

Feature

# OPENING IN *Prayer*

In an excerpt from *Fervent*, Priscilla Shirer shares a legacy her grandmother never wants her to forget.

by PRISCILLA SHIRER



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THINKSTOCK

TO ANYBODY ELSE this photo probably wouldn't mean anything. No one would pay a lot of money or give large amounts of their attention to it. It wouldn't be to them the personal treasure it is to me. Because to them, it'd be just a photo. A random image.

Of two hands.

One of the hands, as you see, is wrinkled and worn. Visibly older. A couple of the nails are a bit bruised and tattered. There's no jewelry to adorn any finger. And no real attempt at cosmetic touches. It's just plain. Simple. Strong and storied, yet nobly, humbly feminine.

The second hand in the picture, lying just overtop the fingers of the first, is much younger and smoother. Brown — same color as the other, though with a skin texture that's still evenly composed and supple. Nails fairly neat and a tad more youthful. A ring on the fourth finger. Together, they're a quick portrait in chronological contrast.

But what I really love about this picture is what's lying beneath these two hands. That old spiral notebook. Grocery-store quality. A dollar forty-nine, plus tax, on sale. No expensive leather binding or intricately designed, acid-free paper. Just a fourth-grade composition book with wide-ruled, lined sheets and a plastic-coated cover.

And yet within those pages, bound by thin, metal rings slightly mashed out of shape by the pressure of frequent use, are the vast treasures of a living legacy.

These two hands — older and younger — belong to a grandmother and her granddaughter. And this spiral-bound filing cabinet contains a grandmother's prayer requests — written out, printed off, and prayed over, during her daily appointment with Jesus. She meets with Him the way she'd meet with any important friend — faithfully, personally, punctually. And in those early morning moments, she opens up this book

of prayer and vocalizes her needs to Him, as well as the needs of others — requests she's been quietly gathering amid her daily dealings.

These two women, though separated by several decades of life experiences, go out together occasionally on little afternoon dates. And since a ninety-five-year-old metabolism can afford to indulge a predilection for McDonald's French fries and vanilla milk shakes, that's their usual outing. They drive through for a batch of that salty-sweet, hot-and-cold combination, then they meander random neighborhood streets, windows down, while the lip-smacking passenger munches to her heart's delight. But it's also in these moments, between her grandmother's swallows, when this grown grandchild seeks to absorb the treasured wisdom from nearly a century of holy living.

Recently on one of these fast-food sprees, when the subject of prayer came up, the younger asked the older why she wrote down her prayers in a notebook like that. Then she waited, even pushing the "record" button on her iPhone, hoping not to miss a word of what she knew would be a long, deeply spiritual answer — one she'd never want to forget and could pass down in her grandmother's own voice for generations to come.

They glanced at each other. No one spoke for a few moments. Another french fry. Long gulp of milk shake. Then came these understated words:

*"So I won't forget."*

Hmmh. And there you have it. The message of this whole book in one simple phrase. Straight from the tender lips of a godly grandma. You write out your prayers so you "won't forget" ...

- won't forget who the real enemy is
- won't forget the One in whom your hope lies
- won't forget what your real need and dependencies are
- and later, won't forget the record of how God responds





Through intentional, deliberate, strategic prayer, you grab hold of Jesus and of everything He's already done on your behalf. It's how you tap into the power of heaven and watch it rever-

berate in your experiences. It's a key part of your offensive weaponry against a cunning foe who prowls around and watches for your weaknesses, your vulnerable places, for any opportunity to destroy you. In prayer you gain your strength — the power to gird yourself with armor that extinguishes every weapon your enemy wields.

Paul the apostle famously said it like this:

Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. (Eph. 6:11 NLT)

There's that word again. Strategies. Schemes and deceptive plots being concocted for your demise by a very real enemy who is always primed to make his next move. He works overtime to destroy the relationships and circumstances you want to preserve. He laughs at your attempts to fix your own issues with timely words and hard work — tactics that might affect matters for a moment but can't begin to touch his underhanded, cunning efforts down where the root issues lie, or up in those spiritual "heavenly places" where such physical weapons were never meant to work. "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies — "

- "but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world,"
- "against mighty powers in this dark world,"
- "and against evil spirits in the heavenly places." (v. 12 NLT)

So we strap on weapons that work — weapons divinely authorized for our success in spiritual

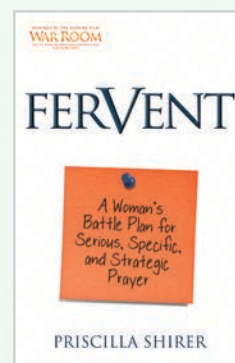
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warfare: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace. Then we take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, as well as the sword — the very Word of God. But we

don't stop there. Because neither does Paul in his description of our spiritual armor in Ephesians 6 —

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray ... (vv. 18–19 NLT)

There it is. The fuel that drives everything. Prayer. We pray till our hands are worn and wrinkled. We pray until our granddaughters are old enough to understand and learn and copy our example. We pray until they can one day place their hands across ours, gently rubbing our aging skin, and we smile because now they'll never forget the things we had the good sense to record in writing for their generation. They will look back on our legacies and know we stood strong, fought the good fight, and finished a race in which we would not even think about letting the enemy have his way in our lives or in the lives of those we love. ☸



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PRISCILLA SHIRER is a wife and mom first, but thousands of women meet God in powerful, personal ways through her conferences, books, and Bible studies. She and her husband, Jerry, are raising three active boys.