24/7 PRAYER RESOURCES

Notes

Shirley and Cheryl are both soldiers at Mandurah Corps Western Australia. They live in the small country town of Waroona where they lead the Waroona Outpost, holding fortnightly Sunday meetings as well as being involved in their local community. Shirley is also on the Senior Leadership Team at Mandurah Corps, and the Recruiting Sergeant for Waroona. Both Shirley and Cheryl regard it a privilege and a blessing to be able to do what they do, and to share the love of Jesus through blessing and prayer.

The power of blessing

by Shirley Templeman Twells and Cheryl Ciccotosto

Blessing others through prayer is more than a different way of praying, it's a new way of living, living like Jesus, because we always want the best for others. As we bless people and places in the name of Jesus, we change the atmosphere around us, we bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth as we declare the praises of our wonderful God.

Hi, my name is Shirley and I would like to share with you an amazing move of God which is taking place all over the world as people are discovering the power of blessing others through prayer.

I have been involved in the ministry of prayer for over 20 years, but something happened almost five years ago now, that not only changed the way I pray, but changed the way I live. The same thing happened for my friend, Cheryl. We were introduced to the book, '*The Grace Outpouring*' by Rory Godwin. It told the story of how God was moving in people's lives at a tiny Christian retreat centre in South Wales called Ffald-y-Brenin (pronounced *falder er brenin*. In Welsh it means: 'The Sheepfold of the King').

What struck my friend Cheryl and I, was the simplicity and gentleness of this move of God, and yet it was so powerful! It resonated within our spirits because this was what we had each been searching for, for so long. We were aching to see God move in people's lives. Longing for people's lives to be transformed by encounters with Jesus. This is what we read about in the Bible, this is how the New Testament church lived and how we really believed we should be living too, but we weren't. Prayer somehow, often seemed to be hard work and the results were minimal. So what was missing? What were we missing? We weren't sure, but we knew that *something wasn't right*.

Then came along 'The Grace Outpouring', a move of God so unexpected, even by the people in the midst of it, and yet its impact was, and continues to be world-wide.

Cheryl and I read the book at the same time (on the plane going to a Dwelling in the Spirit conference), and as we read, our spirits leapt with joy. *This* was what we had been missing! How we longed to visit Ffald-y-Brenin. And amazingly, God got us there (But that's another story).

So because of what we learned there, and through this book, we began to pray differently, which caused us to start living differently, and things haven't been the same since.

In Numbers 6:22–27 we read:

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them" (NIV).

This is how the priests were to bless the people, and as they did, God released his blessings upon them. Jesus is our High Priest, and now, as believers in him, we are called into a new priesthood, the priesthood of all believers.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9 NIV).

This is what we are called to do as believers in Christ—bless people in his name. That is, speak over people the blessings of God, always declaring the best for them. That is what God desires for all his children, only the best for them.

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When we speak blessings over others, we are being 'grace first' people. We don't come to them with judgement or condemnation, but rather we give them a picture of what God desires for their lives. When people receive blessings over their lives in Jesus' name, they just want to know Jesus. Generally speaking, people are not used to being recipients of the kindness and goodness of God, and yet the world is crying out for his touch. If we are to be like Jesus, then we must become a people of blessing, 'grace-first' people and demonstrate God's kindness to them. After all, the Bible tells us *'that God's kindness that leads you towards repentance'* (Romans 2:4).

Now some might say that we can get 'out of balance' with all this 'grace and blessing' talk, and that's true, we could. But something amazing happens when the blessings of God are released upon people, their hearts are softened and they begin to respond to the voice of God.

Many years ago, whilst talking with an elderly lady, she began to tell me of her childhood on a farm, and about her family. She said, "You know, our father was so lovely, we just *wanted* to be good for him". That's what happens when people have an encounter with the living God and experience his goodness. We, who belong to Jesus, can lead them to that place of encounter through blessing them. *We* don't do anything, *God does everything*.

It is such a privilege to pray for people in this way. Blessing is also a form of spiritual warfare, because nothing can stand against the overwhelming goodness of God. Everything that sets itself up against the will of God, must yield to the name of Jesus Christ.

Through this new move of God, people are being healed, broken lives are being restored, estranged families are being reconciled, and people are having encounters with the living God that change them forever.

But God's blessing isn't exclusively for Ffald-y-Brenin, although he is using this place mightily for his purposes. God blesses people everywhere; he also blesses places and his creation. Creation and communities are being restored as they are blessed.

The way of blessing

Let me share with you some testimonies of God's grace as we have blessed *our* community.

Cheryl writes a column called 'The Power of Blessing' in our local community newspaper once a month. The following is taken from her most recent column:

'It may surprise readers to learn that many Christians in our community are praying blessings over Waroona and surrounding areas on a regular basis. We are seeing many answers to prayer as God blesses us. So what better way to start the New Year than by speaking blessings over everyone in our community in the name of Jesus?

***We bless every marriage and family in the Name of Jesus that** there may be happy and strong unions with relationships that are loving, kind, generous and forgiving. We bless every household that there may be love, peace, joy, understanding, wisdom and ample provision. We bless every child that they may grow up loved, protected, nurtured and affirmed in preparation for their adult lives.*

***We bless every school in the Name of Jesus** to be a safe and secure place for teachers and students, providing an environment where children can learn and play and develop healthy relationships. We bless each teacher's ability to impart knowledge and each child's capacity to learn, growing in wisdom, knowledge and understanding to reach their full potential.*

***We bless every wholesome business and enterprise in the Name of Jesus** to prosper and be successful in order to provide continuing service to the region and employment for those needing work. We bless each business and enterprise to operate with integrity and to be protected from fraud or theft.*

***We bless every service organisation in the Name of Jesus** with strong leadership, dedicated workers and ample provision. We bless every facility in our region with protection from damage or vandalism. We bless every worker and volunteer with protection and provision as they serve our community.*

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We bless the frail, infirm and vulnerable in the Name of Jesus *to prosper in spirit, soul and body that they may be in good health, protected from every sickness and disease. We bless the sick with a speedy recovery and the frail and vulnerable to receive the help, care, understanding and protection they need.*

We bless the highways and roads leading to and from Waroona in the Name of Jesus *that travellers will have safe passage, being vigilant, attentive and respectful toward fellow travellers.*

Expect to see good things happening in Waroona! God keeps his promises! There is power in 'the way of blessing', Cheryl.'

Blessing in prayer

(These prayers are adapted from the books 'The Grace outpouring' and 'The Way of Blessing' by Roy Godwin, which is what the author encourages us to do for our own communities, why not try it for yours?).

We also bless all the churches in town, their leaders and ministries.

Once, a lady come into our Community Prayer Meeting simply because she had heard that we prayed for businesses, and her son had just started a new business in town. The first year we began blessing the community, our annual agricultural show had the biggest attendance ever, 5,000 more people came that year than ever before, and Waroona Show was named ' the biggest one day show in Australia'! Another year, Christians prayed for a family atmosphere at the show because it had been getting out of hand with people consuming too much alcohol. It was reported in the newspaper that year, as a show with 'a real family atmosphere'! There are numerous accounts of God's goodness being demonstrated in our small town, and we believe that it is because our ever-faithful, loving God is releasing his blessings over this place as we bless in Jesus' name.

In recent days, there have been physical healings in our congregation and community as we have blessed people in Jesus' name. This is new to us, we've read about it, prayed for it, longed with all our hearts to see God touch people in such a way that they are filled with his joy and give him praise, and now this is happening. All praise and glory to God.

A friend who became a soldier recently, suffered a very physical attack as soon as she put her uniform on.

She could hardly walk into our meeting at Waroona, she was in so much pain. Three of us were there setting up for the meeting, so we immediately stopped what we were doing, laid hands on her and blessed her with healing in Jesus' name. The pain tried to stay but couldn't because of the overwhelming love and compassion of Jesus. Before the meeting began, she was fully restored, physically able to jump up and down! (an older lady!) Praise the Lord! All glory to him our healer.

There really is no 'formula' for blessing others through prayer, the Holy Spirit leads, and how we pray depends on each individual person and situation. But we are discovering that healing seems to come through revelation and compassion. It's the compassion of Jesus that heals.

Sometimes we weep with those we are praying for, other times the praying is swift and joyful. It really is all about being led by the Holy Spirit. However, I will share a couple of experiences in blessing others through prayer.

Recently, while at a Sunday morning service, as I came out of the prayer room just before the meeting began, I walked past a lady I knew and casually asked how she was. She said, "Actually, I'm not feeling very well, I feel very wobbly, not dizzy, but I feel like I'm going to fall over. I think I should go home." Now I sensed that this was not a 'falling over in the Spirit' kind of thing, she really was not well. But I didn't want her to go home and miss what God might want to say to her through that meeting. I didn't want the devil to have the last word. As I said, the meeting was just about to start, so I gently said to her, *"Let me pray for you" at which she was very pleased. So I placed my hands on her and I spoke words to this effect: "_____ Jesus loves you, and he doesn't*

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want you to feel unwell, he doesn't want you to be 'wobbly'. So in Jesus' name, I bless you, and I say to the 'wobbliness', the infirmity 'Get out now! I command you to go as quickly as you came. _____ in the name of Jesus, I release healing to you, no more unsteadiness now. All praise to God for the Kingdom of heaven has come near to you today (see Luke 10:9). Go in the strength of the Lord." Then we sat down and the meeting began. As the introduction for the last song played, I saw _____ get up and determinedly make her way to the front of the church to pick up the flag (she's the Flag Sergeant). She led the people in a 'Glory March' around the church all through the last song! I went up to her afterwards and said, "Well, *that* was a miracle!" She was so full of joy! Even as she left for home later on, she was still brimming over with joy at what Jesus had done for her! (And she still tells people about it!)

At our Waroona Outpost meetings, we stop to pray for anyone at any time if they are in need of prayer. A couple of weeks ago, one of my friends came in and she was in terrible pain because her shoulder hurt, she couldn't raise her arm. A few of us were there getting our 'before the meeting' coffee. Sometimes, it's the simplest prayers that amaze us. Me being me, said, *"Well that's no good! Let me bless you."* I put my hand on her shoulder and said: *"In the name of Jesus, be healed! There are no bad shoulders in heaven, so shoulder, align yourself with the Kingdom of Heaven. I bless you _____ to be able to move your arm. Holy Spirit, come. Thank-you Jesus. All praise to you."* And _____ raised her arm and praised God, and continued to do so all through the meeting.

As I said, this is all new to us, but we are *so* praising God! In one sense we are surprised that people seem to be so open to prayer, especially those who are not part of a church community. But in another sense, we shouldn't be surprised, because for a long time we have been asking God to soften the hearts of the people in our community so that they will respond to his voice. There is no 'formula', but we make sure that we tell people how much Jesus loves them, and that it is *Jesus* who heals them. Sometimes we fumble, we might not do things the way we would have liked to have done, or have expected to do, and yet, God always blesses. He blesses those we pray for, and he blesses us too. What a wonderful God!

I have walked with God for a long time. I've prayed all kinds of prayers, read many books on prayer, been to numerous prayer conferences, retreats and workshops, even led prayer retreats myself. But these last couple of years, I have seen more answers to prayer, experienced the reality of the touch of God, and seen more lives changed by his transforming power than I have ever seen before! And it's made me hungry, hungry for more of God, hungry for more people to experience his touch and to *really* know him.

One might think from reading this that all our days are filled with prayer and people being touched by God in special ways. But that's not how it is. Some weeks it does seem like that, but we, like everybody else, have families, responsibilities, challenging relationships and circumstances to live with every day. But, since discovering 'The Grace Outpouring', we are constantly aware of being called to minister to others in the name of the Lord.

The Bible says (Deuteronomy 10:8) that a priest was to do three things:

- Carry the Ark of the Covenant (the presence of God)
- Minister before God
- And bless the people in his name.

The Holy Spirit helping us, this is what we aim to do, every day, wherever we are. We have, together and individually, blessed others while sitting on a bench in a shopping centre, while having coffee in an airport lounge, while waiting in line to be served a meal - just a few examples. I once prayed for a lady while I was out walking, she was gardening and had just caught her leg on a thorn while pruning roses. She was concerned because she usually bled a lot with such things. I asked if I could pray for her, and she was very willing. I saw her a day or two later and discovered that God had healed her leg, she'd got up the next morning and it was fine. We gave thanks to Jesus. People tend to be willing to tell you their problems. So it's good to respond with, *"That's no good! May I bless you? I'm a Christian so I will bless you in Jesus' name, is that okay?"* I can't think of anyone who has refused a blessing.

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This way of living is so simple, so gentle, it's being like Jesus just where we are, and *anyone* can do it!

If I was to use the word of God to describe what happens when we bless in his name, I would use Ephesians 3:20:

'God can do anything, you know, far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us' (The Message).

In Jesus' name, I bless you to be a blessing to others.

Shirley Templeman Twells

References: *The Grace Outpouring by Roy Godwin – published by David C. Cook*

The Way of Blessing by Roy Godwin – Published by David C. Cook

The Power of Blessing by Cheryl Ciccotosto

Pool of Bethesda

As we bless our community in the Name of Jesus, we are continually seeing an 'outpouring of his grace.'

Some weeks ago, on one of my regular visits to our local aquatic centre, (accompanied by good friend and now newly enrolled fellow senior soldier, Janelle), we had an amazing encounter with the loving kindness of God, which is still continuing today. The Centre has become a place of ministry.

We were on our way to the showers after our swim and noticed a young woman in obvious distress in the office, talking with the manager and assistant manager. On seeing us she left them and came to talk, pouring out her heart. In the past, she has suffered serious back problems and endured spinal operations which have left her in constant pain. Swimming has been her passion but the doctors had just delivered heartbreaking news that she would now have to undergo more surgery, this time on her shoulder, meaning she would not be able to swim for a considerable time. They also warned her that there was no guarantee the radical operation would be successful. She was forlorn and totally devastated.

Our hearts were breaking for her so we asked her if we could pray for her to which she replied, "I pray all the time. I'm a Catholic." Even so, she allowed us to bless her with prayer. As we began to pray for her, she stopped us and poured out more of her story which was very sad. She certainly had been 'shouldering' many loads and 'bearing' many burdens over the years and recently had a relationship breakdown which had truly broken her heart. It was like her broken-ness of heart was manifesting as broken-ness in her body.

We prayed for her, telling her how much God loved her and blessed her in the Name of Jesus to be healed in her spirit, mind, emotions *and* body. After several minutes she casually said, "Oh well, my arm is better now', and raised her hand over her head to prove it; something she had been unable to do for quite a time! Praise God!

The next day the manager and assistant manager were in the office and keen to talk to us about 'Mary's healing.' She had gone back into the office after we had prayed to tell them that her shoulder was healed.

We were able to witness to them of the goodness and kindness of GOD and I said to them "You know, we don't just come here to swim, we pray blessings over the pool, that when the people get into the water they will be blessed and healed by God." We told them we bless the water and all the programs at the centre too and as we bless in the Name of Jesus, God releases His blessings to the people and over the centre."

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The assistant manager turned to the manager and said, "Well that explains it then Doug."

"Explains what?" we asked. Well, it appears that 'all of a sudden' the water in the pool has developed 'a naturally occurring copper element.' They don't know what has caused it or why it has suddenly occurred but it has therapeutic qualities! When people swim for any length of time they often are relieved of chronic pain for up to two hours after they get out of the water. The manager said it has the same effect as the wearing of copper bracelets. The copper in the water leaves a greenish 'halo' around the walls of the pool just above the level of the water! (Every time we look at the 'halo' we get filled with joy and remember to thank Him for His loving kindness).

We told them that nothing would ever convince us that God hadn't done that as an answer to our blessing prayers each day.

As a result of Mary's healing the manager urged the assistant manager to allow us to pray for the chronic neck pain she was suffering from. As we prayed she said, "It's the 'monkey on my back isn't it?" The 'monkey on her back' was on-going family issues and responsibilities that she was 'carrying' as a burden.

We prayed for her situation and assured her that God wanted to lift the responsibility from her shoulders and take care of her family. She got filled with joy and released. She was very excited, which is not her normal persona and said, "I don't believe it! I told Doug (the manager), I believed in this stuff because I saw how the Salvos helped Mum when she was dying, (another story to His praise). I can move my neck." And move her neck she did.

When I asked if it was completely free, she said, "Yes, pretty good, just a little 'tug' on the left side of the neck." We assured her that God loves her so much He doesn't want her to be partly healed, so we would pray for 'the tug' to go. We did, and it did, to the glory of God She was so joyful telling us she would be able to do her sewing again; something that had been impossible because of the pain. It was so precious to see her so filled with joy. We went home 'leaping and praising God!!!'

The next day we were able to share the testimonies with another of our 'pool buddies.' He had recently had a second knee reconstruction which wasn't recovering as fast as the first. He agreed for us to pray for him asking us if 'this stuff' worked. We assured him it did and blessed him in the Name of Jesus to be healed. He began to move his leg and said that he had more movement in it. Praise God!

Our Aqua Aerobics instructor has been conducting classes twice a week for at least three decades with class numbers ranging from six to ten for all of that time. In the last few weeks the numbers have more than doubled. We now have the biggest class in the Rec Centre and continually have in excess of twenty attending. The Centre has just employed a second instructor and scheduled another two classes per week.

God has really blessed our small community (population four and a half thousand), and multiplied not only the number attending but the number of classes as well. As Roy Godwin would say, 'We love what He is doing, we bless what He is doing and we ask Him to do more', always for His glory, and to point people to Jesus.

Last week, I said to one of the ladies struggling with back problems, (problems the doctors haven't been able to help), that I was sorry to hear of her plight and would be praying for her. She gave me the biggest hug and thanked me, so I put my hand on her back and simply blessed her in the Name of Jesus to be totally healed. When she got in to the water she commented her 'back was loving the water!' She got out of the pool with ease and the pained and strained look on her face was gone. She looked so light and continues to walk with ease and less pain. Thank you Jesus.

It is our heart's desire to see people healed and delivered; knowing the love of the Father, the saving grace of the Son and the comfort, friendship, fellowship and power of Holy Spirit.

We are continuing to pray that the hearts of the people in our community will be softened and opened to the saving grace of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour and we are seeing this happen before our very eyes.

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Waroona has in the past been known as 'a place where bad things happen.' Recently we have discovered that the actual name is said to mean 'a place of rest.'

We declare and decree (Job 22:28 Amp), in the Name of Jesus that Waroona is 'a place where good things happen, a place of rest' to the glory of God. Praise God He is 'establishing' the things we declare and decree in the Name of Jesus.

We also declare and decree that Waroona is the healthiest place to live in the nation and in the past few weeks, one of the doctor's surgeries in town has closed its doors! A co-incidence? I think not. Praise Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we could think or even dare to ask or imagine, (Eph 3:20).

Our dear Lord is continuing to open to us 'windows of opportunity' to pray for people and to bless them in the Name of His dear Son. We feel very privileged to be co-labourers with Him in His great work here on earth, in Waroona.

We love 'the way of blessing.' We love being 'grace first' people. We love what He is doing and continually ask Him to do more, that this whole community would come to know and love the one who loves them, that He might be glorified!

His is the power and to Him belongs, *all* the glory.

Every blessing,

Cheryl Ciccotosto