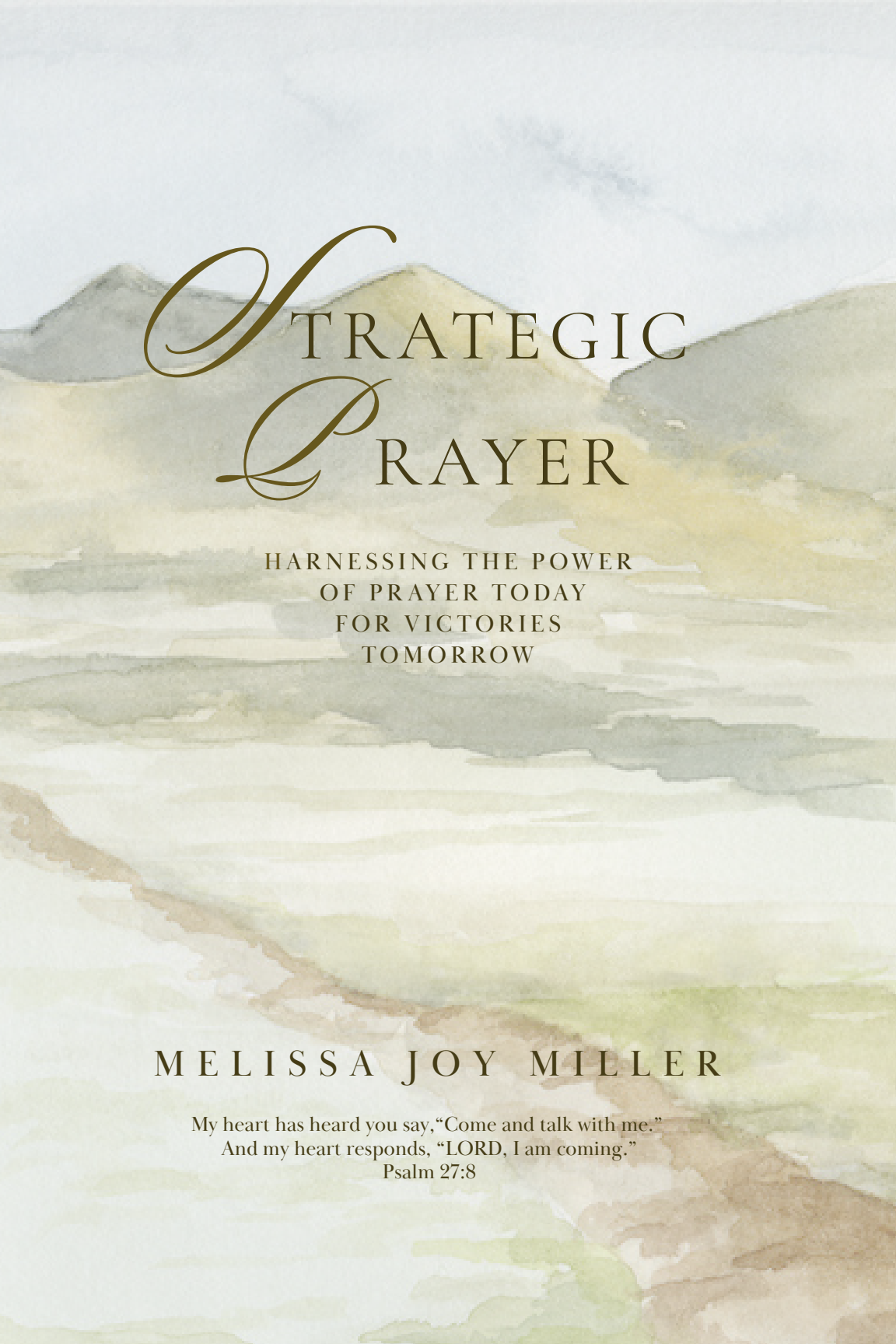


The background is a soft watercolor illustration of a mountain landscape. In the upper portion, there are several mountain peaks rendered in muted tones of grey, blue, and green. Below the mountains, the landscape transitions into rolling hills and valleys, depicted with broad, horizontal strokes of yellow, green, and light brown. The overall style is ethereal and artistic, with a focus on natural elements and a gentle color palette.

STRATEGIC PRAYER

HARNESSING THE POWER
OF PRAYER TODAY
FOR VICTORIES
TOMORROW

MELISSA JOY MILLER

My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."
And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."
Psalm 27:8

Strategic Prayer, Harnessing the Power of Prayer Today for Victories Tomorrow

Melissa Joy Miller

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Edited By: Brenda Mini, Kathryn Calahan

All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

The holy bible: New international version. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2005.

To Sam and Lizzie,

Nothing has driven me to my knees more than the privilege of being your Mom. And I couldn't be more proud of the man and woman of God I see you becoming.

Love and prayers always,

Mom



Dear Friend,

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of leading you through the process of creating your own strategic prayer journal. This method of organizing prayers has carried me through twenty years, multiple countries and many life events. It has been a source of stability when so much of life felt unstable, a source of strength when I felt weak, and a source of words when I had none. I am confident it will serve you in this way also.

I pray that as you write your prayers, filled with God's Word and inspired by the Holy Spirit, you will come to know the comfort and power of strategic prayer.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in a cursive script, reading "Melissa".

Melissajoymler.com





Feast

The path of the stampede of the ages is well worn and easily identifiable. It's where countless generations of people have hurried through life, mindlessly following the heels of those who traveled before them. They're compelled to move on this path at breakneck speeds, keeping up with those in front of them, trying not to get passed by, or run over by those behind them. They hardly know in which direction they are traveling. Desperate for someone to slow the pace, they long for rest. Their souls are malnourished.

But, they don't know where or how to stop. Weary and burdened, they press on.

There is another path. It's far less worn, and so, can be harder to find. But those who dare to avert their gaze and seek it, will find it. The path is marked by light, laid out by the Good Shepherd. Courage is required to step off the well worn path, and out of the stampede. This maneuver, at first, feels unfamiliar and unsteady. But, the ground is sure and trustworthy. When you step out, the Shepherd will be right there to steady and guide you. When you look up, you'll quickly see that He has prepared a feast for you right there in the presence of all those still speeding by, the righteous and the unrighteous alike. As you come to the table, you'll realize the air is clear. You can breathe. The noise is quieted; you can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. There is a place prepared just for you. You can rest your weary limbs. There is a feast laid out for you. You can freely nourish your famished soul. Relief is palatable. Satisfaction is sweet. Abundance is overflowing.

Jesus said, "Come to Me all you who are weary, and carry heavy burdens; and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) He has prepared a feast for you. You're invited. Come.

¹My heart has heard you say,
"Come and talk with me."
And my heart responds,
"LORD, I am coming."
Psalm 27:8

²*"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work;
prayer is the greater work" — Oswald Chambers*

¹ "Psalm 27 (NLT) - A psalm of David. The." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 23 Apr, 2025. https://www.blueletterbible.org/nlt/psa/27/1/t_conc_505008

² Chambers, Oswald. Prayer: A Holy Occupation. N.p.: Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2018.

Introduction

It's Sunday morning. I lay in bed and think through everything that happened this week. It's been a tough one. Work, friends, family, relationships — there's struggle on multiple fronts. Sigh, "*Why is life so hard sometimes?*" I say a quick prayer asking God for help, then get up and get ready in time for church.

I smile at familiar faces and enjoy the hugs of good friends. Then I grab a note-taking sheet for the sermon and head to my seat. It's a message on prayer. *Boy, do I need that!*

The pastor tells a story about a missionary who experienced miracles as a result of faithful, Scripture-filled prayers. He preaches about the church in the book of Acts. "They all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14) and they witnessed miracles. *I could sure use a miracle right now.* He tells us our faith-filled prayers are powerful and effective. *Yes, this is what I needed, a reminder of the power of prayer.* I believe God can make a difference in all

these hard things when I pray. I am determined to be a faithful prayer warrior.

The next day, I choose a pretty new journal at the store and set it strategically by my Bible along with my favorite pen. I'm ready to begin anew tomorrow morning as a prayer warrior. A couple of days go by, and I'm doing great! I've added Bible verses and written my prayers, and my first few pages are filled. *This will be such a treasure for my children one day*, I think to myself. A week goes by. I've had some late nights and hit the snooze button more than once, so I've missed a few days. *That's ok, I'll spend more time on the weekend*. Two more weeks go by. I've missed more days. I add a few more verses and a few more prayers, but I mostly pray without writing everything down; *that's faster*. Maybe I should just plan to write in my prayer journal every other day...

It's Sunday morning again. A month has gone by. It's been a tough one. There's struggle on multiple fronts. My journal is under a stack of books and magazines. I say a quick prayer asking God for help, then get up and get ready in time for church.

STRATEGY PRAYER

If you're reading this book, I am fairly confident I know at least two things about you. First, you want to be a person who prays. Second, you believe that prayer is powerful and effective.

"The prayer of a righteous person is
powerful and effective."

James 5:16b

For so many of us, the struggle isn't usually with desire or belief, but rather with conforming our daily practices with our beliefs. How can we overcome the tyranny of urgent and the ceaseless demands on our time and attention? We need a better strategy. A good strategy for any endeavor, that requires sustained focus and effort, will enable you to do what you're trying to do, use your resources effectively and be sustainable for the long haul. It will be flexible, to adapt to changes in schedules and shifting seasons, and repeatable so that you don't have to keep reinventing the process.

In the case of prayer, you need a strategy that meets all these requirements and more. You want your prayers to be meaningful, filled with God's word, and Spirit-led. You need your strategy to work *for* you so that you can pray

about everything that's in your heart, in a way that doesn't feel overwhelming. This strategy of prayer is all of those things and more.

It's strategic, Spirit-led, Scripture-filled, and sustainable.

STRATEGIC

I am terrible at any sport that has anything to do with a ball. Growing up, I really tried to get better at them. In junior high, I joined the basketball team for one year. The only point I scored the entire season was for the opposing team! Throughout high school, I played volleyball every week with my youth group, but never improved. In college, I thought taking a volleyball class would surely help. I got a "C". Racketball seemed like it might be easier. After all, the court is small and the ball doesn't weigh as much. Boy, was I wrong! It's alright; I've come to terms with my lack of ability in any sports involving a ball.

Even though the various classes didn't improve my playing ability, they did teach me a very important lesson: Games are never won by playing only defense. In order to win any game you have to score points (and not for the opposing team!) And, to score points, you have to learn to

play offensively. This lesson has so many applications in life, including prayer.

³ *"Faith calls us to trust in a future-oriented God"*

—Philip Yancey

If you knew one year ago, what you know today, would your prayers have been different? Would you have prayed more specifically about the journey and challenges you knew were ahead of you? Would you have prepared yourself and your family better? Yes, of course you would have. What if you knew someone who could go into the future and then return to tell you how to prepare. Would you listen to them? King David wrote in Psalm 139:5,

⁴ *"You go before me and follow me"*

Jesus does know what's ahead of us. And, He gave us His Spirit to counsel us. He wants us to listen to Him and inquire about our journey and our hearts, so that we will be more ready for what's ahead. This requires a change of thinking, and a change in how we pray. We must add to our defensive prayers a strategy for praying *offensively*.

Yancey, Philip. *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*. United Kingdom: Zondervan, 2008.

⁴ Publishers, Tyndale House. *The Living Bible, Paraphrased*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1971.

When we pray defensively, it's reactionary. We live life as it comes, dealing with the present struggles and usually asking for relief and mercy. This is good, but it's only half the game.

This monthly prayer plan will help you to strategize when and how to pray proactively, offensively, before the future becomes the present. Because when it comes, it may be too late to prepare. You might be caught off guard and find yourself living, and praying, defensively. It's time to get on the offensive line in prayer. It's time to start praying strategically.

SPIRIT-LED

The offensive prayer requires a deeper discipline than the defensive prayer. It requires that you be intentional about sitting quietly with the LORD. When you're quiet before Him, you can inquire about what the Holy Spirit wants to tell you and listen to His counsel. Ask Him how to prepare for the future. Inquire about what He wants you to learn and what character traits He's building into you and your loved ones. Take the time to sit quietly with the Lord often. Then, act as a scribe of the Holy Spirit by writing what comes to your mind and heart, including truths and specific verses.

The more you do this, the Holy Spirit will begin to instruct your mind and answer your inquiries even when you don't expect it. He will illuminate phrases and passages in the middle of church sermons, Bible studies or podcasts. Perhaps you'll hear a song on the radio, and you'll know that is exactly what you should write as a prayer for someone. You might be in the middle of a conversation, and the Holy Spirit will clarify a specific prayer He wants you to pray for that person. He might even wake you up in the middle of night with clarity and a purpose to pray for. Through the process of asking, listening, reading the Bible and writing, you'll learn what *God* wants you to pray about. Your prayers will become Spirit-led. Focus on having a heart like David who prayed,

⁵"Hear me as I pray, O LORD. Be merciful and answer me! My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'LORD, I am coming.'... Teach me how to live, O LORD. Lead me along the right path, for my enemies are waiting for me. I am confident I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living. Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous.

Yes, wait patiently for the LORD."

Psalm 27:7-8, 11, 13-14

⁵ Publishers, Tyndale House. *The Living Bible, Paraphrased*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1971.

SCRIPTURE-FILLED

Spend time searching the Scriptures for verses to include in your prayer journal. You can't go wrong when you're praying the words of God. When the Holy Spirit shows you a verse that you want to pray for someone or something, you'll choose the day of the month you want to pray for them, then write the verse on that page along with the persons name. That way, when you come to it each month, you can read the verse in prayer. You can also write a short prayer of your own, which includes the verse.

Example:

"⁶Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."

John 15:4

God, I know that living the life you desire for me, and that I desire, will bear the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal 5:22-23) I confess that I can't accomplish these in my own strength and understanding. Help me to abide in you every day and stay

⁶ "John 15 (NASB20) - Remain in Me, *and I." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 20 Aug, 2025. https://www.blueletterbible.org/nasb20/jhn/15/4/s_1012004

connected to you and your Word. Help me to rest in you so that you can produce good fruit in me.

SUSTAINABLE

Using this method of praying strategically is sustainable because it is built for the long-haul. The people and things you will include can remain in your journal for months and even years while remaining relevant. This means that you won't have to re-write them over and over again. You won't have to work to remember to pray for them, because they will already be in your journal. It works *for* you, rather than you working for it.

Using this method of praying strategically has proven to be an effective, organized, sustainable and powerful tool in my life. I've used it to pray my way through singleness, dating, engagement, marriage, domestic and international moves, having babies, homeschooling, language learning, ministry, parenting and so much more. There have been prayers that remained in my journal for a few weeks, then resolved. Others remained for several months before I felt they were reasonably resolved. Still many others have remained for years.

These prayers are building a solid foundation of truth and righteousness in my own heart and the hearts of

those I love. They're building defenses against enemies that haven't even arrived yet, and forming strength and readiness for the battles we will have to fight. This is my daily battleground where I'm gaining victories before the battles even begin.

My favorite moments are when someone I love tells me something has happened in their life that I have been silently praying for, sometimes for a long time. A few years ago I was listening to a song by Casting Crowns. I heard a specific phrase in a particular song that I had heard many times before. In that moment, I immediately thought of my husband. I knew I needed to pray that phrase over him.

Fast-forward a couple of years. He told me about a song by Casting Crowns and a phrase that had become important to him. The truth of it matched the lessons he felt God was teaching him. He knew he needed to really focus in on this phrase and its message. It was the exact phrase I had written a couple years earlier and had been praying for him! What a joy to show him the prayer I had written, and be able to say, *"I have been praying that exact thing for you!"* God gets the glory!

Are you ready to do what it takes to gain this kind of advantage over your future? Then your prayers need to be strategic, Spirit-led, Scripture-filled, and sustainable.

Setting Up Your Journal

FREQUENCY

This strategy for organizing your prayer journal begins with having thirty-one pages, one page for each day of a month. Everything you want to pray about will go somewhere within these thirty-one pages.

Every single person or thing you want to pray about will fit into one of four categories:
daily, weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly.

The first group, the *daily* group, are the people whose names you will want to write at the top of *every* single page. This will include yourself and the small circle of people who are closest to you, such as your immediate family members. This is the smallest group of people, but you will want to pray for them the most! By writing their names, including your own, at the top of every page, you will pray for these precious few, every single day; three hundred sixty-five days a year!

The second group, the *weekly* group, are those in the next level of proximity to you. This group will be a little larger than the first. They might include extended family members, close friends, and other people or topics that are dear to you. You will write these people and things somewhere in your journal *four times*. This way, you will pray for them about once per week; fifty-two times per year.

The third group, the *bi-weekly* group, will be even larger still. This group will likely include people, organizations, and causes within your church, community, and state. Even though this group will include many more people and things to pray about, you'll only include them *two times*. So, you'll pray for them twice each month; twelve times per year.

The fourth group, the *monthly* group, will be the largest by far. They will include people and things that are the farthest proximity from you personally, such as people and organizations on a national and international level. You will only write each person or thing into your journal *once*. This way, you can cover a lot of ground in your prayers by

praying for many things one time per month; twelve times per year.

As you work through these forty days of setting up your monthly prayer journal, you'll identify many people and things you want to pray about. Decide which group each one should go in so that you know how many times to write it; every day, four times, two times or once.

Once your journal is pretty well set, and you're using it month after month, when you miss a day, or a few days, don't be discouraged about it; that's life! You can skip those days assured that you'll come back to them again next month. This is the beauty of a long-term prayer plan. It will always be there for you.

⁷ “[Jesus’] teaching reduces down to three principles:

Keep it honest, keep it simple, and keep it up.”

—Philip Yancey, *(On Prayer)*

SPACING

Having decided how often to write a person or thing in your journal, look through your pages to find days the have more empty space. This will be easy at the beginning,

⁷ Yancey, Philip. *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?.* United Kingdom: Zondervan, 2008.

but will become more important the further you go, as some days will begin to fill up. This way, as you add more and more prayers, they will be fairly evenly spaced out.

If you already know a verse, or have a sentence or two in mind, go ahead and write them next to the name or title. However, it will take time to completely fill in your prayer journal. This is especially true for the people you want to pray for daily. For now, write their names at the top of each page, and leave space after each one so that, one day, you can add verses and written prayers.

There are many passages of Scripture that I want to pray over myself, as well as my husband and children. I often write the word *Family* at the top of a page and write out the verse. Then I might write a sentence or two to pray that verse over each member of my family.

DEFENSIVE PRAYERS

Your defensive prayers are important too! These are current events that change quickly. For me, they usually include prayer requests from friends, things happening for my kids at school, for my husband's responsibilities at work that week, etc. Write these on a loose piece of paper and keep them in your journal. This ever-changing list can

act as your bookmark, keeping you on track with your offensive prayers as well.

Now, it's your turn. Are you ready to join the Spirit? Are you ready to enjoy the abundance of peace and strength that comes from having a vibrant prayer life? Is your family ready for you to start fighting for them in new, powerful and unseen ways? Are you ready to hear what the Holy Spirit has to say to you and feel the elation when you see a long-standing, offensive prayer answered?

Then start today. Fight the busyness and distractions that will threaten to steal this powerful weapon from you. Don't let your enemy keep you living defensively. Take up your armor, and get on the offensive. Join the Spirit and, in faith, begin moving in prayer. It's a decision and discipline you will never regret.

⁸ "I am bearing witness to my love for God by praying even when I don't feel like it. I express my underlying faith simply by showing up." —Philip Yancey

⁸ Yancey, Philip. *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?.* United Kingdom: Zondervan, 2008.

From this point on, I have given you forty days worth of prompts for your consideration. They are suggestions to help you fill out your prayer journal as completely as possible. No doubt, there will be things you need to pray for that are not covered here. On the other hand, you may not feel the need to include some of these ideas. That is okay. Listen to the Spirit and listen to your own heart.

