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100
EXTRAORDINARY
STORIES
OF PRAYER
~ for ~
COURAGEOUS
Girls

UNFORGETTABLE TALES OF WOMEN OF FAITH

JEAN FISCHER

SHILOH  kidz

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MaYa ANGELOU

{1928-2014}



Prayer Changes Things

Maya Angelou lived a difficult childhood. Her parents had separated and there was trouble at home. Maya went to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, but she faced even more trouble there because she was black. Some people did not accept Maya because of the color of her skin. It all became too much, so she stopped speaking. For five years, Maya refused to say even one word.

When she became an adult, Maya made choices that would not please God. But even then she felt something tugging at her spirit. She wanted Jesus; she wanted to be a Christian. One day while taking a class, Maya read the words “God loves me!” The idea that God cared touched Maya’s heart and brought her to her knees. She became a praying woman. “When I pray, something wonderful happens,” she said. She discovered that prayer changes things. Maya understood that God heard her when she prayed, and she was grateful.

Slowly, her life began to turn around. As she grew closer to God, Maya became wise about life. She wrote poetry and books, and her words made her famous. With God giving Maya strength and courage, she felt at peace speaking in front of huge crowds, sometimes as large as ten thousand people. In 1993 Bill Clinton asked her to write a special poem for his inauguration as president of the United States, and the world watched on television while Maya recited “On the Pulse of Morning.”

Maya Angelou was never afraid of sharing her faith and wisdom with others. She knew that fear keeps people from being the best they can be. She had been a frightened little girl with trouble all around. But thanks to God and prayer, Maya grew up to be a wise, strong, and courageous woman—a Christian!

THE PRAYER FROM THE HEART. . . FIGHT WITH GOD HAS MUCH POWER.

JAMES 5:16



ANNA

{LUKE 2:36-38}



Anna's Special Someone

Anna's story begins sadly. Her husband died seven years into their marriage, leaving Anna young and alone. Anna likely missed hearing her husband's voice and knowing he was there to talk with, so she turned to God. He became her Special Someone.

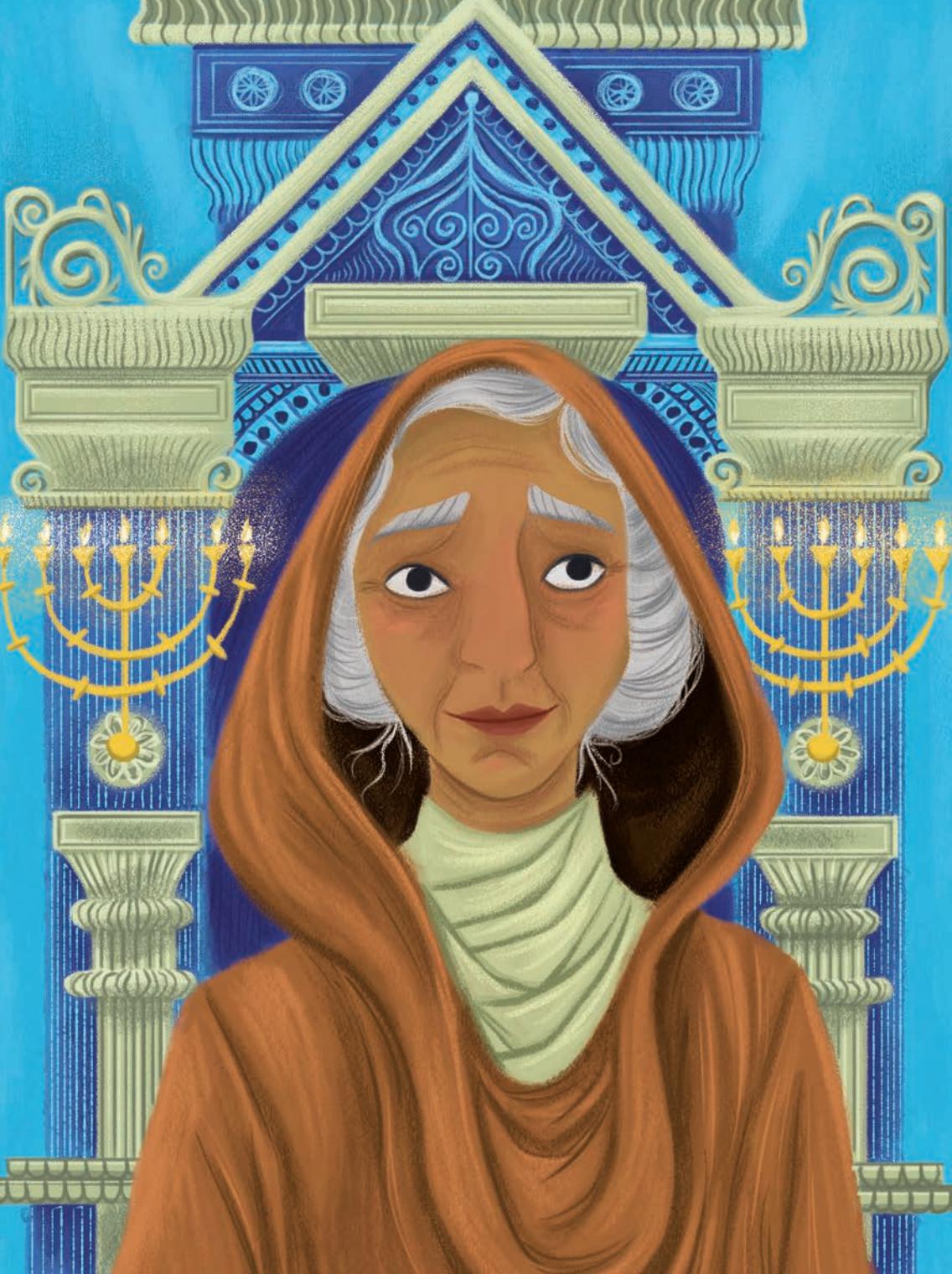
Anna spent many hours each day talking with God. She got so close to God that she learned to recognize His voice in her heart. For many years, the Jewish people knew her as a prophetess—a woman who spoke the words of God. She shared with them what God told her.

One day when Anna was very old, God sent her to the temple to meet a special baby, His Son, Jesus. When Anna saw the baby, she already knew who He was. She prayed and thanked God for Him. Then Anna spent the rest of her life telling others the Good News. She spread the Word that God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to save people from sin so they could have forever life in heaven. Anna became the first woman missionary!

Just like Anna, you can talk with God! You don't have to be alone or without anyone to talk with before you decide to pray. God wants to hear from you all the time. You don't even have to speak to Him out loud. You can think your prayers and still know that He hears you. God is interested in everything you say. Nothing is too little or unimportant. Start today. Get in the habit of talking with Him every day all day long.

"THEN YOU WILL CALL UPON ME AND COME AND PRAY TO ME, AND I WILL LISTEN TO YOU."

JEREMIAH 29:12



ANNE ASKEW

{1521-46}



Forgive Them!

O Lord,” Anne Askew prayed, “I have more enemies now than there be hairs on my head! Yet, Lord. . .I heartily desire. . .that Thou wilt. . .forgive them that violence which they do.” Anne prayed that prayer just minutes before she died.

She lived in a time of change and trouble during the reign of King Henry VIII. The king led the Church of England, and he ruled that anyone who did not obey his church’s teachings was an enemy of the kingdom. King Henry arrested people who disobeyed him, and some were put to death.

Anne did not believe what the king’s church taught. She believed only what the Bible said. When King Henry ruled that women could not read or teach about the Bible, or anything else that disagreed with his religious ideas, Anne disobeyed. She memorized scripture and taught it to others. She read and talked about the Bible as much as she wanted, and that got her into trouble.

The king’s men arrested Anne. They ordered her to take back everything she believed and said about the Bible, but Anne refused. For disobeying King Henry, Anne was tortured and killed—a punishment saved for the king’s worst enemies. Just before she died, Henry gave Anne one last chance to deny the Bible, but she wouldn’t! Instead, Anne prayed for those who hated her. She followed Jesus’ teachings in the Bible when He said, “Respect and give thanks for those who try to bring bad to you. Pray for those who make it very hard for you” (Luke 6:28).

Anne Askew’s story is a reminder to pray in the worst of times—and also to pray for and forgive those who hurt us. Is there someone you need to forgive today?

“WHEN YOU STAND TO PRAY, IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST ANYONE, FORGIVE HIM.”

MARK 11:25



GLADYS AYLWARD

{1902-70}



God Knows What You Need

After studying for three months in the missionary society college, Gladys Aylward was told that she wasn't educated enough to become a missionary. No one believed she'd be able to learn the Chinese language, and so the committee couldn't accept her. But young Gladys knew deep in her heart that China was where God wanted her to be.

So Gladys decided to get a job as a housemaid, and she worked to save money for a one-way ticket to China. In 1932 she left Liverpool with an old suitcase full of food and clothing.

For eight years Gladys ran an inn in China where mule team drivers could rest and enjoy a meal. She shared God's Word with them and anyone else who would listen. She also took in orphaned children, and she taught them all about Jesus.

Gladys had more than a hundred orphans in her care when she learned the Japanese army was coming to take over the place where they lived. Gladys was desperate to save the children, so she gathered them up, and they all began walking to a safer place—an orphanage in Sian many miles away.

For twelve days they walked, and Gladys was worn out from leading the kids, but she refused to give up.

When they reached the wide and deep Yellow River, they had no way to cross.

"Ask God to get us across," the children said. "He can do anything!"

Gladys and the children knelt down together and prayed, asking God to help them get across the river.

God heard their prayers. A Chinese officer showed up, and he had boats! Gladys and the children crossed the river safely and arrived in Sian.

What a wonderful story about the power of prayer! Whenever you face a challenge, ask for God's help. He knows what you need even before you ask.

"DO NOT FEAR, FOR I AM WITH YOU. DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I AM YOUR GOD.
I WILL GIVE YOU STRENGTH, AND FOR SURE I WILL HELP YOU."

ISAIAH 41:10



MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE

{1875-1955}



A Little Girl's Prayer

Born not long after the Civil War, Mary McLeod Bethune watched her parents struggle to make a life free from slavery. They continued working for their former owner, trying to earn enough money to buy land where the family could grow cotton. When that finally happened, the McLeod family praised God. They trusted He had provided them with freedom to begin a new life.

Mary's mom and dad loved God and raised their seventeen children to love Him too. Prayer was an important part of their lives. Even as a little girl, Mary recognized God's greatness and His ability to answer prayers. Her dream was to read and write, so she asked God to make a way for her to learn. Black children were not allowed in school with white children back then.

When she was ten years old, a school for black children opened in a nearby town. Mary walked miles to go there and learn. God answered Mary's prayer! She grew up to graduate from college and become a teacher. But she wanted more. Mary wanted to provide the best education for all African American children, so she opened a school. At first she had six students. Then more came. And more. Mary's school grew until one day it became a college for African American men and women.

Mary kept praying, and God kept leading her forward. He had great plans for her. For the rest of her life, Mary worked to help African Americans gain equality. Her hard work got the attention of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who chose her as his adviser to help bring Americans together as equals, whatever the color of their skin.

God has a plan for you too. When you pray, be like Mary. Ask God to guide you wherever you go.

“ ‘FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,’ SAYS THE LORD, ‘PLANS FOR WELL-BEING AND NOT FOR TROUBLE, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE AND A HOPE.’ ”

JEREMIAH 29:11



SAINT BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN

{1303-73}



A Life Dedicated to Prayer

Birgitta had a dream in which she saw Jesus on the cross. Birgitta asked Him, “Who did this to You?” Jesus answered, “All those who despise My love.” The dream felt so real to seven-year-old Birgitta that she never forgot it.

Years later Birgitta fell in love with a man named Ulf. They married and lived happily in Sweden with their eight children.

One of Birgitta’s relatives, the king of Sweden, asked Birgitta to be lady-in-waiting to his new queen. So Birgitta and her family made the long journey to the castle. After years of service, they went home. But on the way back, Ulf got very sick. Birgitta sat praying for her husband when a bishop appeared. He said, “God has great things for you to do.”

Ulf died, leaving Birgitta a widow at age forty-one. She asked Jesus to guide her, and she dedicated her life to quiet prayer. She had more dreams in which Jesus told her things, and often Birgitta passed His messages along to others. Sometimes those messages criticized important people, such as the king, priests, and bishops. Birgitta wasn’t afraid to tell them to be better Christians and make a difference in the lives of others. And when France and England went to war, Birgitta sat down with representatives of both sides and tried to solve their problems but was unsuccessful.

Much of what Birgitta tried to do failed, but that didn’t stop her from praying and relying on Jesus. She moved to Rome and opened her house to anyone who needed help, especially the sick, homeless, and poor.

In 1391 the Catholic Church made Birgitta the patron saint of Sweden, and in 1999 Pope John Paul II named her one of the patron saints of Europe.

What can *you* do to help others in your school, neighborhood, and community? Ask God what He wants you to do. He’ll guide you in the right direction.

I HAVE CALLED TO YOU, O GOD, FOR YOU WILL ANSWER ME. LISTEN TO ME AND HEAR MY WORDS.

PSALM 17:6



ANTOINETTE BROWN BLACKWELL

{1825-1921}



She Dared to Speak Up

Antoinette Brown Blackwell was born in a time when children rarely spoke up unless asked. But when she was eight years old, she dared to say her own prayer aloud during family time when her dad always said the prayers. Her brother asked, “Why did you pray aloud?” Antoinette answered, “I think I am Christian, and why should I not pray?” Antoinette joined her family’s church at age nine, and she kept speaking up at church meetings.

She was smart! Antoinette loved learning and was a good student. At age fifteen, she became a teacher. Teaching helped her earn money to follow her dream of attending college to become a minister. Some wondered how she dared even think about that at a time when there were no women ministers. That didn’t stop Antoinette! She went to college and earned her degree. But when she tried to preach, some of the men shouted and stamped their feet. Still, Antoinette didn’t give up. She wanted to become a pastor and lead a church. She believed that day would come.

Antoinette felt that women, like men, could be leaders, and they had the right to be ministers or anything else. So she began speaking up about women’s rights. She joined in with other women seeking equality. She kept speaking up and delivering speeches at women’s rights conventions.

The day finally arrived when Antoinette was invited to become pastor of the First Congregational Church in Butler and Savannah, New York. Her dream had come true! That little girl who had dared to pray aloud became the first woman minister in the United States.

Antoinette’s story inspired other little girls to become ministers or whatever else they wanted to be—and to be brave enough to pray out loud.

BE HAPPY IN YOUR HOPE. DO NOT GIVE UP WHEN TROUBLE COMES.
DO NOT LET ANYTHING STOP YOU FROM PRAYING.

ROMANS 12:12



Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Nn



CATHERINE BOOTH

{1829-90}



Mother of an Army

You've seen the red Salvation Army kettles at Christmastime, and you probably noticed volunteers ringing bells as people dropped money inside. The Salvation Army wouldn't exist were it not for Catherine Booth.

Catherine grew up in England in the 1800s. Her parents taught her to love and trust God. In her teens, Catherine injured her spine, and she had to stay in bed for months. To keep busy, she read books about God. She learned how He wants people to live. The more Catherine read, the more she wanted to tell everyone about Jesus and what He taught. She wanted to preach!

When she became well, Catherine fell in love and married a young preacher named William Booth. Together they not only preached, but they also led others to teach about Jesus. Before long the Booths had more than a thousand volunteer helpers. William called them the "Salvation Army," and Catherine became known as "Army Mother." The army grew and grew! Today the Salvation Army helps people in over a hundred countries around the world.

When she preached, Catherine often talked about prayer. She had learned that prayer requires more than just words. The person who prays needs a close relationship with Jesus. That means trusting and obeying Him. Prayer also requires faith and believing that God owes us nothing but He will give us exactly what we need.

Maybe someday God will lead you to preach, like Catherine, or maybe He has a different plan for you. Pray now and begin asking God what He wants you to do when you grow up. Then trust Him to get you there. It will take time and patience, but don't lose faith. God has something good waiting for you right around the corner.

THE LORD IS NEAR TO ALL WHO CALL ON HIM, TO ALL WHO CALL ON HIM IN TRUTH.

PSALM 145:18



ANNE BRADSTREET

{1612-72}



America's First Woman Poet

Close your eyes and imagine yourself living long ago in an English castle. Anne Bradstreet didn't have to imagine. She lived it! Anne was born in a castle in Northampton, England, where her father was a steward for an earl—her dad managed the castle and what went on there. Anne was homeschooled—or you might say “castle schooled”—in languages, music, and dancing. She discovered that she liked to write.

Now, imagine Anne leaving the castle and all its richness behind. When she was sixteen, Anne married a young man named Simon Bradstreet, and they sailed off to America to begin a new life. It was difficult for Anne to adjust. America was brand-new, not much was there, and life was hard. But Anne prayed and trusted that God had led her exactly where He wanted her. She settled into a quiet life as a wife and later a mother of eight.

Anne often wrote poetry about her life. Things were not easy for her, and she had much trouble. Many of her poems were like prayers to God. She struggled to know Him better and understand His ways.

In her lifetime, Anne wrote many poems. Her writing became famous! Today she is remembered as the first woman poet in America. Her poems are taught in schools around the world.

Maybe you are like Anne, more comfortable writing your prayers than saying them. That's okay with God! He hears when you pray aloud, when you pray silently, and even when you think words and write them down.

Try writing a prayer poem to God. You might discover a passion to write. Who knows? Maybe you will be the next great American poet!

WHILE SHE KEPT PRAYING TO THE LORD. . .HANNAH WAS SPEAKING IN
HER HEART. HER LIPS WERE MOVING, BUT HER VOICE WAS NOT HEARD.

1 SAMUEL 1:12-13



CANDACE CAMERON-BURE

{1976-}



God Comes First

You probably know of Candace Cameron-Bure. She stars in Hallmark movies and played a main character in the TV series *Make It or Break It*. Candace has been acting since age five. She started doing commercials. Then, at age ten, she landed a big role on the hit comedy *Full House*. In addition to her acting, Candace is known for her Christian faith.

Candace grew up in a family that didn't talk about God. When she was twelve, another family asked hers to attend church. At first church seemed strange to her, but as she continued to attend, Candace felt a change. She was happier. Her heart felt warm inside when she welcomed Jesus in, and Candace became excited about her new Christian life.

When she grew up and got busier, Candace made God less of a priority in her life. When she did things she knew displeased Him, she simply asked for His forgiveness and moved on. But then Candace learned something important. She couldn't just believe in God but then do whatever she wanted, living her life however she thought was right. She needed to live the way He wanted her to live. Candace got on her knees and told God that she wanted to live her life for Him and that she wanted to become the woman He created her to be.

Today Candace makes God her first priority. She does her best to live in ways pleasing to Him, and she is never shy about sharing her faith.

Like Candace Cameron-Bure, you aren't perfect—no one is—but just like her, you can ask God to help you live to please Him.

IF WE STAY HERE ON EARTH OR GO HOME TO HIM, WE ALWAYS WANT TO PLEASE HIM.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9

