

ORATIONS

Grand York Rite of California

May 2012

Orations

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Golden State Research Chapter

Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

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Dedicated to

Most Excellent Companion

EDMOND D. "TED" HARRISON

**General Grand High Priest, 2011 - 14
General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons,
International**

**For his fervency and zeal in support of Craft
Masonry and the Royal Arch, in general, and the
Golden State Chapter of Research, in particular.
Of special note is his success in implementing an
enhanced and expanded Royal Arch Charity, to
encompass Central Auditory Processing
Difficulties, Autism, and Hearing Difficulties.**

PREFACE

As I began my journey up the line, I began to think of what kind of a difference I would make.

I started noticing that as the new Companions entering the Royal Arch Chapters would approach me, they would ask questions about the degree and some of its meaning. This points to the value of the Research Chapter and its publications, like this one which gives you rich material from several important orations given earlier this year. I feel that we are entering into a new age of Royal Arch Masonry. My theme for this Year is Quality – and Quality in Education is one of our key responsibilities as Chapter leaders. We all will be approached by a new Companion at some point in time. These Companions are not going to show up for a stated meeting if we don't have more to offer them than reading minutes and paying the bills. They are in search of Education and more knowledge of the Royal Arch Degree. The bottom line is that Quality should not be a Goal, but a Standard in the way we conduct our Chapters.

Robert V. Wright, Jr.,
Grand High Priest
Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

PROLOGUE

It is with great pride that the Golden State Research Chapter (GSRC) publishes this third compilation of orations and talks given during Grand Sessions.

Should you wish to consider affiliating with the GSRC, please see the website located on the back cover.

Peter Eiserloh
High Priest, GSRC
August, 2012

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INTRODUCTION

GRAND ORATIONS, 2012

This compilation of remarks were delivered at the California York Rite Grand Sessions in May, 2012. In addition to the Grand Orations for the Grand Chapter and Grand Council, we have included the Grand Commandery breakfast remarks delivered by Very Eminent Howard “Bud” Ramsey; the Easter Sermon presented at the Grand Commandery West Coast Easter Observance in April prior to Grand Sessions; and a research paper presented at the Golden State Chapter of Research annual convocation.

Geoff Holbrook

Geoff is Master of Brawley Lodge No. 402 (2012) and Past Master of Imperial Lodge No. 390 (2011). He has served as presiding officer for all three Imperial Valley York Rite bodies, serving Chapter #109 as High Priest in 2011 (and now Secretary), Council #60 as Illustrious Master in 2009 (now Recorder), and Commandery #54 as Commander in 2011. He is a member of San Diego Priory, KYCH and a member of the San Diego Conclave of the Red Cross of Constantine. He served the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons for the State of

California, as Grand Orator in 2011-12 and is a member of the Golden State Chapter of Research.

He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Los Angeles and his law degree from Thomas Jefferson School of Law. He is a Senior Deputy County Counsel for the County of Imperial and represents the county in tax related matters. He lives in Imperial County with his wife, Courtney, a speech therapist, and three children, Addison Rose, Samuel, and Benjamin.

Joseph Ross

Joe was raised in 1967 and has served Island City Lodge #215 as Master in 1983, 1992 and 2006. He is also a member of Northern California Research Lodge and was Master in 1995. He is a recipient of the Hiram Award in 1994, and recently served Grand Lodge on the Home Endowment Board and Constitution Observance Committee, and as Grand Chaplain in 2011-12.

He is a Knight of the York Cross of Honor, having served as High Priest, Illustrious Master, and Eminent Commander in the Alameda and Oakland York Rite bodies. He has served in 2011 as Grand Orator for the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons. He is a Knight Commander of the Court of Honour for the Oakland Scottish Rite. In addition, he has held numerous advisory roles for the Rainbo and

DeMolay Youth groups; and has been Worthy Patron for the Oak Leaf Chapter, Order of Eastern Star.

Howard “Bud” Ramsey

Howard Walter Ramsey, Jr. moved to San Jose, California when he was 10 years old. He started working at IBM when he was 18 years old but, before completing his first year with them, went into the Marine Corps for four years. After his discharge, he resumed his employment with IBM, and after 30 years with the company, retired in 1995.

On February 14th, 1970, Bud married Susan Guldenschuh. Bud and Susan have been married 42 years. They have two daughters, RaeAnn and Jennifer, and seven grandchildren. Their son-in-law Monty is a member of Mt. Moriah Lodge.

Bud was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason on June 27th, 1994. He served as Master of Charity Jarman Lodge No. 362 in 1998 and Master of Los Gatos George E. Tutt Lodge No. 292 in 2001. He also served as Master of El Camino Research Lodge in 2010.

In the York Rite, he's a Past High Priest of Howard Chapter No. 14, Royal Arch Masons, a Past Illustrious Master of San Jose Council No. 20,

Cryptic Masons, and Past Commander of San Jose Commandery No. 10. He is a Knight of the York Grand Cross of Honor, a recipient of the Meritorious Service Award for Chapter, the Ish Sodi Award for Council, and the Meritorious Service Award for Commandery. He is a Past Governor of the El Camino Real York Rite College and is designated to receive the Order of the Purple Cross from the York Rite Sovereign College of North America in August, 2012.

In the Scottish Rite, Bud is a 32°, Knight Commander Court of Honor, a Past Commander of the Council of Kadosh, Past Venerable Master of the Lodge of Perfection, and currently the Senior Warden of the Chapter of Rose Croix.

He is the current Sovereign Master of Britannia Council, Allied Masonic Degrees, and a member of the Royal Order of Scotland, the Robert the Bruce Association, and the Firth of Forth Clan. He belongs to San Jose High Twelve, the Asiya Shrine, is a Past Monarch of Zorah Grotto, and a Past Toparch of San Jose Pyramid No. 9 of the Ancient Egyptian Order of Sciots. He is a member of St. Francis Conclave, Red Cross of Constantine, and New Covenant Tabernacle, Holy Royal Arch Knights Templar Priests. Bud is a Past Patron of Starlight Chapter No. 401, Order of the Eastern Star, and a member of Candlelight Court, Order of the Amaranth. He has additional memberships in

concordant bodies as well. He received the Service Award from Starlight Chapter.

He had the honor of serving the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of California as Junior Grand Steward in 2001, Inspector from 2001 to 2006, and an Assistant Grand Lecturer from 2006 through 2011.

In addition to his Masonic activities, Bud is also an active member of Cambrian Park United Methodist Church and serves as their Lay Leader, Chair of the Leadership Team, and leads their Men's Group.

Rev. Thomas M. Boles graduated with honors from Trinity Theological Seminary with his BT, DMin and D.D. degrees, also his MAT Degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and his PhD. in Biblical Studies at Newburgh Theological Seminary. Dr. Boles has also received from Trinity Seminary a Lifetime Membership in the Omicron Psi Honor Society for academic achievement. Dr. Boles is a minister at E.W. Presbyterian Church in Whittier, CA., and Pastor of the Midnight Mission Church in Los Angeles. He is a Navy veteran of World War II, having served in the South Pacific Theater

He has served the Grand Lodge of Masons in California as Grand Orator and Grand Chaplain, and is recipient of the Hiram Award. He has been conferred the 33^o Grand Cross from the Scottish Rite Freemasons S.J., Washington, D.C., and the

Meritorious Service Award, Purple Cross York Rite College; Master of Wisdom Lodge #202 F&AM, Potentate of Al Malaikah Shrine Temple, Director General of the Shrine of North America, Director and Treasurer of the Shrine Hospital in Los Angeles, Puissant Sovereign of the Knights of the Red Cross of Constantine and Sovereign Master Allied Masonic Degrees and Personal Representative of the Santa Ana Valley Scottish Rite. He currently is serving as Grand Prelate for the Grand Commandery of California.

I

WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK by Excellent Companion Geoff Holbrook

Our Grand High Priest's theme for this capitular year is, "We're on the right track, keep moving!" It is, at once, an implicit recognition of all which has been accomplished to date, and also, a call for continued industry as we work to make our Chapters stronger and better.

It is also a special call to newer Royal Arch Masons to continue the great work our current leaders have accomplished and the opportunities they have given us.

It is a great time to be a Royal Arch Mason in the State of California. Certainly, our chapters face their own challenges, but there is much of which we can be proud. The number of new Companions currently being exalted has continued to increase over the past few years. Our research chapter, the Golden State Chapter of Research, continues to grow and most importantly provides valuable information and tools to our companions. This past year the

General Grand Chapter Royal Arch Research Assistance in Central Auditory Processing Disorders, has made changes which have been welcomed with much enthusiasm and its important charitable work continues to be provided. These are all positive indications for the future and the work we as Royal Arch Masons do.

However, for these current good trends to continue, the next generation of leaders must continue the work which has been done, or as our Grand High Priest puts it- to keep moving on the right track. In my experience, this is precisely what is being done. My own lodge and chapter have undergone a monumental transformation in the past few years. This year marked the 100th anniversary of my chapter. When I joined my chapter it was lead by men with years of experience, most of whom were 50 year members, both of the lodge and the chapter. Unfortunately, over the past few years most of these men have been unable to grace us with their presence. Most of the active members whose primary Chapter is my Chapter have less than 5 years of membership. I suspect many Chapters will face a similar challenge, if they have not yet already.

My chapter was fortunate enough to have a small group of dedicated companions who have

guided us through this change. These companions have guided the newer members to positions of leadership and have kept this Chapter on the right track. This year my Chapter exalted more companions than we have ever had in recent memory.

This generational change has had positives, but there are also pitfalls. The lack of experience and time of younger members makes it all the more important we obtain the guidance and mentorship of our experienced companions. With this in mind I view our Grand High Priest's theme as especially important. It recognizes what our companions have done, but it is also a challenge to the next generation to continue the great work which has been done by those before us.

In our York Rite Ritual for the Royal Arch degree we are reminded of a similar situation where a generation was guided and mentored by their father, and which resulted in the survival of their institution. We are twice reminded of Noah, a timeless individual and perhaps one of the best known characters in all of the Old Testament. Noah stood out amongst all of humanity in his age; he was chosen by God because of his individuality and steadfastness. And he was one who accomplished much, by

guiding his next generation and eventually was able to repopulate the world.

Our ritual not only makes reference to Noah, but it also specifically references his succeeding generation- his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

The first reference to Noah is indirect and occurs in the opening of Royal Arch degree. We are reminded of nine men who built three arks, each in groups of three. The one I will focus on today is the group consisting of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These three sons of Noah labored with Noah in the building of the Ark of Hope. By this reference, we are reminded of the wise father being assisted by his offspring in performing his vital and important work.

Additionally, Shem, Ham, and Japheth hold another position of significance to Masons. The first known reference to the raising of a mason appeared in the Graham Manuscript of 1726. In this account Shem, Ham, and Japheth went together to their father's grave, to find any valuable secrets buried with him, naturally believing all things needed for the new world were taken with him in the Ark. This lesson, of course, reminds all masons of another famous Grand Master.

The second reference to Noah in our ritual is a direct reference made by the Principal Sojourner when he was leading the Jews out of captivity in Babylon on the return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the temple. One of the first observations made on this trip is to Mount Ararat, where the ark rested after the flood. The Principal Sojourner reminds us of the sacrifice made by Noah, the covenant made by the Lord and also of the tower of Babel. By this reference, we are reminded of the success of Noah and his sons in their endeavors.

Noah was the tenth man from Adam and the great grandson of Enoch. It is written, “Noah walked with God”. He is, of course, best known regarding the story of the Great Flood and the cleansing of the earth by water. This story is perhaps one of the best known stories of the Book of Genesis and is also one of the longest. After Noah built the ark and the flood subsided, God made a covenant never to flood the earth again.

The story then shifts to the actions of Noah’s sons. After the Flood, God ordered the sons to repopulate the world. These subsequent generations then built the tower of Babel and repopulated the world.

The reference in our ritual to the three sons of Noah should remind us of the importance of continuity among generations for the survival of our institution. The father was chosen to lead, and his work was accomplished with the help of his sons. Noah's sons were then able to continue his work and repopulate the world.

It is my hope during the opening of Chapter, when newer Companions hear the words Shem, Ham, and Japheth, they are reminded of the work done by their own leaders to make their Chapters and their Grand Chapter great and the instruction to Shem, Ham, and Japheth to be fruitful and multiply will remind newer companions that the success of Royal Arch Masonry in California depends on their efforts to work industriously and recruit newer members.

Let us keep Noah and his sons in our thoughts, as an inspiration and a warning, so we may keep moving on the right path and by doing this, Haggai's admonition, "ye have sown much, and bring in little," will bear no resemblance to our own efforts. (Haagai 1:6)

Let us continue the great work of our leaders, by working industriously at our growth, our ritual, our education, and our charitable efforts. Lastly, may the fraternal bonds between the

“fathers” of our chapters and those newer companions continue to grow, so that our great Royal Arch may forever be strong.

May God bless you, and keep you.

II

PRIDE

By **Illustrious Companion Joe Ross**

"PRIDE"

Most Worshipful **Frank Loui**, KYGCH, Grand Master of Masons in California, Most Illustrious **Robert A. L. Whitfield**, KYGCH, Grand Master of the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons, Sir Knight **Casey W. Norris**, KYGCH, Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knight Templars, Most Excellent **Bill Allen Jr.**, KYGCH, Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, all of the State of California. Honored East, Distinguished and honored members and our most gracious ladies, whom we all love and cherish, Companions, visitors and our many friends.

It is indeed an honor and a pleasure today addressing you at this Grand Session, where we come together, celebrating "PRIDE", Describe the work "PRIDE"

P = Patriot - Support and honor our Country, our Flag, our Constitution and our Bill of Rights.

R = Respect - Worthy of respect creating brotherly love, Relief and Truth for each other.

I = Influence - Power to effect others with a positive manner and a positive attitude.

D = Decision - Assorted relationship, firmness that make good men better and leaders in our officers.

E = Ecumenical - Universal religion. The unity of which we in Royal Arch Masonry stand United, respecting all our laws, our rules and our regulations, governing ourselves and helping all of our Companions.

Lets us look at the overall values of this Great Country and especially the Cryptic Masons here in our United States.

Our heritages, well, After investigating our history in California, I found out a few things that are very beneficial and I would like to convey this to all of you here today.

The Grand York Rite consists of the Grand Chapter, the Grand Council, and the Grand Commandery, in this great State of California, consisting of many nationalities. This of course is what makes our order so wonderful.

We look back to the immigrants which have made this Country so great, each contributing their thoughts and energies for all their hard work with "PRIDE" in making this the greatest Country in the World.

We in the Masonic Order have inherited and received the many cultures that make up our Nation, making us a diversified order; we have been

successful due to great Leadership and, above all, brotherly love affords us continued relationships. We are "PROUD" to be Masons; to join this order with such "PRIDE."

We look back to the beginning of this great Country when our Masonic bodies were chartered. In the great State of California; we have in our fraternity the American Indians, Asians, Filipinos, Spaniards, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Brazilians, Chinese, Japanese, Canadians, Danes, Norwegians, Germans, Frenchmen, Swedes, Poles, Russians, Italians, Iranians, Latin Americans, and Englishmen that are all good and true Americans, making this great Order what it is today. And I know this greatness rubs off on us all here assembled. Because of this true relationship through our lives here on the Earth, all of us today enjoy each other, as we all learn and adapt to changes which are put forward in our Order for greater positive attitudes. This, in itself, is very rewarding, giving us PRIDE inside and our outward appearance.

How proud we are to be a part of the largest fraternal order in the World. The teachings of our history, our fraternal brotherhood, our respect for this great Country and especially the care and love that we have for our Ladies -- for without their support, we might as well go home and forget the whole thing; but we're here during the Grand Session enjoying the fraternal leadership and

brotherly love as enjoyed by us all. And that my Companions is "PRIDE".

We all should stop for a little while, lets stand up and look in front of you, behind you and on your right and left. Now give our ladies a great big hug and I might add, give your lady a loving kiss
. . It wouldn't hurt to show your admiration and support!

As we are gathered here, I look around and see so many dedicated companions who have taken time from their very busy schedules to make this our Grand Session such a success.

You know my throat swells and my heart warms with PRIDE being associated with our many Companions -- now that is pride!

Pride can be defined in several ways as before mentioned, but most important to us, according to Webster's Dictionary is: *Doing such things that make us happy in doing positive happenings with others, having high opinions, or worth of one's self, from that association with one's self with respect for others and self respect.*

We are a support group. We regularly support each other by discussing shared problems. With positive results reflecting changes to better mankind and making all things for the betterment, for governing our organization, reflecting that which creates and makes all things better with positiveness, which, of

course, creates this great organization of Cryptic Masons.

We are an extended family as we express brotherly love for one another and have a belief in the heaven above.

Today we look into the future and anticipate our own future. We as a group with all the talent that surrounds us and when we put our minds together, the end accomplishments are absolutely surprising, and fantastic, we come together in charity and ritual support to make good men better. We are an organization that has so many dedicated companions, keeping alive our Cryptic Masonry.

You know . . . positive surroundings, surely produce what you see here today.

There are of course some Companions saying: " I don't think I can do that." Yet, when the mind and body accept the challenges, the end accomplishments are absolutely fantastic! What more can one say?

This PRIDE is why we are here today. May your PRIDE rub off on one another -- that is why so many future Companions are inquiring about our York Rite Masonry. Yes, Masonry is on the rise. The Most Worshipful Master has said: "*More Masons have taken their degrees and especially those brethren who have been raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason. More Masons than those of our brethren who have passed to the celestial*

lodge above and thus, my Companions, our fraternity now is on the rise and I'm one with great PRIDE.

I wish to thank each and every one of you who have allowed me this great opportunity to convey this message to you today.

We ask the Great Architect above to guide all of you in all your endeavors as we progress in our sessions. Also in our travels as you and your family return to your respective places of abode to keep you and your loved ones safe, to keep your pride well in hand.

I leave you this day with a positive thought Our future is up to you, our leaders. Remember this: If you think you are beaten, you are.

If you think that you dare not, You don't.

If you like to win, but think you can't, It's almost certain that you won't.

If you think you'll lose? You've lost; for out in the world you'll find success, it begins with a fellow's will, it's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed, You are. You have to think high to rise; you've got to be sure of yourself before you can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or the faster man; but, sooner or later, the man who wins is the man who thinks he can!

Do what you have to do in making this Masonic body the front runner. Positivity is a frame of mind that breeds success.

As Thomas Edison once said: *Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.*

Most Illustrious Grand Master **Robert A. L. Whitfield**, thank you for the opportunity to serve on your grand team, and to be associated with all the Grand Leaders of our Cryptic Masonry and the many concordant bodies that we have here today, celebrating and making the Grand Session so successful.

Our hearts swell with pride. May all of you continue in this Grand Session with much pride and with much enthusiasm and strive for the very, very best we have in ourselves.

Thank you all and we pray that all your endeavors, your travels and above all, keeping this, our fraternities alive and well...

One last note:

Pride builds a foundation for a better life, keep it, share it and pass it on!

Life is not measured by the number of breaths that we take, but by the moments that take our breath.

It's your turn and you are now up to bat. Enjoy your great session, get a home run.

Thank you all and may God bless each and every one of you, and may all your endeavors bloom brightly with elegance.

Joseph H. Ross
Grand Orator

III

COMMANDERY BREAKFAST TALK

By R. Eminent Bud Ramsey

On Christmas afternoon, the Pastor's wife dropped into an easy chair saying, "Boy! Am I ever tired." Her husband (the Pastor) looked over at her & said, "I had to conduct two special services last night, three today, & give a total of five sermons. Why are you so tired?" "Dearest," she replied, "I had to listen to all of them." Hopefully that's not how you'll feel when I'm done talking, but we'll see. I decided to talk about a question that continues to nag at me. And that question is, "Why should a man want to be a Knight's Templar?" "What's the big deal?"

Since at least the 18th century Freemasonry has incorporated the Templar symbols and rituals in a number of Masonic bodies, most notably, as you know, the "Order of the Temple" or, as we commonly refer to ourselves, as the Knights Templar. Bernard de Clairvaux and founder Hugues de Payens devised the specific code of behavior for the Templar Order, known to modern historians as the Latin Rule. Its 72 clauses defined the ideal behavior for the Knights. I'm telling you this as a reminder that we have a rich heritage, an honorable reputation, and that we are solidly based

in the Christian Faith. This alone calls us to a higher standard.

Over time, the Knights Templar have become associated with legends concerning secrets and mysteries handed down to “the select” from ancient times. And no, I won’t tell you where the treasure is hidden. Rumors circulated even during the time of the Templars themselves. Masonic writers added their own speculations in the 19th century, and further fictional embellishments have been added in popular novels such as *Ivanhoe*, *Foucault's Pendulum*, *The Da Vinci Code*; and others, as well as modern movies such as *National Treasure* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*; and then there are video games such as *Assassin's Creed* and *Broken Sword*.

Freemasonry demands only a belief in a Supreme Being; therefore it should not surprise anyone that the Christian Freemasons established a branch of the Fraternity where they have the freedom to interpret the symbols of the Blue Lodge according to their religious beliefs. The Order of the Temple, or Knights Templar, is a logical outcome of the Christian Mason’s belief in Christ as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The Templars of today are or should be men who, by their loyalty and devotion, are making Templary a meaningful Christian Order that has the respect and admiration of the public at large. The principle tenets of Freemasonry and the

foundation of strong Christian values make this Order stand for something of incredible value.

Those who have worked in the vineyards of Templar Masonry find it rewarding, educational, comforting and satisfying. It is not entirely about ritual although our ritual offers valuable lessons and insights. I once confessed to my Pastor that I learned more about scripture from Freemasonry than I have from anywhere else. But just as importantly as our ritual is the set of values that are laid in the hearts of men who are working for the good of the Order and the benefit of others. It is an amazing responsibility to be the successors in this modern world of an Order so ancient, so noble and so glorious.

So perhaps a better question would be, “Why would any Christian Mason not want to be a Knight’s Templar?” In any case, we as Templars should hold the bar high! We as Templars should set the example. I have heard it said many, many times that “Chivalry is dead.” I think that what people really mean is that courtesy just isn’t present like it used to be. There’s less of it. This is something I can certainly agree with. As Templars and Masons, we should be called to a higher standard. Chivalry is not dead. Chivalry exists wherever an individual is willing to put forth an effort to be courteous, generous, or to invest their lives, fortunes or honor for the benefit of someone else.

As a Knight Templar, you have many opportunities to help others that are less fortunate. One of the obvious ways of course is through our Knights Templar Eye Foundation, which is our major charity. Another is our Knights Templar Educational Foundation that helps provide educational advantages to the youth of this country. It has been a source of low cost loans for students to complete their college education. And all of you know about our Holy Land Pilgrimages which sends ordained Christian Ministers, at no cost to the Minister, on Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, for their spiritual enrichment, enthusiasm, and refreshed dedication. I think most of you are aware that Masonic membership is not required and the minister can be male or female.

As Knights Templar we also provide financial support, advisors and scholarships to Masonic-related Youth Organizations such as International Order of Rainbow for Girls, Job's Daughters, and Order of DeMolay. And there are a lot of ways not so obvious.

Loren Easley wrote “The Starfish Story”. I’m sure many of you have heard this, but bear with me as I retell it.

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean.

Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?"

The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean.

The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die."

"Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!"

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said, "I made a difference for that one."

God calls ordinary people to do extraordinary things!

You are an ordinary person that can make an extraordinary difference. And what do I mean by an extraordinary difference? No doctrine or faith or knowledge is of any value except as it bears fruit in action. As a Templar Mason, you are in a position to live out and exemplify your faith...to put it into action. When you take the time to help a child with the reading, math, or school work, this is an extraordinary thing. You may not fully understand the difference it can make to that child at that time, but, if you look at the lives that have been changed by an act as simple as this, you'd be impressed. Statistics used to get an estimate of how much space will be needed in prisons in the future, is based on the reading level being attained by the third graders.

That's part of why the Grand Lodge has adopted "Raising a Reader" as their primary focus for the next few years.

If you take the time to mow a lawn for one of our widows, this is an extraordinary thing. What greater value is there to a person than to know that someone cares enough about them to want to make things better or easier. When you take the time to genuinely listen to someone, even though you disagree with what they're saying, this can be an extraordinary thing. Again...someone cares enough to listen. Doing any random act of kindness. Making a difference for someone.

A line from one of my favorite songs, "The Impossible Dream", goes like this. "And the world will be better for this, that one man scorned and covered with scars, still strove with his last ounce of courage, to reach the unreachable star." Be that one man. Be a true Templar.

As a Templar, step up to the plate. Make the commitment to make a difference in the lives around you. Make a commitment to "set the example". Be a man of integrity. Keep the bar raised high.

Set the example by your actions and encourage the other Sir Knights in your Department to do the same. Be courteous to others at all times. Do not be disrespectful. Treat others as you would like to be treated. I'm not just talking about "big things"

but in every day small things. If you attend an event or dinner, let “guests” go first. Let the officers go last. Be chivalrous to the ladies and treat them with respect. Be kind, understanding, and patient with children. They should realize that they too have value and that you recognize that value. Follow the rules. If it’s a bad rule, there is a proper way to see that it gets changed. But, until then, set the example and follow the rules. Pay attention to your surroundings, what you’re doing, what you’re saying, and the language you’re using. Especially when we have youth present, but at all times. If someone relates something negative to you about another person, don’t just assume it’s true and don’t pass it on to others. Instead, focus on what you have that’s positive to share. Be quick to give a kind word or to praise something noteworthy in others. Let the world know that on becoming a Knight Templar, you have become a man of high integrity and honor.

So, why should every Christian Mason be a Knights Templar? To be around men of like stock who do things that will continually remind him that, with God’s help, he has the power to make a difference in the lives of others. To be with an organization that allows him to not only learn about his faith, but to live it!

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

IV

CHRIST AROSE

by Rev. Thomas M. Boles, Grand Prelate

Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-9 or Luke 24:1-12

Opening prayer:

O MERCIFUL GOD, WE PRAISE YOU, WE WORSHIP YOU, WE THANK YOU! DURING HIS HOLY SEASON, WE GATHER TO WORSHIP IN THE NAME OF JESUS BY WHOSE DEATH AND RESURRECTION WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED. UPON EACH PERSON GATHERED HERE, LET YOUR BLESSINGS REST. RENEW OUR FRATERNITY IN CALIFORNIA, AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS YOUR PEOPLE ASSEMBLE IN PRAISE AND GRATITUDE FOR THIS HOLY PERIOD. IN THE NAME OF THE RISEN LORD, WE PRAY.

AMEN

* * * * *

Pastor Billy Strayhorn tells a wonderful true story about a pastor who was asked to conduct a graveside burial service for a member of his church. The only problem was, the cemetery was more than an hour and a half away from the church. The pastor wasn't feeling well so he decided to ride with the Funeral Director in the hearse.

By the time they arrived at the cemetery, the pastor was truly sick with flu-like symptoms. Feverish and sick, he made it through the service, but he was deathly pale and obviously not well. As they headed back home, the funeral director suggested the pastor stretch out in the back of the hearse since it was now empty. It had curtains and nobody would see him. The pastor decided to do so and promptly fell asleep.

He awoke when the vehicle stopped. Taking a few minutes to fully awaken, he slowly sat up and drew the side curtain to see where he was. Suddenly he was face to face with a gas station attendant pumping gas. Needless to say the attendant was surprised and shocked to see a body in the back of the hearse rise up and stare back at him. With all the color drained out of him and his eyes as wide as saucers, the attendant ran on shaky legs back into the gas station, while the funeral director tried to catch up to explain the whole situation.

"I'm pretty sure," says Pastor Strayhorn, "that's how the women who came to the empty tomb that first Easter morning felt. They had to

have run on shaky legs back to the disciples, their hearts pounding with both shock and excitement.”

What happened that first Easter is an amazing story! A man had risen from the dead. Every once in a while we hear about someone whose heart has stopped and is given CPR and revived. But three days in the ground, well? Never before and never since has this happened in human history.

Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee was once asked if he believed in the resurrection. “Of course I do,” said Huckabee. “Dead people vote in every election we have in Arkansas. Resurrection is very real to us.”

Huckabee was being humorous. But one woman took this question more seriously. She was sitting in church during the Advent season at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In the course of the sermon the priest asked this question, “What do you really want for Christmas this year?”

This woman says she nearly rose from her pew to answer the priest like this, “What I would really like, for Christmas is, to believe in the resurrection.”

I can’t help but believe that many of us are in the same boat. How else can you explain our anemic faith? If we really believed in the resurrection, if we really believed that when we leave this world we shall stand before God clothed in a new body, if we really believed that Christ lives and that he is in the world today, would we not live

more confident, more courageous, more committed lives?

Jesus Christ rose from the dead. That's too much for some to accept. From the very beginning both dedicated disciples as well as cynical critics have struggled with the story of the resurrection. We can read that in the biblical testimony.

Some said his disciples stole his body. Remember that was Mary Magdalene's response when she first saw the empty tomb. "She came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'" (John 20:2).

Matthew puts the blame on the chief priests for the popularity of this stolen body scenario. He says in chapter 28 that the chief priests gave the soldiers a large sum of money to say that his disciples came during the night and stole Christ's body while they were asleep. Then Matthew adds, "And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day." To some people, the stolen body scenario was credible.

Others contended he was not really dead when he was laid in the empty tomb, he only swooned, or passed out, on the cross, that he only seemed to be dead.

One lady wrote in to a question and answer forum. she wrote, "Dear Sirs," "Our pastor said on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that

the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? (Signed) Sincerely, Bewildered.”

Someone on the forum named Charles wrote back: “Dear Bewildered, Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for six hours; run a spear through his side, put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens. Sincerely, Charles.”

The resurrection is simply too good to be true in some people’s eyes. There must be some rational explanation, anything but a resurrection. And yet it is true. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He is alive today. How can I say that with such confidence? Let me give you three good reasons this Easter season, 2012.

First of all, those who experienced his resurrection are such credible witnesses. Don’t take my word for it. Go back and read the record yourself. That’s what attorney and journalist Lee Strobel did. For a time, Strobel says he was too intellectual to accept the resurrection of Jesus as established fact. In his book “God’s Outrageous Claims” he writes: “I used to consider the Resurrection to be a laughable fairy tale. After all, Yale Law School had trained me to be coldly rational, and my years of sniffing for news at the Chicago Tribune had only toughened my naturally cynical personality. But intrigued by changes in my wife after she became a Christian, I spent nearly two years systematically using my journalistic and legal experience to study the evidence for the

Resurrection and the credibility of Jesus' claims to being God. I emerged totally convinced and gave my life to Christ."

I would challenge you, if you have any doubts at all about the historical record of the resurrection, go back and read the story for yourself. The story does not read as something that was made up. It's too chaotic. Notice the initial reaction of the disciples to the RESURRECTION; they did not believe it themselves. Mark tells us that when Mary Magdalene and the other women told the eleven disciples that they had seen the risen Lord, even "they did not believe it" (16:11). Luke is more blunt: "The disciples did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11).

Even after the risen Christ had made himself known TOO many witnesses, Thomas, one of Christ's most sincere disciples, would not believe that it could be so. He had to see for himself (John 20:24-25). Even when Christ made his final appearance to his disciples on the mountain where Christ gave them the great commission, Matthew adds these incredible words, "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted" (28:16-17). They were in Christ's presence "but still, some doubted."

This is not propaganda. It is not a story fabricated to deceive. No one tried to iron out all of

the wrinkles in order to convince us. This is the jumbled testimony of actual witnesses to the most amazing event in history. These witnesses to Christ's resurrection recorded their testimony with all the doubts of their friends and the accusations of their enemies left intact. This is the first reason I believe in the resurrection: those who experienced his resurrection are such credible witnesses.

What is most impressive, of course, is how the resurrection affected their lives, and ours too. These disciples were absolutely transformed. They moved from doubting and fearful to dynamic and ferocious in their witness to the resurrection. Before Christ was crucified Simon Peter denied he even knew Christ and yet, a mere seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost Peter told the story of Christ's death and resurrection with such conviction and power that three thousand people became believers (Acts 2:41). How do you explain such a change in a person's demeanor? It's incredible. Even more impressively, none of those who claimed to have met Christ after his resurrection ever recanted. They were persecuted, tortured, even martyred, and right to the very end they stayed true to their testimony. He is alive!

Father Basil Pennington, a Roman Catholic monk, tells of an encounter he once had with a teacher of Zen. in case you haven't heard of zen, it is a japanese sect of mahayana buddishim, that aims at enlightenment by direct intuition through meditation. Pennington was at a retreat there. As

part of the retreat, each person met privately with this Zen teacher. Pennington says that at his meeting the Zen teacher sat there before him smiling from ear to ear and rocking gleefully back and forth. Finally the teacher said: “I like Christianity. But I would not like Christianity without the resurrection. I want to see your resurrection!”

Pennington notes that, “With his directness, the teacher was saying what everyone else implicitly says to Christians: You are a Christian. You are risen with Christ. Show me, what this means for you in your life, and I will believe.” That is how people know if the resurrection is true or not. he said “Does it affect how we live?”

The amazing thing is that every one of Jesus’ disciples passed this test. Their lives were dramatically turned upside down by their encounter with Christ. How would you ever make something like this up and stick to it when stones were piercing your flesh as did Stephen, the first Christian martyr? Or as you were being crucified upside down like Simon Peter? It is hard to dispute the testimony of someone who is so convinced of what they have experienced that they are willing to suffer and die to tell the story.

A day after the terrible tragedy at Columbine High, CNN journalist Larry King did a live interview with a teenage girl named Mickie Cain, a student who had witnessed the massacre. Mickie was having a difficult time maintaining her

composure and was able to blurt out only a few words before lapsing into uncontrollable sobs. Larry King was patient and gave her plenty of time to regain her composure. Mickie recounted the chilling story: “Let me tell you about my friend Cassie,” she said. “Cassie, was amazing, She completely stood up for God when the killers asked her if there was anyone in the classroom who had faith in Christ. She spoke up, and said she did, and they shot her for it.”

Such a testimony as Cassie made that day makes our witness look pretty pathetic, doesn't it? The critical question is: would you make such a sacrifice for something that you knew was patently untrue? Of course not! And neither would those early disciples of Christ. Don't take my word for it. Read the record for yourself. These were not wild-eyed fanatics. They were intelligent men and women, responsible men and women, sensible men and women, but something dramatic had happened in their life, something so dramatic, so extraordinary that it could not be denied. They had met Christ, risen from the grave, and they would not testify otherwise even while being tortured.

The witnesses are so credible, the change in their lives so dramatic, that their testimony cannot be disregarded.

However, I said there were three reasons that I can say with such confidence that Christ rose from the grave. Here is the third: without the

resurrection, the presence of suffering in our world simply cannot be explained.

You and I have wrestled with this problem many times. How can a loving God place us in a world where there is so much suffering? In my heart I can only accept one real explanation. It is because the only way we grow spiritually is by struggling with pain. A person who never confronts pain and suffering will forever remain a spiritual infant. But to what end do we grow spiritually? It is so that we might become like Christ, that we might be fit to dwell with him eternally. The only way I can accept some of the deep tragedies I see in this world, and especially in the hospital where I work, is to believe that this world is a preparatory school for a better world yet to come.

Consider the fact of aging. That which is physical gradually drops away. The flesh withers! Energy declines! The body is simply not capable of earlier feats.

You may recall years ago when fitness legend Jack LaLanne celebrated his seventieth birthday by towing 70 boats containing 70 people for a mile across Long Beach Harbor. Amazing! But wait. He did it by holding the rope in his teeth. Why? Well, he was handcuffed and wearing leg shackles! Unbelievable! At last report LaLanne was still going strong in his nineties. But friends, one day even Jack LaLanne's body will give out on him and only one thing will remain, his spirit. This

world is not our final destination. It is but a prelude to a grander production.

This world is a preparatory school. Without the resurrection, it is simply impossible to explain a world in which people suffer. But the resurrection is real. Christ is alive. Lee Strobel is only one among many intelligent and scientifically trained men and women who have studied the record carefully and come to the conclusion that the evidence is overwhelming: Christ rose from the dead. He is alive and he is available in our world today.

I ran across a beautiful story recently about a woman named Rosemary who works in the Alzheimer's Unit of a nursing home. Rosemary and a colleague named Arlene brought the residents of the home together one Good Friday afternoon to view Franco Zeffirelli's acclaimed production, "Jesus of Nazareth". They wondered whether these elderly Alzheimer's patients would even know what was going on, but they thought it might be worth the effort.

When they finally succeeded in getting everyone into position, they started the video. Rosemary was pleasantly surprised at the quiet attention being paid to the screen.

At last, came the scene, where Mary Magdalene comes upon the empty tomb and sees Jesus' body not there. An unknown man, in reality the risen Christ, asks Mary why she is looking for the living among the dead. Mary runs as fast as she

can back to the disciples and tells Peter and the rest with breathless excitement, “He’s alive! I saw Him, I tell you! He’s alive.” The doubt in their eyes causes Mary to pull back! “You don’t believe me, You don’t believe me!”

From somewhere in the crowd of Alzheimer’s patients came the clear, resolute voice of Esther, one of the patients. “We believe you,” she said: “We believe you!”

Well, Esther, I believe it too. The evidence is overwhelming, and life makes no sense without it. Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Closing Prayer:

GO FROM THIS PLACE IN CELEBRATION
BECAUSE YOU HAVE HEARD OF GOD’S
GREAT PLAN OF SALVATION FOR
HUMANKIND. GO IN JOY BECAUSE THE
LIVING JESUS HAS REDEEMED YOU! GO IN
TRUST AND HOPE BECAUSE THE HOLY
SPIRIT GUIDES YOU. GO IN REMEMBRANCE
BECAUSE THIS IS THE DAY WE RECALL THE
RESURRECTION. CHRIST HAS RISEN!
CHRIST HAS RISEN, INDEED.

AMEN

V

**VESPER SERVICES
POWER PRAYING**
by Rev. Thomas M. Boles, Grand Prelate

John 17:1-11

Opening prayer:

WE'VE COME FROM WHAT SEEMS LIKE A WHIRLWIND OF ACTIVITIES AND OVERLOADED SCHEDULES. NOW WE'RE SITTING IN THIS PLACE OF WORSHIP HOPING TO BE STILLED. OUR MINDS ARE STILL CLUTTERED BY THE THINGS WE'VE BEEN DOING AND BY WHAT WE HAVE YET TO DO. OUR THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS ARE INATTENTIVE BECAUSE OF STRUGGLING RELATIONSHIPS AND UNSETTLING CIRCUMSTANCES. MAY WE INSTEAD GET CAUGHT UP IN THE HOPE OF COMFORT. MAY OUR THOUGHTS BE DOMINATED BY WORDS THAT BRING

PEACE. MAY OUR EMOTIONS BE CALMED BY YOUR SPIRIT. O DEAR JESUS HELP US TO CONCENTRATE ON YOU, YOUR WORD, AND YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, THAT WE MAY WORSHIP YOU IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

AMEN

A man stopped by a computer store where he'd recently purchased a personal computer. "I have a question about a computer I bought here the other day," he said to a salesman who greeted him enthusiastically.

"What kind did you buy?" the salesman asked.

"A Crimean Extravaganza 1900," said the customer.

"Wow! That's a nice computer," exclaimed the salesman. "It has a 100 megahertz pentium processor, 16 megabytes of ram, a 256 kilobyte pipeline burst cache. It has PCI 64-bit video and a 1.2 gigabyte hard drive. What more could you possibly want in a computer? Do you need some add-ons? More memory? An accelerator board?"

"Actually," explained the customer, "I just need to know how to turn the fool thing on!"

Those of us who are not computer nerds can sympathize with that poor customer, can't we? But, on a different level, isn't that the critical question that confronts us as we try to make sense out of our lives? We have at our fingertips more knowledge than our ancestors could ever have imagined. We have gadgets to make our lives so much easier than earlier generations. Space age technology and transportation take us around the world in a few moments or a few hours, depending on whether it is our mind or our body we want to send on the journey. In many ways, Solomon in all his glory did not live with as many advantages as you and I. The only question we have to ask about our lives is, "Where do you turn the thing on?" Where does the power come from to make our lives effective, fulfilling and worthwhile?

We know where it came from for the early church. Power came from prayer. After Christ's Ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. There they gathered in the upper room. The writer of the book of Acts tells us they engaged in one practice and one practice only, they were "continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." There it is, the secret of the early church's dynamism and prayer.

They did not know it at the time, but those early followers were preparing themselves for the

great outpouring of God's Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and they were doing it with prayer. THERE ARE PEOPLE TODAY WHO STILL DRAW THEIR POWER FROM PRAYER.

Eric Liddell was such a man. Eric Liddell, the Olympic champion runner who was the hero of the movie CHARIOTS OF FIRE, knew about the power of prayer. He was in Weinsen prison in North China during World War II. His biographer speaks of the high esteem with which Liddell was held in the prison camp. A woman who was in the camp at the time told of Liddell's extraordinary leadership power, his joy, and his integrity in the midst of enormous hardship. But she also revealed the secret of Liddell's power.

Every morning about 6 a.m., with curtains tightly drawn to keep in the shining of their peanut-oil lamp, lest the prowling sentries would think someone was trying to escape, Liddell used to climb out of his top bunk, passing the sleeping forms of his dormitory mates. Then, at the small Chinese table, he and another prisoner would sit close together with just enough light to illumine their Bibles and notebooks. Silently they read, prayed, thought about what should be done. Eric was a man of prayer who talked to God all the time, naturally. His life was grounded in God, in faith, and in trust. No wonder he exhibited such strength, such confidence, such power.

People who do great things for God invariably have their lives plugged into the incredible power of God's love and God's mercy through prayer. It is a secret many of us need to learn! We have power walking and power lunches and power wardrobes; but what we really need is to discover power praying.

NOW BEFORE WE GO ANY FARTHER,
WE NEED TO SEE THAT THERE ARE SOME
THINGS THAT PRAYER IS NOT!

PRAYER IS NOT A MEANINGLESS
RITUAL. There are many prayers that are more
ceremonial than they are sincere outpourings of the
heart.

RLD tells about a prank he played on a friend in seminary named Joe. He and Joe had a class together. It was taught by one of the most boring professors in the school. Like all of the classes in their school, this one always opened and closed with a word of prayer. RLD's friend Joe had a habit of dozing off during the hour-long lecture. This gave RLD an idea. Right in the middle of the lecture, after Joe had been asleep for about five minutes, RLD leaned over and nudged him. "Joe," he whispered, "class is over! The professor called on you to close in prayer!"

Immediately Joe leaped to his feet, startling not only the professor but the entire class, as he announced, “Fellow students, let us pray.” Joe knew the ritual so well, says RLD, he could go from a sound sleep to leading in prayer at the snap of a finger.

Prayer is not a meaningless ritual. I suspect most public prayers fall in this category of mere ritual.

Some time back THE JOYFUL NOISELETTER carried a story about a group of students who developed a tactic for dealing with the controversial 1992 Supreme Court ban on prayers at public school graduation ceremonies.

After all the diplomas had been passed out at the May 28 commencement at River Valley High School in Three Oaks, MI, an unidentified graduate deliberately sneezed loudly. In unison, all 95 graduates exclaimed: “God bless you!”

Leave it to young people to figure out a novel solution to a complex problem. But I don’t believe I would count that as a prayer. Prayer is not a meaningless ritual. NEITHER IS PRAYER A SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK.

As Sam Levenson observed long ago, there will always be prayer in schools as long as there are

exams. How many of us try to use prayer as a bail-out device? How many of us use prayer as a way of avoiding responsibility? I can remember well, the many Friday exams in all three seminaries! It seems all I did was pray over each question. And, would you believe, it seems always got the right answer. I know I could not have graduated without those prayers!

I heard about some volunteers for an evangelism team in a local church who were being briefed on techniques for making calls. One newly elected member was obviously timid about her responsibilities. The pastor hoped to encourage her by stressing the power of prayer. he said: "You'll find it helpful, before you make the call, to spend a few moments talking to God about it,".

When the volunteers met later to report, this timid lady was bubbling with enthusiasm. "Oh, thank you," she said to the pastor, "for what you said about prayer. I tried it and it works."

"I'm glad to hear that," beamed the pastor. "Tell us what happened."

"Well, I prayed the people wouldn't be home," she said, "and they weren't."

Some of us have prayed prayers like that, haven't we? I doubt that God takes such prayers

very seriously. Prayer, was never intended to be a substitute for fulfilling our responsibilities. Indeed, just the opposite is true. Prayer accompanies steadfast devotion.

Charles Sinclair, a lawyer in Coral Gables, Florida, was locked inside the trunk of a car by kidnappers. He eventually escaped after his captors drove into a hospital complex and slowed for a speed bump, allowing him to dive out of the trunk and alert the guards. Sinclair had pulled over to the side of the road to check on his car when two men came up, forced him into the trunk, and drove away with his car. He made his escape with a tire iron with which he broke open the trunk latch. He said, "I knew my only chance was to get the trunk open. I was praying, and I was prying like mad."

One commentator later noted, "Praying and prying, what a beautiful expression of the proper approach to trouble. Our approach is usually complaining and crying. How much better to pray and pry, praying as if everything depended on God, and prying as if everything depended on us." Prayer is not a meaningless ritual. Neither is it a substitute for hard work.

RATHER PRAYER IS PLACING OUR NEEDS IN GOD'S CARE AND GOING ON WITH OUR LIVES TRUSTING THAT GOD WILL SUPPLY OUR NEEDS. Prayer is a daily

offering of our deepest concerns to God, then giving our best to God and trusting that God will handle the rest. Such prayer is powerful, for one thing, because it allows us to relax and focus on the things we need to do.

It's comparable to an experience that Richard Speight had.

Speight is a golfer, though not always a good one. yes, i can personally relate to this! Speight would hit a golf ball with all his might and it wouldn't go where he wanted it to go. One day, a stranger was playing ahead of him who had no trouble hitting the ball both straight and far. Speight, on the other hand, lumbered along the fairway in a grumpy mood slapping at the ball, moving it a few yards at a time. The gentleman ahead of him offered some advice.

"You're trying too hard, young fellow," he said. "Just relax. Take it easy. Let the club do the work. That's what golf's all about, you know."

This wasn't the first time Speight had heard this. It was, however, the first time he was willing to listen. The club was designed to hit the ball, the other man told him. Richard was trying to move the ball with brute force. "I had been feeling totally responsible and totally inadequate at the same time," Speight admitted. He took the man's advice

and let the club do the work and what a difference it made. The ball rose, sailed smoothly down the fairway, and fell in the middle of the green. Unfortunately, Richard Speight reflects, his prayer life and his golf game have been strikingly similar. In both, he always felt the need to always be in control. He prayed for results, but always told God what the results should be. Likewise he prayed for action, and almost always told God what action to take. Speight learned a valuable lesson that day on the golf course. Instead of relying on his own abilities, he began trusting in God.

Many of us fill our lives with unnecessary stress, unnecessary worry, unnecessary aggravation because we will not trust our lives to God. Do the best you can, open your heart up to God in prayer, and then let go.

That is what a small group of praying Christian businessmen in Charlotte, North Carolina, did many years ago. During the depression of 1932, they became greatly concerned about the spiritual and moral decay in their city. Believing that the situation called for an all-out evangelistic effort, they asked the ministerial association to undertake a united crusade, assuring the clergy of their support. However, the ministers, somewhat skeptical of this type of meeting, declined the request.

Though disappointed, the laymen still felt that God wanted to do something big in their city, and not knowing what else to do, they decided to call for a day of prayer. All who could were asked to come to a quiet, wooded spot on the outskirts of Charlotte and spend the day waiting upon the Lord. Twenty-nine persons responded to that first invitation. As they fasted and prayed, the faith of the men grew stronger. They prayed that God would be pleased to send a revival to their city and that it would spread over the state and out to the ends of the earth. This time proved such a blessing that in the months following, similar meetings were called. Two of these were held on the farm of W. Frank Graham, a dairyman and devout churchman, who shared the men's concern for revival. Particularly was he burdened for one of his own children, William, a teenage boy who needed to come to grips with God.

Out of these repeated times of prayer, the men felt led to sponsor an evangelistic meeting in the city. In the summer of 1933, they purchased a small tent and set it up for gospel services. This effort was so encouraging that the men decided to undertake a much larger crusade the following year. The Reverend Mordecai Ham was invited to preach. Many difficulties were encountered in getting ready for the meeting, and several times it seemed as if it would never materialize, but the men persisted in

their prayers and labors, and finally, in the fall of 1934, the Charlotte Crusade began.

What happened in that meeting is now well known. For it was there that the young boy, Billy Graham, along with many others, was converted. That's what I would call power praying. Prayer is not a substitute for hard work. It is not a meaningless ritual. Prayer is offering up our needs and concerns to God and trusting God to meet our needs. And God will meet our needs, if only we ask. Have you discovered, as millions others have, how much power there is in prayer?

Closing Prayer:

DEAR LORD JESUS, AS YOU TOLD YOUR DISCIPLES THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE POWER TO BE WITNESSES, MAY WE ALSO BE SENT FORTH WITH POWER TO WITNESS CONCERNING YOU. WHEN WE ENCOUNTER DISCORD AND INJUSTICE, MAY WE GIVE WITNESS TO YOUR PEACE. WHEN WE ENCOUNTER POVERTY AND BROKENNESS, MAY WE GIVE WITNESS TO YOUR COMPASION. WHEN WE COME ACROSS PAIN AND SUFFERING, MAY WE GIVE WITNESS TO YOUR HEALING AND COMFORT. WHEN WE COME ACROSS SPIRITUAL DEPRIVATION, MAY WE GIVE WITNESS TO YOUR SALVATION. WE ASK

**THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO BOTH
ACCEPT THE TRIALS OF LIFE, AND DO
ALL THAT WE CAN TO ALLEVIATE THEM,
RECOGNIZING, THAT IT IS IN YOU LORD,
THAT WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE
OUR BEING.**

AMEN