



Prayer Devotional
July & August

Dear Nova Family,

As we begin this Open campaign together, you may be thrilled and ready to get started, or you might be hesitant and skeptical, or somewhere in between. Wherever you are at, the church leaders and campaign leaders hope to see your heart come fully in line with God's mission and vision for Nova. As the months pass, the vision for the building project and the impact we might have in our community will become fuller and clearer, and we desire that *you* would be an integral part of that. During the next several months and beyond, would you commit yourself to praying for the campaign, our church, and our witness in the community?

This devotional booklet, as well as the booklets to follow, are designed to give us a sense of shared focus during this campaign season. Our writing team set out with the purpose of *uniting* our hearts and minds around Nova's vision and mission and *preparing* us spiritually. We hope that you will use the scriptures, devotional thoughts, and short prayers as a springboard into your own prayer and reflection. I encourage you to jot down your specific thoughts and prayers so that you can look back along the journey we are taking and see how you have changed and how God has answered your prayers. I also encourage you to take time each day to discuss these verses and questions with others and pray together.

May God bless you richly!

Amy Martin, *Open Campaign Prayer Chair*

OpenEYES

July 17

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." (John 4:34-38)

Would you describe your friends, neighbors and coworkers as "ripe for harvest"? How about the cashiers at the grocery store, or the people walking their dogs on the Nova campus? Do they seem eager for spiritual things? Or does it seem like there is still hard work to do? Are you able to see with spiritual eyes in order to follow Jesus' command to "look at the fields"? Or does the soil of your own heart need to be prepared in order to receive a growing spiritual vision?

Lord, expand my spiritual vision to be able to rightly see and understand the needs and opportunities in our community.

--Amy Martin

*Open*WITNESS

July 18

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:2-6)

The beginning of disciple-making is connecting with people who do not yet have a relationship with Jesus. For many Christians, personal witnessing and evangelism is a scary thing, but you can share your faith with complete peace. Some common reasons for paralyzing fear include thoughts like: "I don't know what to say," or, "I don't know the Bible well enough," or, "I don't want to be rejected." Instead of engaging your anxieties, start by taking the focus off of yourself and putting it on the Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit that speaks to the hearts of pre-Christians and communicates their need for a relationship with the living God. The best work we can do is to pray and watch Him work.

God, lead (insert the name of someone) to you for forgiveness and eternal life and call him/her to be a kingdom laborer to draw others to you. Use me however you want in the lives of people who don't know you.

--Dean Mayeda

OpenCAMPUS

July 19

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5:14-15)

When the power went out, I was caught outside in the dark! Crash! I had knocked *something* over. Finally, moonlight peeked out of the clouds overhead. The clouds parted, the full moon filled my backyard, and I could find my way safely home. Jesus says we are the light of the world. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, Jesus expects us to stand and reflect God's Light in our thoughts, words, and actions so people in our world can find the Way! Take a moment to check your reflection throughout this day.

Jesus, help me reflect your light to everyone I encounter this day.

--Rick D'Amico

*Open*HANDS

July 20

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Why did God create the world? Ponder this question for a minute. God was not motivated by loneliness or obligation. God created because He is profoundly happy, and He wants to share His joy with us. A truly joyful person wants others to share in her happiness. That is why Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And God wants us to have the same motive when we give. He wants our hearts to be so transformed by the joy of being loved by Him that we overflow with love for others and give cheerfully to bring them joy.

Lord, help me to overflow with your love and find joy in blessing others with my giving

--Dave Martin

*Open*HEAVEN

July 21

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." (Malachi 3:10)

Spiritual talk is easy, but how you spend your money shows what you really trust in. Have you ever been tempted to not tithe because finances are tight; or to cut back on your giving so that you can afford something that you want? You only have so much money — where is it going to go? It's a test. God is saying, 'Do you really believe that I can take care of your needs and desires? Or do you think you have to take care of them on your own?' In Malachi 3:10, God basically says, 'I dare you! I dare you to see what I will do if you put my kingdom first and give generously, even when it's hard. Tithe, and see what happens to your life.' As you give, keep a record of your financial needs and write down how God provides. By doing so, you will find your faith deepening as you see God's faithfulness.

--edited from Rick Warren, *Pastor Rick's Daily Hope*

Lord, help me to find my security in you rather than in money. Strengthen my trust that you will provide for all of my needs as I live generously and help me when I struggle with unbelief.

--Dave Martin

OpenEARS

July 24

**"Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction."
(Proverbs 29:18)**

Another version says: Without prophetic vision, people run wild. As the leaders of Nova seek God's will for the church, he equips them with prophetic vision. Do you believe that? Take a minute to imagine what the church would be like if we all came into agreement with and submission to the vision the leaders set out for us. Now imagine what it would look like if the "people run wild". Is there any part of your heart that resists the guidance of Nova's leaders and the vision they believe God has given them?

Lord, bring my heart and mind in line with your mission for Nova.

--Amy Martin

OpenMIND

July 25

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (Acts 9:10-19)

Why is Ananias part of Paul's story? Sit with that thought, and see what you can work out. Ananias was able to recognize Jesus' voice clearly, and yet he had some very practical concerns about what he was being asked to do. Rather than clinging to his own thoughts about his safety, he allowed the Lord to reorient his thinking, and he chose to obey. He was able to use his spiritual resources to meet Saul's spiritual need.

Vision brings together needs and resources to meet those needs. (Henri Nouwen)

Yes, Lord. I want you to reorient my thinking so that you can use the resources you have given to me to meet the spiritual needs of others.

--Amy Martin

OpenHEART

July 26

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:9-10)

Paul's missionary journeys demonstrate a healthy relationship between human initiative and God's guidance. Read all of Acts chapter 16 to get a fuller picture of this, taking note as you read of when Paul uses his own reasoning and planning and when the Holy Spirit intervenes. Do you tend to rely more on your own initiative and understanding, or do you tend to wait for the Spirit's direction? How might God be inviting you to have more balance in this area?

Vision shows us new directions and opportunities for our mission. (Henri Nouwen)

Holy Spirit, help me to discern your leading and have a heart that is able to be directed by you.

--Amy Martin

Open MOUTH

July 27

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent." (Acts 18:9)

What is the subject that once you get started talking about it, it's hard to shut you up? Most likely it's the thing about which you are most passionate and knowledgeable. On the other hand, when do you typically avoid talking? For most (polite) people, it is the times when a subject might cause conflict or discomfort. Like Paul, we are sometimes called by God to speak up even when it makes others angry or uncomfortable. As you become more passionate and knowledgeable about the vision and mission of Nova, you will have opportunities to explain the vision and remind other church members to stay committed and unified throughout the process.

Vision gives us courage to speak when we might want to remain silent. (Henri Nouwen)

Lord, put courage in me to speak up to encourage others to stay unified and committed to the mission and vision you have for our church.

--Amy Martin

OpenDOORS

July 28

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)

Not so long ago an excellent movie entitled "War Room" was shown in theaters. It's the story of an elderly lady who had this little room she called her war room where in prayer she would do battle with Satan for the souls of a list of people she had posted in that room. She would enter that room every day and pray for those on her list. It wasn't just now and then, but *every day*. That is following Jesus' command to "ask, seek, knock." The words are in the present tense. That means that we are to keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. Note that those three words are followed by three promises. Praying this way reveals a hidden fire of the heart that believes God will answer and values what He gives.

I hear You, Lord. I will keep knocking on heaven's door that (list the names) will open the door of their hearts and invite You into their lives. Help me to keep at it and not lose heart. I am asking for Your help because I have a lot of demands upon my time and I know that to keep on praying is to be a priority. Flood my spirit with a passionate burden for the lost.

--Ron Graff

July 31

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Worry...it's what we do. People joke to hide their frustration, saying, 'Why pray when you can worry?' For so many of us, worry is the default response to trouble or suffering. Even when times are easy, we wonder, 'How long will this last?' In contrast, Paul encourages us to throw ourselves into the arms of God; to trust Him with all of it, with anything, and in every situation, to pray *with thanksgiving*. *This* is the antidote to worry! Paul urges us to recall and rejoice over all God has done for us! Thanksgiving brings assurance that He will continue to provide through the uncertainty of tomorrow. It's lying back in the strong arms of God and basking in the peace that time with Him provides.

How has God shown His faithfulness to you? Reflect a moment; maybe even jot down some specifics and rejoice ...and pray ...and let God's peace surround you!

Lord, thank you for your faithful care through all the times of my life. I am leaning on your everlasting arms.

--Rick D'Amico

August 1

“Let us approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need,” (Hebrews 4:16).

The Greek word translated “confidence” here denotes free and open speech; a bold frankness--an open outpouring of the heart. It means that I am to come to God without hesitation or tentativeness. When I do, God’s promise is that I will receive mercy for my past failures and grace (God’s unmerited favor) to meet my present and future needs. The words “in our time of need” mean the help is always at the appropriate time; not according to my clock, but to Heaven’s time.

O gracious Father, I come confidently just as you invited me to come. I’m really struggling with_____. I pour my heart out to you. Help me! Thank you, blessed Lord, for Your promise of mercy and grace in my time of need. By faith I now rest my need in Your care.

--Ron Graff

August 2

Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive [the demon] out?” He replied, “Because you have so little faith... This kind can come out only by prayer.” (Matt 17:19-20; Mark 9:29)

In a culture that emphasizes immediate gratification, it’s easy to become frustrated and give up when we don’t quickly see answers to our prayers. In this story, Jesus’ disciples had tried to cast a demon out of a boy, but without success. This confused them, since Jesus had already given them authority to pray for healing and to cast out demons. So they asked him why his promise didn’t work in this situation. By looking at parallel accounts of his answer in Matthew and Mark, we learn an important lesson about faith and prayer. Our level of faith in God is revealed by whether we persevere in prayer or whether we quickly give up when God does not immediately answer our request. In his teaching about prayer, Jesus says that if we seek we will find, and if we knock the door will be opened. Do not stop praying for something until God has either answered your request or made it clear that He has chosen not to. It may be that God has good reasons to delay and wants you to continue praying with faith.

Lord, help me to pray with faith and not give up.

--Dave Martin

August 3

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. (James 1:6)

At first glance, it seems like this verse is setting an impossible standard: only if you never have a single doubt will you receive what you ask for. On the other hand, it also can lead one to think that there is a way to make God give you what you want; if you can just fool Him (and yourself) long enough, it will work like a magic charm. But perhaps James is not warning us not to doubt the *thing* that we desire, but rather to not doubt the character of the One who promises to give us all good things. How much of your heart believes that God is good? That God is for you? That God is all-powerful? You can get to know God's character and his promises better by diligently studying his Word.

Father, help me in my unbelief. Show my heart your goodness and help me to stand firmly upon your character and your promises.

--Amy Martin

August 4

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. “There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’ ”

Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?” (Luke 18:1-8, NLT)

Jesus wants us to pray and not give up. How many times do we ask something of God, and then not wait long enough for Him to open the door? We knock once or twice and when nothing happens, we move on. O for grace to be like Jacob and wrestle with God—not letting go until He answers our request. The glory of God and the souls of our neighbors depend on our willingness to pray with this kind of fervent desperation. We must plead with God again and again until we obtain the answer.

~ edited from Charles Spurgeon,
The Importunate Widow Sermon

Almighty God, you are a good judge. You care about justice and you are full of mercy. You are not willing that any should perish. Please give repentance and faith to my family and neighbors. Salvation is your work, but help me to be faithful in prayer and witnessing. Help me to be watchful for your answers.

-- Laurie Griffin and Dave Martin

August 7

"At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. [An angel came to Daniel and said], 'Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.'"
(Daniel 10:2-3, 12-13)

Daniel was no novice in the practice of prayer. When he wanted understanding about the vision he had received from God, he persisted in fasting and prayer until the answer came. God was gracious to Daniel and gave him insight into why the answer was delayed; the messenger simply got held up in a spiritual battle, and now he was come to deliver the message. Are you able to pray like Daniel? Perhaps it isn't likely that God will entrust you (like Daniel) with a prophetic vision concerning the nation, but he will certainly invite and entrust you to pray for something close to his heart. Has he already put a vision in your heart? Are you willing to be focused and persistent in prayer and fasting?

Lord, teach me to be a part of your mission through prayer.

--Amy Martin

August 8

“Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer,” (I Peter 4:7, The Message).

Several years ago, there was a popular song titled, “Sixteen Tons.” Part of the song says, “You load sixteen tons and what do you get, another day older and deeper in debt.” The frame of mind of the Christian is or should be far different. He or she knows that this world is about to be wrapped up. According to I Peter 4:7, knowing that should strategically affect their state of mind. We are exhorted to “take nothing for granted” and to “stay wide-awake in prayer.”

Lord, in this fast-paced, sometimes hostile world I live in, help me to always be in a prayerful state of mind in my daily walk knowing this “world is about to be wrapped up.”

--Ron Graff

August 9

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. (Matthew 6:7)

“Babbling like pagans” means using empty words or phrases to try to flatter, manipulate, or cast a spell on God with our words. Another version says “do not use vain repetitions.” We don’t need to try to impress God or manipulate him into answering our prayers. How then should we pray? Is prayer really as simple as talking to God? If so, how can we hear him reply? The Bible is the primary way God enters into conversation with us. So a great way to pray is to do it while reading the Bible. When you read a verse in the Bible, it is God speaking to you. And then you can respond by praying to God about what he’s just said in that verse. After you’ve finished talking, you let God speak again, which means reading the next verse. Then you reply with more prayer, and so on.

-edited from Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible*

Almighty God, you are a good, good Father. You have given us everything we need in your word and you have promised to watch over your word to see that it is fulfilled. Teach me to love your word, to hear your voice and respond in prayer, in faith, and in action.

-- Laurie Griffin and Dave Martin

August 10

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41)

The disciples could see that He was struggling. Jesus told them plainly, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death. Stay awake and keep watch with Me." But, those last hours in the garden, Jesus prayed alone. His disciples fell asleep despite His request and ignored His warning. Suddenly, the arrest took place and Jesus' followers scattered in fear!

Do we do the same? Do we keep watch and guard our hearts, or sleepwalk into sin by failing to pray?

Lord, lead me not into temptation. Remind me to watch and pray.

--Rick D'Amico

August 11

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16).

James doesn't say that the prayers that are packed with spiritual power come only from the spiritual elite. They come from those who are living an ethically righteous life from God's standpoint; they also come from living a life of accountability in confessing sins to God and to trusted friends. So, when I am 'confessed up' and walking hand in hand with God in obedience to His Word, my prayers are spiritual dynamite.

O Lord, forgive me when I haven't been open and honest with You in my prayers. How foolish because, according to Your Word, You know everything about me, (Psalm 139:1-6). When I pray help me to be transparent and honest with You and to daily follow You in the right paths according to Your Word. I so want my prayers to be effective and powerful.

--Ron Graff

August 14

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. (Romans 8:26)

Have you ever started to pray about something for which you desperately needed God's help, but had no idea what to say? The problem felt so overwhelming that words seemed inadequate. Paul says that in those times the Holy Spirit translates our groans and tears into a prayer that perfectly articulates our needs. Therefore, never let the fear of not knowing what to say prevent you from praying. Come before God and wholeheartedly seek his aid, even if all you can do is to cry, groan, or whisper a simple phrase like, "Help me, Father!" or "Jesus have mercy!" or "Come, Holy Spirit!"

Father, give me the confidence to approach you in prayer, knowing that I can rely on your Spirit to help me pray according to your will.

--Dave Martin

August 15

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. (Psalm 145:18)

If God's Word promises that the Lord will be near, why do so many people feel that he is far away? There might be some reasons why God would stay hidden from someone for a season, but generally speaking, he is accessible to his children. He says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know," and "return to me, and I will return to you." There are many other examples in Scripture showing that God wants us to take initiative in reaching out for him, and that he is close by ready to reach back. Ask the Lord to help you examine your heart. Have you at all become lazy or sluggish in drawing near to God in prayer? If so, why? What might God's invitation be to you right now?

Lord, thank you that you are near to me when I call on you in truth.

--Amy Martin

August 16

In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait patiently. (Psalm 5:3).

“You hear my voice,” the Psalmist says. His words remind us that our praying is not to The-Great-Someone-in-the-Great-Somewhere; our praying is to a Living God who is My King and My God (verse 2). Note the relational pronoun *my*. This shows me that when I pray, I can come to God with full assurance that My King and My God both hears my prayer and has the power to act. Then, with this assurance, I *wait patiently* in expectation.

O Lord, my King and my God, thank You for this reminder that You are a Living God who hears my prayers. Like the Psalmist, help me to have this confidence every time I come to You in prayer.

--Ron Graff

August 17

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)

Sometimes we subconsciously believe that we must convince God to answer our prayers. This can create anxiety and disillusionment as we seek to persuade or bribe God. The reality, however, is that God wants to answer our prayers so that we can produce fruit as Jesus' disciples. The problem is that we often aren't praying with the goal of producing more fruit. Prayer is not an intercom from the den to the kitchen asking the divine butler to bring more food as we watch TV. Prayer is a radio in the midst of battle, asking our general to send in the resources we need for victory. Paul told Timothy that no soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer. Christ has chosen you to have the privilege of serving in God's army, and while you can ask him for anything, he wants the primary goal of your prayers to be the advancement of God's kingdom.

Father, may you be increasingly honored and praised by your creation. May Your Kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give me the resources, forgiveness, and spiritual protection that I need to serve you today. I ask for this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, for his glory, Amen.

--Dave Martin

August 18

You desire, but do not have, so you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. And, when you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives. (James 4:2)

This sounds like it was written for us today! The gravitational pull of materialism, status, and power constantly draws us away from simply following Jesus. When we take the lead and make choices driven by desire, one of the first casualties is purity in prayer. Instead of humbly seeking to be with our Redeemer and King, we take counsel with ourselves and guidance from our appetites. Too easily, we can become enslaved by our desires; pursuing pleasure and wealth; breeding envy, greed, conflict, and pride. Gradually, our prayers are reduced to not-so-polite requests for God to do as we please, or we just stop praying altogether. No one is immune to this disease! Left untreated, it can kill faith, leaving us depressed and unsatisfied.

Are you in need of a cure these days? There's no way to 'get better' on your own, for that's what made you sick in the first place! The treatment requires God's intervention, a heart longing for purity in prayer, and faithful following:

- 1.) Confess: Call yourself out. Christ will forgive and cleanse you.
- 2.) Repent: Stop leading. Turn around. Follow Jesus.
- 3.) Regular Check-ups and Meals: Pray and read God's Word daily!

Lord, I come. Take my life. I offer it to you ~ a living sacrifice.

--Rick D'Amico

August 21

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:5).

King Herod had James, the brother of John, put to death. Peter was arrested and chained between two soldiers with sixteen soldiers standing guard outside. The situation seemed hopeless. What could the church do? They could pray. And pray they did--they earnestly prayed, and rightly so. As Christians we often feel hopeless about situations we face. When we do, it's time to pray. When we pray, we should always keep our eyes on the Mountain Mover (God) not on the mountain (the situation). Read Acts 12:6-10, and note the miracle that took place. When the church comes together to pray for a need, God works miracles.

Dear Lord, sometimes the mountain I face is so big. As we face these mountains help us to have the attitude of King Jehoshaphat when he said "Lord, we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you," (II Chronicles 21:12). Help us as a church, and me personally, to keep our eyes on You, the Mountain Mover, knowing that You are bigger than any mountain we may face.

--Ron Graff

August 22

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:13)

Why does God listen to your prayers? We all have a subconscious answer to this question. Those who view God primarily as their Master will say that He listens because of what they do for Christ. But those who view God primarily as their Father will say that He listens because of who they are in Christ—God’s children. Though human parents are sinful and far from perfect, most want to give good gifts to their children. How much more does our perfect Father want to give us the best gift of all when we ask—His own Spirit to live inside us. Through His Spirit, God wants to empower you to follow Christ and increasingly transform you to resemble Jesus in your thoughts, desires and behavior. So ask for this daily in faith, trusting that it is exactly what He wants to give you.

Father, please give me more of your Spirit to empower me to obey Jesus and become more like Him.

--Dave Martin

August 23

"I thank you and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king." (Daniel 2:23)

Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding." When Daniel needed wisdom and understanding, he asked. Asking was his first response to his need. How about you? When you need to understand something better (whether spiritually, relationally, or in your everyday work), do you first ask God for wisdom? Is there any subject on which God is in the dark? Does the Creator of every aspect of the intricate universe lack in imagination? Jesus said, "Ask and you shall receive." James said, "You do not receive because you do not ask God." See how many opportunities you can find this week to ASK.

Lord, thank you for your promise to grant wisdom and understanding whenever I ask. Remind me through your Holy Spirit to always turn to you first whenever I need knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

--Amy Martin

August 24

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel. (Ephesians 6:18-19)

One of the best ways to “pray in the Spirit” is to pray verses of Scripture. Praying from the Word of God means your prayers include Spirit-inspired words. You are taking words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulating them through your heart and mind back to God. And we know that when we pray according to God’s will he hears us (1 John 5:14). –edited from Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible*

Lord you have promised that your Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray. You have given us your Word, which is alive and powerful. Teach us how to pray your word and your will in all circumstances: for our families, for our community, for our church leaders and for our nation. Make known the mystery of your gospel. May Nova be fearless in reaching out to the lost.

-- Laurie Griffin and Dave Martin

August 25

When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; he brought me into a spacious place. (Psalm 118:5)

No one would ever wish to be "hard pressed": trapped, disillusioned, anxious, in an impossible situation. And yet for those who have cried out to the Lord and have had the experience of him bringing them out of that circumstance and "into a spacious place", those memories are sweet. Paul tells us that trials develop perseverance, perseverance develops character, and character develops hope. Hope for our present situation and for the future is one of the greatest gifts God gives his children. When you find yourself hard pressed, remember God's past faithfulness to you and others. Cry out to him and remember that he will bring you through again.

Father, thank you that you hear me when I cry out to you. Help me to remember your faithfulness when I am hard pressed, and give me hope.

--Amy Martin

August 28

I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. (Isaiah 62:6-7)

Here in Isaiah we see a group of people charged with praying diligently for the well-being of Israel. God tells them to pay attention to the needs around them and to persevere in prayer until He saves his people and makes them a light for all nations. It may sound strange, but God wants us stay alert to the needs around us and remind Him to save us. Obviously, He knows what is happening and what we need, but he wants us to constantly depend on Him in prayer. So be a watchmen for your family, your church community, and your world. Diligently remind God of our needs and of His promises to care for us. ~edited from Darris McNeely, *The Role of a Watchman*

Lord help me to be watchful of what is going on at Nova and in our community. May my prayers continually go before you until your name is lifted up in Torrance. As we seek to make Nova more visible and accessible to the community, make my life more visible and make me more accessible to those around me. Help me to live as an example to others and give me boldness to tell them about the hope that I have in you.

-- Laurie Griffin and Dave Martin

August 29

But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28)

God's love calls me far beyond the realm of simply being nice to nice people. Jesus stated such behaviors are merely normal human transactions. God's definition of love is much tougher. He expects me to actually do good deeds, give blessings, and pray for those who hate and mistreat me! Well, that's ridiculous, outrageous, and totally unfair! They certainly don't deserve it! Yet it's in the exact same manner that God loves me! That kind of love is the *gospel*, the good news that God is totally unfair! Instead of justice, I get mercy, forgiveness, and peace with God because Jesus took the credit for my sin and received the death penalty in my place. God knows I certainly didn't deserve it; but I'll never complain about *that* injustice!

Who hates you? Who causes you frustration? Who has hurt you? God calls you to see them the way He sees you. He expects us to love and serve them the way Jesus loves you. And it begins with prayer!

Lord, open my heart to those I call enemies. Help me pray for them.

--Rick D'Amico

August 30

After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31, NLT)

Why was the prayer and witness of the first church so powerful? Read through Acts 4:23-31; the context of this recorded prayer gives us some clues. Verse 32 tells us "all the believers were united in heart and mind." Earlier in the passage we are told "all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God." The believers were united in purpose, and they prayed together according to their common mission. In what contexts do you pray together with other members of Nova? What do you usually pray for, and how do you pray? Perhaps we can learn from the prayer model set out in this passage: they *remembered* God's promises and past actions; they *related* to their current context; they *requested* power and boldness in proclaiming the Gospel. And God answered them.

Lord, teach us to pray at Nova the way the first church prayed. Help us to make your mission in the world our priority as we come together in fellowship and unity.

--Amy Martin

August 31

For I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. (Philippians 1:19)

What does Paul mean when he says that the prayers of the Philippian church will lead to his deliverance? Is he saying that because the church is praying, things will turn out exactly the way he wants? That he will be released from prison and live to a ripe old age after many years of successful ministry? No, deliverance means something different to Paul. Read this passage again from verse 12 to verse 30. Paul's ultimate goal in life was for Christ to be exalted through him, whether by life or death. This should be our prayer as well. It is good to pray that God would provide what we think we need for ourselves and for our church community. But our highest prayer must be for Christ to be exalted no matter what.

Lord, give me sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in me and my church family, whether by life or death, joy or sadness, success or suffering.

--Dave Martin

Sept 1

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25)

Were Paul and Silas praying and singing with the express purpose of 'witnessing' to the other prisoners? Probably not. Their prayer and praise was something between themselves and God; yet because they were in close proximity, the other prisoners were exposed to the Gospel. Have you ever thought of Nova's Sunday morning worship in this way? As we open up the windows and sing and listen to the pastors pray and preach, could our neighbors be exposed to the Truth?

Lord, bring our neighbors onto the Nova campus during our worship services, so that they might overhear our worship and be exposed to your Light.

--Amy Martin