

*Have you ever had God answer a tiny prayer?*

I once prayed for lost keys. Lillian Harbeck, a family friend, lost her car keys in McCormik Place, Chicago, IL. It seemed impossible to find her keys in such a huge place. They could be anywhere.

- There was a carload of us teenagers she brought to a great Christian Concert.
- We stood by the car in the underground parking garage and prayed.



For context, McCormik Place is the largest convention center in North America.<sup>1</sup> About 40 minutes later Lillian returned and started the car. We prayed a prayer of thanks and then went home.

- God is **concerned with the little things** in our life. Jesus said, **God even knows when a little sparrow dies** (Mt 10:29).
- God **answers little prayers** to *build up our faith* to believe for the bigger, more difficult things.
- Jesus said, 'If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer (Mt 21:22 NIV).'

I believe **many of us trust God to answer our little prayers ... but we do not have faith for the big prayers.** **But if we have faith, God can turn our world upside down (Acts 17:6).**

**This week, if we pray and have faith, we can change the direction of this city and this nation. Let's pray and believe God for Him to change the world.**

It *cannot* be done **through voting or activism**, but *only through prayer*.

This year, 2026, is the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the USA.

- Fifty years ago, on America's sesquicentennial, the **nation was divided** in many ways. There were opposing opinions on Vietnam war, race, gay rights, union influence, equal rights.

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<sup>1</sup> [McCormick Place - Wikipedia](#), accessed 1-3-26.

- Nevertheless, because of prayer, the *Jesus People Revival* was at its peak.<sup>2</sup> People were coming to Jesus every day.

Today is a call to prayer and believe God for Him to change the world.

In the Assemblies of God, the **first full week of the year** is dedicated to prayer. This year's theme verse is Jer 29:7 <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/third-party-access-to-masstaxconnect-faqs#how-does-a-taxpayer-approve-a-third-party's-request-for-access-on-masstaxconnect?>

‘Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper (Jer 29:7 NIV).’



### 250 - Pray for America

*Jer 29:7*

I encourage you to **come out Monday through Friday** to pray, at 7 p.m. Various people will lead the prayers with Friday night being an *Encounter* night. **Prayer is needed** – on a national level, a church level and on an individual level.

- **A nation** cannot move in two different directions at the same time. We are experiencing wild political swings, like a pendulum, as the nation decides which direction to go.
- **CIC** always seems to be Satan's target. I believe we are going to see God's hand in our church this year. Prayers are essential.
- **You and I personally** need God's direction and help to keep going.

Jeremiah's encouragement to pray is an urgent call for us today to pray. His letter is a great example that prayer can change the world.

Jeremiah ministered near the collapse of Judah in 586 B.C.

‘As Jeremiah began to preach, the Assyrian empire was in decay ... Babylon, (and) the kingdom of the Medes stood waiting to pick the spoils.’<sup>3</sup>

Jeremiah served the final kings of Israel ...

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<sup>2</sup> The Southern Baptist convention reported the greatest number of baptisms between 1971-76 with 1972 as the peak. Ed Stetzer, ‘It Revival Here?’ *Outreach* (Jan /Feb 2026), 11.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 9.

- Josiah (31 years) – the last godly king, died in battle against Egypt.
- Jehoahaz (3 months) – Egyptian vassal, then deported to Egypt.
- Jehoiakim (11 years) –Egyptian vassal, then Babylon conquers Egypt.
- Jehoiachin (3 months) – Babylonian siege, surrender, and 1<sup>st</sup> deportation. Nebuchadnezzar carries all the treasure (gold & silver) from the Temple, all of Jerusalem – commanders, soldiers, craftsmen back to Babylon. Babylon is 300 miles away in what is now Iraq.

It must have been very difficult to see his nation totally collapse. **If we pray for America, we won't need to witness her decline.**

- The prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles between the first and final deportation to Babylon. Our passage today is famous for its wisdom and hope.
- Zedekiah (11 years) –Babylonian vassal, rebels, & the final deportation of remaining Israelites. Zedekiah watched his sons being killed and then they put out his eyes, so it was the last thing he saw.
- Nebuchadnezzar carries everything of value (bronze) from the Temple. He burns the Temple, destroys all the important buildings, and has Jerusalem's wall torn down. They 'Allowed the poorest people to stay behind to care for the vineyards and fields (2Ki 25:12 NLT).'

**Humility before God and prayer could have** changed things.

We have a great opportunity **to change the world** through prayer – big prayers.

- This week some **protesters in Iran** were shouting the word, “azadi,” the Farsi word for freedom.<sup>4</sup>
- We will pray for the regime change happening in **Venezuela** at the end of the message.
- Like the ancient Hebrews, we **too are strangers in America**, ‘Our citizenship is in **heaven (Phil 3:20)**.’ We can change America’s trajectory through prayer.

Jeremiah’s letter **should inspire us to pray** and believe God to change the world.

## 1. Jeremiah’s Letter.

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<sup>4</sup> Benoit Faucon, ‘Growing Iran Protests Put New Pressure on an Embattled Regime,’ WSJ (12/29/25), accessed 12/31/25.

'This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:  
5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease (Jer 29:4-6 NIV).'

The first thing Jeremiah wants them to do is **adjust their attitude** to Babylon.

- One of the classrooms in DCA has a sign that reads, 'attitude, not aptitude determines your altitude.'
- It is so true. You can **survive anything** with the right attitude.

Jeremiah wants them to **shift their thinking** from what they lost to what could be.

- Yes, you **lost your farms** - build new homes.
- Yes, the **vineyards** are gone - plant new gardens.
- Yes, you lost **family and friends** in this war - marry and let your children marry. **Increase**.
- Yes, you lost your **language**, your **Temple**, your **king**, your **army**, your very **identity** – but, God has given you a new calling.
- **Life will go on without Temple and its sacrifices.**

In the same way, we must **look to what can be** with God instead of what is right now.

This advice was **revolutionary**.

- This was the **opposite** of the hate they had for those who did this.
- It went **against the Jewish leadership** in exile who wanted to resist everything.
- It felt like **compromising**.

The most **astounding** part is the advice to pray for Babylon's prosperity: 'Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper (Jer 29:7 NIV)."

- Wow. These people killed most of their family and friends and destroyed their nation.
- Jesus said to 'pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5:44).' But this is a whole new level.

Jeremiah's friend, the prophet **Habakkuk** heard God say, 'I am raising up the Babylonians, a cruel and violent people ... <sup>7</sup>They are notorious for their cruelty and do whatever they like (Hab 1:6-7 NLT).'

- The Babylonians were **not nice people**. They conquered the Assyrians. They were fierce warriors.
- **Habakkuk asks, 'how can this be?'** 'You are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil (Hab 1:13 NLT).'

- **God assures** the prophet that 'the righteous will live by faith (Hab 2:4 NLT).'

Praying for Babylon's prosperity.

1. It was practical (29:7). 'If it prospers, you too will prosper (Jer 29:7).' If for no other reason, we must **pray for stability and revival** in America, so that our sons and daughters can have a good life.
2. It built hope (29:11). They needed to think 'my family will do okay here. We can prosper here.' **People need hope.** "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jer 29:11 NIV)."
  - **Babylon** was *not* the end for Israel.
  - **America** is *not* at the end. **Let's imagine** what could be when we pray.
3. It was humbling (29:12-14).
  - Israel was **in this situation** because it had forgotten to seek God in all things.
  - Prayer for Babylon, in a sense, **forced them to repent**.
  - They had **no choice but to turn** their hearts back to God. 'Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup>I will be found by you,' declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity (Jer 29:12-14 NIV).'

We must **pray for America**. I do **not believe** America is an evil nation like Babylon, **but we too are foreigners to this world**.

Sometimes we pray only for little things, but **we must pray big, bold prayers** so that America will prosper.

- If **America prospers**, we will too.
- The next **generation needs hope**.
- We must **humble ourselves**. 'If my people ... will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2Ch 7:14 NIV).'

Jeremiah was over 60 when he went into exile and did not live long enough to see his prayers answered, but Daniel did.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Daniel's Prayer & Faith.

**Daniel was a teenager** when he was carried into Babylonian exile.

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<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah was around 60 years old. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, NICOT, 106.

- The book of Daniel has a **lot of great stories** about his purity, his faith, and the miracles he experienced.
- **Because of his aptitude**, he rose to a very high position in the Babylonian government.
- He prospered and served the kings of Babylon. He served six kings of Babylon.<sup>6</sup>

**Fast forward 60 years.** Daniel is now an old man. He was there when the Babylonian empire fell to the Mede & Persian empire. It's a great story:

- Daniel was **called from retirement** to interpret mysterious handwriting on the wall during a drunken party.
- He **interprets the mystery** as the Medes and Persians will conquer Babylon. Daniel was promoted to the third highest position in the land.
- **That night Darius the Mede** led his troops through the water supply system. The Babylonians were so drunk that they were conquered without incident.
- Daniel went onto **serve to two more kings**, this time emperors of the Medes and Persians.<sup>7</sup>

**Daniel followed Jeremiah's letter and prayed for Babylon to prosper.** It says that it was his **habit to pray**. 'He went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God (Dan 6: 10 NLT).'

- I am sure **Daniel prayed for the exile** to be over; he faced Jerusalem.
- But **because he took Jeremiah's letter seriously**, I am convinced he prayed for Babylon to prosper. 'I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet ... <sup>3</sup>So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes (Da 9:2-3 NLT).'
- **Daniel did well in Babylon** and under the Medo-Persian rulers. He prospered because Babylon prospered.

**Their prayers changed history – a big thing!**

- Daniel lived to **see the first exiles return** to Jerusalem in 538 B.C.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.), Daniel 2-4; Amel-Marduk (561-560 B.C.), Jer 52:1; Neriglissar (559-556 B.C.), Labashi-Marduk (556 B.C.), Nabonidus (555-539 B.C.), Belshazzar (552-539 B.C.), Daniel 5.

<sup>7</sup> Darius the Mede, Daniel 5-6, Cyrus the Great (560-530 B.C.), Daniel 1:21; 10:1.

<sup>8</sup> This is Cyrus' decree (Ezra / Nehemiah's first major wave); another group came with Ezra (mid-5<sup>th</sup> c.); a final group with Nehemiah who rebuilt the walls (445 B.C.). The Second Temple was completed in 516 B.C., roughly 70 years after its destruction in 586 B.C.

- God answered the prayers of his people who were in exile. They prospered while in captivity.
- Their return to the Promised Land was the rebirth of their nation. They sang a song: 'When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. <sup>2</sup>Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." <sup>3</sup>The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy (Ps 126:1-3 NIV).'

## Conclusion

We too, as citizens of heaven, are foreigners and strangers to this world (He 11:13). Our heart longs for heaven. Perhaps, we should lift our faces when we pray, like Daniel facing Jerusalem.

Let's humble ourselves and pray big prayers. We know God answers us when we call on Him – we all seen God answer little prayer.

But there are times to pray big prayers.

Let's read today's passage together: 'Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper (Jer 29:7 NIV).'

I encourage you to attend at least one of our prayer times this week. Friday, Madeline will be leading an Encounter-like prayer, altar, and worship service. I am speaking at the Teen Challenge chapel service.

Currently, we are going to pray for your needs. I have called them little things, and in the larger picture, they are, but we have needs that seem big to us. God delights in answering them to build our faith and bring relief to His people.

Prayer.

- Venezuela.
- Iran.

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