

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:15-16 NIV84



Sydney Lankford with the sisters who studied the bible with her! God answered our prayers and brought a new sister into the campus ministry!
To Him be all the glory!

The key to putting power in our prayers is personal righteousness. This is not at all meaning our perfection, but our heart to be humble and transparent with our sins. Jesus taught a parable about this in Luke 18:9-14 in which he points out the heart of a Pharisee and the heart of a pious tax collector before God. You can see this heart of transparency and humility clearly in the parable: *“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”* Jesus then clarifies that *“this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Luke 18:13,14.



The Music For A Mission fundraising event was a tremendous success! It came together with much faith (prayer!) and deeds!

It is astonishingly powerful when someone confesses their sins “to each other” and brings themselves before their brothers and sisters and our Almighty God with humility. The scriptures teach that this heart will be purified from all unrighteousness. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:9

I am so grateful for the brothers and sisters throughout my Christian life that have helped me come to convictions on my thought life, prayers, purity, bitterness, and day to day dealings in my marriage, and many, many more topics that God calls us all to submit to in his Word.

In the late 90’s I had moved to San Francisco to assist in a church transition. I was blessed with a job quickly, living as a single in a gracious brothers’ household, was asked to serve as

a bible talk leader, and had what appeared to be a very promising dating relationship. Sadly, all I really had was a “front” – a cover up with these as the trappings to a heart that was far, far from God. The gross impurity in my life at the time had taken control and my heart was hard to true love – and thus truth. I know now that at the time I was doomed according to the scriptures, ***“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” Eph 5:5-6.*** However, I did not want to admit this as all of these activities in the church — my “churchianity” — made me blind to how much I had hurt God and turned my back on the cross.



Channing Frye donated an autographed basketball and pair of shoes !

I am so, so, thankful for the brother and sister in our lives — without their deep convictions and persistence in showing me the truth, I would have utterly perished and wandered further and further into a very dark denial. I recall getting angry at correction and those “pesky” probing and revealing questions he would ask me. This hatred of correction the bible calls *“stupid.”* (Prov 12:1)

When I repented and responded to the call to God’s standards of righteousness in my mind and heart (the bible, after all, is written to judge the *“thoughts and attitudes of the heart”* Hebrews 4:12) there were amazing changes that began to happen around me. Prayers were being answered left and right. There was power in them now. God blessed me with a job making literally twice as much as I had been. My dating relationship healed up and then served to strengthen our walk with God...and shortly afterward turned into an engagement. We were asked to serve as the teen leaders for our region of the church. Soon after, God blessed us with the incredible privilege of serving as the full-time ministry leaders for an amazing congregation in Stockton, California. The adventures and lessons continued, but they would have ended if it were not for a persistent and loyal friend – *“wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.” Proverbs 27:6*



Please pray for the eBay auction of the donated superbike!* (UPDATE: The Bike Sold for

5,500!)

God has continued to answer our prayers — there are several things that he has made happen that are totally to his glory and his response to our prayers. Firstly, the Music for a Mission event was inspiring with several prominent local musicians putting on an amazing show! Josiah and Kristin Smith (the event organizers) offered up many prayers as they labored to orchestrate several talented local musicians. We are grateful to those that came and shared their talents for our cause. For the silent auction at the event, some unique and valuable collector's items were donated —again, by much prayer. For instance, Cardinals superstar Larry Fitzgerald donated an autographed Jersey and Football. Phoenix Sun's Channing Frye donated autographed shoes and basketball! The most amazing gift donated was a *"2006 Yamaha Graves 1000cc R1-LE Superbike raced by Eric Bostrom & Johnny Rock Page"* currently listed on eBay and valued well over 10,000!



Sydney and her mother who was encouraged by her baptism!

It was inspiring to see the brothers at our midweek service respond to the call to confess their sins and pray for each other. I was so encouraged to take a prayer walk with my dear brother John Morris. We cried out to God gratefully praying through our sins and hearts together. God blessed our prayer chain last time we undertook the call to pray through the night as a church for our "Bring Your Neighbor Day." It was that kind of prayer that brought us together, unified in spirit and purpose, so we could see his Glory in having 200 people at church service.

God also blessed us with an astounding contribution of almost \$14,000. Let us continually unite in prayer for the "Crown of Thorns" church plantings in the United States and around the world. Let us remember our dear brothers and sisters who are being sent out to the ends of the earth from right here in Phoenix! And let us never forget that there is truly great power in humble prayer — and the glory is all to our God!

In Christ's Cause,



J.M. Ciaramella

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