. We recognize His voice because it echoes in our

memories and sounds so much like the unconditional love song of our mothers. This is why having a mother who is absent, self-centered, or uninterested can leave a deep impact. If our early experiences of love come with conditions, it can be harder to understand the Good Shepherd. But when we experience genuine motherly love, it helps us see how deeply God loves us.

Sherry and I both took on a shepherd's duty of guiding our children, each with different roles. But when I think about all the children she has shepherded at the academy over the years, I am in awe. She is a mother who would do anything to protect those placed in her care, even those who occasionally stray from the fold.

In the film *“The Passion of the Christ,”* you might remember the scene where Jesus carries His cross, and Mary desperately tries to push through the crowds to reach her Son. The scene switches between Jesus carrying the cross and Jesus as a toddler running; these flashbacks are from Mary’s perspective. She sees Him running, then He trips and falls. Like any good mother, she drops everything and rushes to Him frantically. She reaches Him and gently says, *“I’m here.”*

Then the scene shifts back to the present. Mary runs to Jesus as He stumbles under the weight of the cross. She reaches Him, much like a shepherd finding a lost sheep, and says, *“I’m here.”* This time, Jesus changes the story. As she holds Him, He touches her face and says, *“See Mother! I make all things new.”* Then He picks up His cross and moves on. This is the last time Mary touches her Son before He dies. The scene may take some creative liberties, but it is still very powerful.

All of us will reach, or have already reached, a point when, like Jesus, we must take what we’ve learned from our parents and go out into the world to find our purpose. Jesus knew His mission and kept moving toward Golgotha. Hopefully, our children will also discover and accept their purpose, even if it means carrying a cross. Even on the cross, Jesus remembered His Mother and made sure she would be cared for by telling John she was now his responsibility.

We often see mothers as meek and gentle, just like we picture

shepherds as simple guys who passively walk around in pastures wearing flowing robes and moving sheep around. But neither of these images are really accurate. I can’t speak for anyone else’s mom, but my mom, although she could be gentle, was definitely not weak.

Shepherds are not just gentle farmers walking through fields. They are often tough and determined. Sheep, like people, can be stubborn. When a shepherd uses his staff to guide the sheep, it is not always gentle. Sometimes, he must be firm--not out of anger, but out of love. Mothers can understand this. When they are stern with their children, it comes from love, not meanness. Like my mom, Jesus sometimes became frustrated with people who would not listen to Him. But even when He was annoyed, it always came from a place of love.

Shepherds and mothers share many similarities. Recognizing these commonalities helps us better understand motherhood and how God cares for us. Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, and shepherding has many qualities in common with good mothering.

Shepherds always watch for danger to protect their sheep. Similarly, moms guide us away from harm, reminding us, *“Look both ways before you cross the street.”* Moms also tell us to go places in groups and to be cautious of strangers. Today, they warn us about dangers on the internet and social media. Likewise, Jesus warned us about spiritual dangers like greed, laziness, envy, fear, worry, and thinking the world revolves around us. Jesus also teaches us to bring Him our burdens so we may find rest and comfort.





Moms teach us values that help us live meaningful lives. They say, *“If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.”* Jesus teaches us to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

We often think of moms when it comes to food. They encourage us to eat our vegetables and try new things so we stay healthy. Similarly, Jesus asks us to nourish our spirits through prayer, study, helping others, and building relationships. He gives us the bread of life and the cup of forgiveness.

Moms remind us to be prepared, even telling us to wear clean underwear, just in case. Jesus also teaches us to be ready and to stay alert for the snares of the devil and for opportunities to serve and set a good example.

Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd. He says, *“I know my sheep, and they know me.”* They listen to His voice. He gives us a sense of belonging. If you ever wonder if anyone cares, the answer

is yes. Your prayers are heard; they do not go unanswered. The Good Shepherd listens for the cries of His sheep.

As we honor our mothers as modern-day examples of the Good Shepherd, we are reminded that a mother heals with a kiss, a gentle touch, and her steady presence. Her love does not fade, even if we make foolish decisions or get into trouble. She knows us by name, *even our middle names*, and cares for us even when we are grown. She helps us avoid too many snacks and brings us to the table for healthy food and drink. A mother understands why our puppy died and why we don’t like spinach. She makes sacrifices for us, such as cooking our favorite meals or helping with homework. A Christian mother prays for us, not because she has to, but because she wants to.

I used to pray for my mom every day, but I don’t anymore because she is in heaven. Now, I pray for the mothers of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I also

pray for those who struggled to become mothers but couldn’t, and for anyone who has lost a child through miscarriage, illness, accident, or violence.

There is great comfort in belonging to the Good Shepherd. Being part of a family, club, church, nation, or sheepfold means loyalty. Jesus is loyal to us and promises never to leave us. He will search for us when we are lost, even leaving the ninety-nine to find the one who strays and bring them back to the right path.

He is the Good Shepherd. In fact, He is the Perfect Shepherd, and I understand that role better because I first had a good mother.



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry nearly fifty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries and Christian Bible College.



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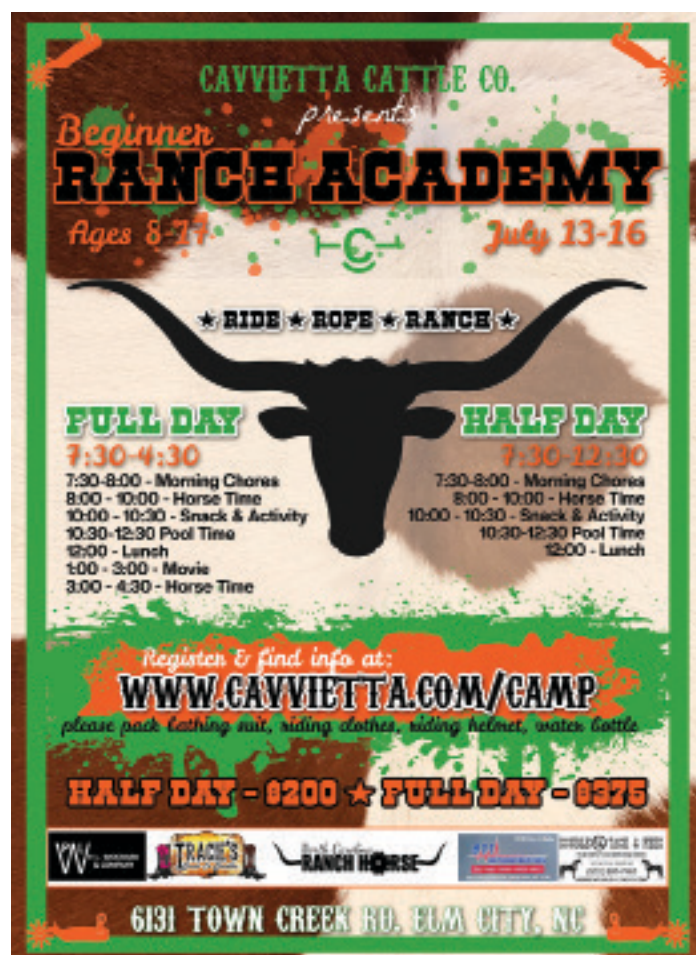
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Music is a Gift

Music is a gift from God. Most of us find comfort in a familiar melody. Of course, some music you may not particularly enjoy; in fact, some of it hardly qualifies as music at all. Still, most of us can appreciate a wide range of melodies. Everything from classical to oldies can fill your library. As God's children, it is also natural that we love Christian music. For millions over the centuries, music has been a tonic, a source of relief or escape, helping us cope with life's pressures and challenges. Music can brighten our days and bring comfort during our darkest nights. A familiar song can evoke emotions and bring back memories we thought had long vanished.

We might reflect on David's musical ministry, which once brought comfort to King Saul. That comfort was short-lived because we know it wouldn't be long before

Saul would try to take David's life. Yet, isn't it strange that the very person Saul would come to hate was the only one willing and able to offer him comfort?

Our Lord teaches us that we are the salt of the earth. We are the ones who help prevent society and culture from decaying completely. They may not realize it, but without us and our music, the world would be much worse than it is. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are divinely granted a restraint on the earth's decay; we keep the world from drowning in its own filth. Through music, young David comforted a troubled King. Likewise, troubled souls today can find great comfort in music as well. We understand that music can be misused and abused, but it can also be a wonderful blessing from God and a powerful tool to do great things. The fact is, just like David, our music is the only music that can bring lasting peace to a troubled world.

Like any of God's gifts, music can be easily misused and turned into an idol. Instead of using music to improve their mood, some choose

music based on how they feel. Sinful actions are often worsened by sinful music. Barroom songs are typically played in a bar. Usually, in such environments, no one seeks music that encourages virtue or sobriety. As Christians, our music should reflect our hunger for God and our desire to please Him. Our music is often a response to what God is doing in our lives at the moment.

At **GoMix Christian Radio**, we pray for God's wisdom to ensure our music accurately reflects biblical truths. This way, we can be confident that our music demonstrates faithfulness and beauty for the good of His church and to the praise of His glory.

Thank you for your support, which allows us to continue our ministry.



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SPECIAL

REPORT

We've tried to keep our listeners informed over the past few months of our new, 29,000 watt, **GoMix Early Light** signal coming to **104.7 FM**. This will take the place of our 10,000 watt signal we had on **88.3 FM**. This new frequency will cover much of Goldsboro and Kinston, N.C.

approval to place our programming on the air. Although approval is taking a bit longer than expected, we hope to be back on the air very soon. In addition, don't forget you can always stream our **Early Light** station **online**, or by tuning in to **88.1 FM** in certain areas.

As we are going to press with this month's **PathPointe**, we are still awaiting final FCC



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Well Done!

Dr. Sherry Worthington



From the time I was a young child, my parents instilled in me the importance of doing a good job. When I finished playing with my toys, I was taught to put them away. When I made my bed, I knew I had better do it right. My parents had the habit of making me do things over when I did not do them right the first time. I quickly learned that it was much faster to do it right the first time than to have to do the chore again. By the time I was 12 or 13, I began babysitting. I really thought I had arrived when I had my first babysitting job over the summer. My mother had taught me that when I was babysitting, I should make myself useful. I should not be on the phone, and I should earn every dime I receive. I would wash the dishes that we used and pick up after the children. I also did some chores around the house. A word to the wise: I learned that when I went the extra mile meant I was called first next time they needed a sitter.

I carried these habits with me throughout my life. My first job was at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I also worked as a day care worker, an office helper, and at a grocery store. I held these jobs from the time I was 16 until I graduated from college. Each of these positions taught me many things. I learned what to do and what not to do from my different managers over the years. I now realize that each job and experience helped shape the person I am today.

Later in life, as I grew in the Lord, I realized my job had become more of a ministry than it had been. I had always known that whatever job I had, it should honor God, and I should serve Him in whatever employment I was in. When we started Pathway, ministry became the main motivation. I have served at Pathway for over 30 years now. I see each student and staff member as someone God has placed under

my care, to be nurtured and helped to grow in Him. The parents are also very special, not only to me but to the rest of our staff as well. As always, I have learned more from the people I am shepherding than they have from me. When I think I know what to do, the Lord quickly shows me how little I know. I have learned so much, and I am still learning every day.

However, my greatest ministry is to my family. I love each member of my family with all my heart. I am honored to be my husband's helpmeet and best friend. I am constantly learning more about him each day. My children and grandchildren are very precious to me. It is one of the most rewarding yet challenging ministries I have ever experienced. Like yours, each of my children and grandchildren is different. We understand that what works for one doesn't work for the other. Motherhood is such

an incredible responsibility. The Bible teaches us to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (*Ephesians 6:4b*). Being a parent requires a delicate balance. We need to show our children God's love, but also teach them the difference between right and wrong. We should praise them when they do well, but correct them when they do wrong. The first part of *Ephesians 6:4* warns about fathers provoking their children to wrath. Mothers are guilty of making our children angry, too.

I believe there is a delicate balance. We provoke our children when we do not believe in them, and we find fault in everything they do. When we harp on them for their mistakes, we expect perfection. We are often guilty of not listening to our children when they talk to us. Perhaps we are always on our phones or busy doing other things. Many parents have told me that their teenagers won't talk to them about problems. If we are too busy to listen to them about the little things when they are young, how can they trust us with the big ones? As parents, we must always stay interested in the small and big things in their lives.

I also believe we can do just as much damage when we spoil our children and don't hold them accountable when they do wrong. Often, it is difficult to look at things from both sides. Our tendency is to want to believe everything our child says, but we forget that they see things from their own perspective. Of course, sometimes they are simply lying. We almost have to act like private detectives to find out the truth. When our children were

young, it was often when they were being overly sweet that we realized they were up to something. It is our responsibility to believe in them and to hold them accountable. It is better that they learn about the consequences of life from us than from others or their first boss.

One of the most difficult responsibilities of being a parent is constantly setting an example of how a Christian lives. The only way to do that is to let Christ live through us. As parents, we must be an example of a disciplined life. Can



they see the fruits of the Spirit in us? We won't always display every fruit of the Spirit, but our children should believe that we live out what we teach. They can say, *"Mom and Dad are not perfect, but they try to live like Jesus."* Do we speak badly about the people in their lives? Do we hurt those they see as role models? My husband and I always aimed to keep the people in our children's lives in a positive light. We knew they were basically good people; they had flaws just like we do. We believed that someday they might need someone to talk to and

might not feel comfortable talking to us, so we wanted to provide them with some Godly options. **James 3** warns us of the harm a tongue can cause. Our words can hurt our children in so many ways.

Do our children see us reading our Bibles? Do they see us in prayer? Do they see us loving others more than ourselves? Do we follow the first and second greatest commandments? We must love the Lord our God with all our heart! We must love our neighbor as ourselves. (*Matthew 22:37-39*) Do we have unconditional love for them and our spouse? Love is tough, yet tender.

Don't we realize that unconditional love is the key to all ministry? Let us be sure that we have unconditional love for our children and grandchildren. The way we raise our children and influence our grandchildren in our Lord's service is one of the most important ministries we will ever have. I would love for my Lord to say, *"Well done"* in all areas of my Christian walk, especially in my ministry as a parent. Our heavenly Father loves us so much, but He holds us accountable. Let us do the same for our children. May each of us be the example they need. Their future depends on it!



Dr. Worthington has five children and twelve grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Acts 2:42

Every time I read about the early church in the book of Acts, I can’t help but wonder what God thinks when He looks at the church today. It seems we have strayed far from the original model, and the “new” looks nothing like early church. When I was a Pastor, I would sometimes say, *“We never change the truth of the message, but the methods in which we share it must change.”* I am now seeing that while there is some truth to that remark, I am having to question some of the methods I am now seeing in churches today.

One fact I notice about the original church is that it was not about the place, it was about the Presence. Early Believers met from house to house. This gave those who attended a sense of family. More churches are going to home groups for this reason. People who are in these groups are doing the Christian life together. If these groups have good leaders who are grounded in the Word and keep their focus on the Holy Spirit, the members are maturing in the Lord. Those without the Word and the Spirit are just another social club.

Another point to consider is the early church was not about the lights, but The Light. I really don’t mind dimming the lights or adding more light to the stage area. I understand that lighting can affect the atmosphere of any room, but do we really have to have the “concert affect” to draw people to the

Lord? Just how much of this is Spirit-led verses being flesh-led? If it is truly lifting someone’s spirit, then go for it. But if we are totally honest, the flashing, spinning, blinking, multi-colored lights do more to excite the flesh than the spirit. When the true “Light”, Jesus Christ, shows up, no other lights can compare. It’s not the amount of light on the stage that counts, it is whether the Light of the World shows up on our stages.

Next, there is the music. I love music and songs that exhort, glorify, magnify, elevate, praise, thank, and bring worship to the Lord. Never has there been a time when so many new Christian songs have been written by so many individuals and church groups. While it can be good, it can also be a hindrance. It is easy to worship to a song that you know verses constantly having to learn new songs. Unfortunately, a lot of good songs get left behind while we are chasing after the next new thing. I am meeting more and more young people who do not even know the hymns I sang when I came to Christ. More people are worshipping the music rather than the One it is written about.

Let’s not forget the love and unity that was a major factor in the early church. Jesus even said we would be known as His followers IF we have love one for another. Once we were saved, the Church was to become our spiritual family. Together we would love, share, grow, pray, worship, serve, and mature as believers of the One Body of Christ. I am concerned at the amount of people whose circle of friends are outside the Church. It is one thing to associate with the world with the aim of winning them to Christ. It is another thing when

we live just like the world and claim to be in a relationship with Christ. Were we not told to come out from among the world and be separated unto the Lord? We should desire fellowship with the Church Body, not friendship with the world.

Also, the early church was a Body that served one another and those in need outside the church. I visit so many churches where people are spiritual consumers rather than godly servants. Too often, people come to church and expect to see the Preacher use his gift, while never using their own. As born-again Believers, we all have talents from our parents and gifts given to us from God, through the Holy Spirit. When we accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we die to self, take up our cross, and follow Him. He leads us to serve others around us, especially in the Body. But many put the money in the plate on Sunday as if paying their dues for childcare, great music, and good preaching. And if they don't get their money's worth, they go somewhere else. Jesus said He did not come to be served, but to serve. He also said the same is expected from us as His followers.

Prayer was foundational for the early church and should be for us today. We can have a special event and fill up the church with people, but if we invite the church to a special prayer time, we may be disappointed at the lack of interest. The sin of prayerlessness is widespread in many churches today. It takes a tragedy or a crisis to get people on their knees. But God desires for us to spend time with Him through prayer. Like the early church, we would see many signs and wonders if only we would pray. Souls would be saved and lives transformed. The anointing on the leadership would increase while the strength of the enemy would decrease. If only we would pray like the early church.

It is my prayer that everyone who reads this letter will be challenged to examine themselves to see where we stand in comparison to the early church. We must allow the Holy Spirit to trim and prune us, if needed. Let us read **Act 2:41-47** and line ourselves up to its teaching. Yes, we must stay with the total truth of the Word, but we had best check our methods lest we hand our churches over

to the enemy. While more churches are motivated by performance and programs, the early church was motivated by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Dr. Glenn Mills is a long time supporter of GoMix Christian Radio and a full-time Evangelist with Glenn Mills Ministries. More information is available at www.glennmillsministries.com

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The Call to Battle

Do you find prayer difficult? I'm not talking about the "Now I lay me down to sleep" or the "Thank you for the food" prayers. I'm talking about the prayers that require concentrated, consistent fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Constant prayer is most difficult. I have read many books on the subject, but reading books and listening to sermons does not guarantee a successful prayer life.

Whenever I seemingly carve out a period of time to be alone and talk with my Father, my best Friend, I am inevitably interrupted with anything that Satan can use to distract. Someone needs me right now, I have an important phone call, or I remember something that I forgot to do. The list goes on and on.

Sometimes, fellowship in prayer is special and sweet; but other times, I just don't feel like praying. I don't want to sit still and concentrate on prayer. Praying later would be a better time for me. But that thing I was reminded to pray for seems to slip my mind later. And sometimes, later never comes.

Prayer can be hard work. I can talk to a close friend for hours and it doesn't seem like work, but focusing on talking with Someone Who I can't hear audibly is difficult. Opening my eyes while praying brings many distractions, but closing them makes me sleepy. Even with closed eyes, I am still distracted with thoughts that interfere with prayerful concentration.

No wonder God's Word places so much emphasis on persevering in prayer. It can be really difficult. Paul's exhortation in **Ephesians 6:11-18** tells us to put on the whole armor of God before praying. Prayer is a spiritual battle. But prayer opens the door to many blessings that come in no other way.

We need to carve out an extended daily prayer time, but we also need to engage in many short prayers throughout the day as prayerful thoughts come to mind. Answering the call to the prayer battlefield is not easy, but we need to be diligent soldiers and answer whenever we hear the call no matter how long or how often the battle. Prayerfully ponder that!



Mrs. Connie Peters has two children and resides in Princeton, NC. Now retired, she formerly served as an instructor at Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



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