

# Hall of Fame Habits

## Spiritual Fitness

Kathy Rinzel-Age 59

*I wrote a book called “Hall of Fame Habits- Staying Fit through the Generations.” I interviewed 12 women who are fit and free and that I look up to. Below is the full interview( I had to delete some for the book for space issues) that I had with my sister Kathy who is the most spiritually fit person that I know. Instead of a physical perspective, she answered the questions from a spiritual fitness point of view. Wow. There is wisdom in here. As they say, “Seek and you will find!” Enjoy! Jane Birr-Life Coach. To purchase the book, please go to [www.janebirr.com](http://www.janebirr.com)*

### **Q. Kathy, what does a typical week of prayer look like to you?**

I set aside time daily for personal prayer which would include praising God, thanking Him, talking to Him, reading scripture, confessing sin, being silent, and asking for His help and blessings for myself and others.

I also pray daily together with my spouse.

On a weekly basis I join together with others at a local church for a Sunday Service, and also for a mid-week bible study. It is vital that we get connected with others in prayer and be a part of a dynamic Christian church.

I'm also involved with various prayer groups that focus outward to support other people or intentions in prayer. During the school year I join with other moms at my daughter's high school to pray for the school, the students and the teachers as part of a 'Moms in Touch' group. Once a month I get together with a few women who pray concerning issues of pornography and purity.

There are other prayer opportunities at special times during the year that might include city prayer walks, life vigils and gatherings to pray for our nation, civic or spiritual leaders.

It is also important to plan retreat times throughout the year where a more extended time to seek God, to grow spiritually and to be renewed is planned for. This can be alone or with others. I have been a part of various church, family, marriage and women's retreats for example.

In regards to the time commitment this may vary. I make it a priority and plan for it. I also look for breaks in my day to enjoy extra times with God if only for a few minutes. If we love someone will we make the effort to spend quality and quantity time together. The same holds true for our relationship with God. We lavish our love on Him with all the earnestness described in the scripture :

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)*

**Q. What are the obstacles that get in the way?**

The obstacles to spending time in prayer are often my own human weaknesses that result in excuses such as:

- I’m too tired. I’ll pray later (later never comes, or so late that I fall asleep).
- I’m too lazy because prayer takes concentration and discipline.
- I don’t want to. I want to do other things instead.
- I don’t have time.
- I’m too busy.
- I don’t want to get up out of bed.

If prayer involves a gathering at church or outside of my home, the excuses might be:

- I don’t feel like going out.

- It's too cold.
- It's too dark.
- It's too far.

Another obstacle is changes in my schedule or in my families' schedule, like extra projects, work, travel, sports, sickness, and ect.

My sin gets in the way when I feel guilty and don't want to face God.

Fear is an obstacle if I am afraid of what God might require of me or if I don't want to read His words to me in the Bible because of the challenges to my own will or comfort zones. All the more in these situations drawing near to God will open the way for His grace to transform my fears and failures.

**Q. Kathy, what is your advice on how to begin to pray?**

God loves you. He made you. He delights in you more than you could ever imagine. He speaks these words to you from the Bible:

*"I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you."* (Jeremiah 31:3)

It is God's desire to be close to you and to have you with Him for all eternity. The way to communicate with Him is through prayer. What is prayer? Prayer is simply being present with God.

It is not hard, but you do need to make the choice to come to God or not. He does not force you. He gave you a free will. God will help you. He is not far off. Psalm 145:18 says:

*“The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.”*

There are endless ways to pray. The following may be helpful to start off with:

- Set aside ten minutes to be with God.
- Find a place where you will not be distracted and interrupted.
- Acknowledge that He is there by greeting Him and tell Him you want to spend this time with Him.
- Thank God for the blessings in your life.
- Praise God for who He is. (God, You are forgiving, gracious and merciful...see Psalm 103)
- Humble yourself: admit your sins and failures; ask for His mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

- Read from the Bible (you could start with one of the gospels or read a Bible verse )
- Talk to God. Share your feelings, your concerns, your hopes and your fears. Tell Him what makes you happy or sad today.
- Ask God to help you and others that you care about or those who have special needs.
- Be still. Listen. Allow God to love you and speak to you.

Make a commitment between you and God that you will pray everyday for 10 minutes for the next week (or for five minutes if that is more realistic) Start small! Ask God to help you. Be faithful to this time.

Re-commit after a week to have this daily time with God. Again, ask God for the grace to be faithful.

Ask someone to pray for you. Find someone to be accountable to.

If you skip a day, tell God you are sorry and be faithful the next day. Don't quit! He desires to be with you more than you want to be with Him.

Gradually increase the amount of time.

Believe that God is present with you. He is. Just because you can't *feel* His presence doesn't mean He's absent.

Feel too unworthy? You blew it again? Your sin is too great? God sent His only Son to pay the price for your sin. Jesus came for sinners. He hung out with sinners, He loved them, He forgave them, He died for them. This is good news!

Confess your sin, express sincere sorrow and resolve with God's grace to turn from sin. Receive forgiveness. Be free from guilt! Thank Him for His mercy.

Don't look back. Let go of the past. You have a new start today. Believe it.

Do you feel that you don't know God so you can't really talk to Him much less worship Him? This is all the more reason to spend time with Him so that you can know Him. **God reveals Himself to those who seek Him.**

He reveals Himself in His creation. Nature is not God but it certainly reflects who He is. Choose to spend time with God out in nature.

God also reveals Himself to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus is the exact representation of God. He reveals what God is like. He came to show us the love of His Father. Learn who Jesus is by studying His life in the gospels.

God reveals Himself through people. We receive His love through others and see His character displayed through the touch of human kindness.

God reveals Himself through the Bible. Spend time with God reading, studying, pondering and memorizing the Scriptures.

God reveals who He is through His Spirit. The Spirit is our Comforter, our Helper, our Advocate. He guides us into all truth. Ask for the Holy Spirit.

Our deepest need is for God. Don't give up. He never gives up on you. Pray by simply being present with God. There is joy in His presence. Remember, He loves you!

**Q. What are some good resources for prayer**

The best resource for help with prayer is a Bible. Find one that has references in the margins of other similar verses in the Bible. These additional reference verses

broaden your understanding of what you are reading. This also helps you get more familiar with other books of the Bible.

There are also many good devotional books with Bible passages.

Learn to pray by praying with others who love God

**Q. Kathy, what what are your systems that keep you on track?**

One of the guidelines I have to help me keep my times with God a consistent priority is to **seek God first**. Before the activities of the day pile up I talk to God early in the morning. Of course there are times when unexpected things come up; but when they are finished and the choice of what to do next needs to be decided my bottom line is: **seek God first!** What if I have an extremely busy day and want to get going? **Seek God first**. Especially on those days I need God. This simple rule has been so valuable to me over the years. **Seek God first.**

*“Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek His face always.” ( Psalm 105:3,4)*

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)*

Another simple rule that has been essential is **guard your prayer times**. I schedule them into my day. I find a quiet place. I eliminate interruptions such as phone calls. I deal with distractions; mainly my thoughts which drift or focus on myself. I redirect my attention back to God. I often have to stop myself from doing several other things while on my way to pray and even during prayer that would consume this time.

I also continually need to guard the times of my Bible studies, prayer meetings and church services. These often conflict with other important events and needs of my family. If possible, I change the time or date of the conflict or get others to help with things like transporting my children to and from their school and sports. I don't schedule things during those times and make sure my family knows these priorities. If I can go to at least part of the meeting I do. I also know that the little excuses such as, “I don't feel like going,” can develop into a pattern of not going at all. I repeat to myself often, **“guard your prayer times!”**

A third vital rule that keeps me on track is “**don't go it alone!**” I can still hear a speaker from a conference I attended many years ago exhorting the audience as he pounded on the podium, “Get with the people of God!” Community, as a part of a church that follows the Scripture and is passionate about Jesus, is foundational to my spiritual life. And within that context of Christian community I connect with friends that I share my life with as we pray, grow and play together. For me to 'go it alone' is spiritual suicide. It is a prime tactic of the kingdom of darkness to divide, separate and isolate churches, families, marriages and individuals. This is so evident in nature. When an animal falls back from traveling with the herd it is easy prey for its enemy.

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...” (Hebrews 10:24,25)*

Be creative! I may pray out loud, sit in silence under the night sky, dance with Jesus, memorize some proverbs, journal, write prayer requests and record the answers, pray in a canoe in the middle of the lake, or pray in a cemetery. Pray in a cemetery? Not really, though a friend does! She loves the peace and quiet there.

Sometimes if I am falling asleep during prayer I get up and walk around the room or if possible go outside and walk while praying. It can be a challenge to find a quiet place, for at times there will be someone else in my usual space or someone playing music too loud near by. I'm flexible. I have prayed in the closet, in the laundry room, the bathroom, and endless times in the car while I wait for my children's music lessons or sport practices to end (I keep a Bible and a winter blanket in the car).

I learn all kinds of new ways to pray by praying with others and with children. And of course the Holy Spirit inspires all kinds of creative ideas.

Pray with Scripture. I love to pray using various devotional books or writings of the saints or other great Christian books and periodicals. However, I make it a standard practice to daily read and or study the Bible. There is no substitute for it. It is God's Word. It is God Himself speaking to me. It is a vital foundation for my spiritual life and the blueprint for my daily living.

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”(Psalm 119:105)*

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1 )*

*"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Duet.8:3)*

Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day. I have to continually check to see if I am setting boundaries to keep this day from becoming like the other days of the week.  
(see question 10b)

The last guideline to keep me on track is to go outside myself in outreach to others. Am I only concerned about my own needs or am I praying for others? Am I a witness caring that others would not go their whole life without knowing God? When I see a need and have sympathy for someone do I just feel sad or do I take the responsibility to go where my heart goes in prayer and action. A body of water without an outlet can soon become a stench. And so can I if I don't go beyond myself to serve. What are my gifts? How am I using them to help? What can I give in a particular situation? My money, my time, a meal, a listening ear, prayer, fasting, physical labor, the message of salvation, childcare, teaching someone how

to do something, an encouraging note? I pray and then I am attentive to how God is directing me to serve.

*“As evening approached, the disciples came to Him and said, .....*

*“‘Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.’ Jesus replied,*

*‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’” (Matthew 14:15,16 )*

*“Wherever your sympathy goes, you must go too, if possible.” (God Calling, Dec.1)*

*“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)*

### **Q. What I have learned from failures and setbacks?**

I have learned from my past failures concerning our family prayer times. Although establishing this as a daily routine was a top priority and a great blessing, being routine (same songs, same ways of praying) during our times together resulted in little spiritual growth and negative attitudes. We had to adapt to the continuous

stages of our six children as they grew. We had to be sensitive to the gap in the various ages represented and even the gender differences. This required planning, creativity, and flexibility. Sometimes the little ones would draw what they could understand of the Bible while the older ones read. We used picture bibles, comic book bibles, rhyme bibles, and teen bibles. We had 365 day devotional books that presented real life situations that taught moral lessons accompanied with scripture verses and discussion questions. We praised God using recorded music, the kids' band instruments, guitars, drums and tambourines. We incorporated puppets, candles, advent wreaths and calendars, dancing, blessings, current events, watching the night sky, seasonal themes, pancake prayer breakfasts and special treats. Interruptions were a constant obstacle. We had to deal with phone calls as well as ever changing schedules. We failed a lot, but we also prayed a lot together. I think the key to overcome was the commitment to make this a priority. We had to 'just do it.' And we had to put forth the effort to do it well.

Certainly this applies to my personal prayer times. I have gotten into ruts, 'put in my time,' so to speak. As is true of any true important relationship routine can become an obstacle. Not the routine of daily interaction, that is essential, but the same routine ways of relating that can become rote - where my body is present but my mind and heart have strayed. These are times to check my heart, re-evaluate,

and ask God for a fresh outpouring of His Holy Spirit, who supplies endless creative ways to draw me into His heart.

**Q. Where does proper rest fit in?**

When I have a lot I must do or desire to do, I skip the first couple hours of sleep and stay up late. This is usually counter-productive. Especially as I age I have more difficulty falling asleep the longer I delay my normal bedtime. The next day I accomplish less, doze off during prayer times and can be very vulnerable spiritually, mentally and physically. It takes a concerted discipline to keep a reasonable bedtime hour.

I sleep so I can pray, but the reverse is also true; I pray so I can sleep. How often I allow distressing thoughts to torment me. This worrying is merely fellowshiping with myself, not God. I may also be anxious. I have anxiety about things that I can't do anything about or things I think might happen. I forget that God will give me the ability, the grace, or the provision for tomorrow's troubles or needs when those times come and not before. I love the scripture that says, "*Cast all your anxiety on Him for He cares for you.*" (1Peter 5:7) If during the day I can bring my concerns to God then they don't accumulate to overwhelm me at night.

Sometimes if I'm weary I just lay my head against something as if I'm leaning on Jesus and just rest with Him. I rest in silence and allow God to love me and restore me. And when I go to bed I often quote a verse from the psalms which says;  
*“I will lie down and sleep in peace for You alone God make me rest secure.”*  
*(Psalm 4:8)*

*“Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*  
*(Matthew 11:20)*

There is another aspect of rest, of being refreshed on a weekly basis through the celebration of the Lord's Day. This is of such importance that it is one of the Ten Commandments:

*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.” (Exodus 20:8)*

This day of rest is a gift from God, a gift of mercy, because He truly cares to free me from the burden of the ceaselessness of physical and mental work; even the thought of it.

When I was growing up, almost every business and store was closed on Sunday. This enabled us to attend church and take a day of rest. The meaning behind the word 'Sabbath' is that of ceasing or refraining from work. It is not meant to put an extra burden on me or to be a set of legalistic inhibitions or rules; rather, it is very freeing. It can be difficult for me to stop all the activity and things I want to get done or to reorganize my schedule and complete necessary jobs in advance in order to have a day of rest. The commitment to do this though results in the freedom for me to literally rest by taking a nap, to enjoy my family and friends, to take a walk, and to spend extra time with God.

There are a couple of scripture verses that help me to understand another aspect of the Lord's Day:

*"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD..." (Isaiah 58:13-14)*

That joy is worth pursuing! I think that the Lord's Day is meant to be the highlight of the week. Many in the Jewish faith anticipate their Sabbath for three days in advance, and then reflect back upon it for three days afterwards. They also have a day of preparation.

To have a day that is delightful, a day not just to observe but to celebrate, does take preparation. I try to prepare food in advance for example. Special activities in our churches and homes involve preplanning and creativity. The motivation is that Jesus will be our guest of honor. There are endless ways to make Sunday special. In our home we might start the night before with a candlelight prayer time and worship music. We bless our home and each other. Sunday evening we often enjoy our best meal of the week with family and friends using our better tableware and sometimes praying for special needs or reading a passage from the Bible.

Celebrating the Lord's day by honoring God at the start of the week puts the rest of the week in perspective. Refraining from the usual physical and mental work provides a refreshing break and a needed rest from the routine of everyday living.

As we honor God in this way He honors us with His presence and blesses us, I am convinced of that.

**Q. How do you get back up after you fail?**

I remember years ago whenever I did something wrong or not perfect enough or fast enough I felt like a failure and would say to myself or out loud, “I’m such a failure.” Then one day I had the distinct impression that God was telling me that I was not to ever call myself a failure again. I had to bite my tongue a lot after that. I still felt like a failure in so many areas but I stopped saying I was.

*“The tongue has the power of life and death...” (Proverbs 18:21a)*

What a powerful truth that verse is! I was speaking death over myself. Saying I was a failure led me into a downward spiral of fretting, and replaying my failure in my mind, then thinking about all the other ways I was a failure and how I failed God again. From that negative place I would often decide to quit or give up. My focus was on me, me, and me which then generated into depression, self pity and complaining. If other people were around I would feel so embarrassed; that was often an issue of pride, but I didn't see that.

Then instead of saying, “I am a failure,” I started saying, “I blew it, I sinned again, I messed up, I failed; but I am not a failure.” (This is speaking the truth and admitting sin) “God I need help.” (At this point I am looking up and not focusing on myself. This is good.) “Thank You for paying the price for my sins and never calling them to mind again.” (Now I am giving thanks and have gratitude; and also declaring a truth from Scripture “*as far as the east is from the west so far has He put our transgressions from us.*” Psalm 103:11b) “Thank You that You are willing and able to repair what I have messed up. (Now I am expressing hope and belief in restoration) “I praise You for giving me another chance and for your mercy and grace. (I am praising God for His awesome character) “Thank You that I am humbled and can now have more compassion on others when they fail.” (Humility is a great teacher. It opens the doors of understanding, positive self-evaluation, wisdom, and the realization of my need for God and others.) “God with You all things are possible; when I am weak you are strong; You are always with me; I can do this with Your help.”(These words of life from scripture now bring me to victory as I take positive steps forward)

What an amazing difference in these two scenarios. One depicts such defeat. So much is lost. To never try again leaves a trail of deep regrets. I have known that dark place. But the past is the past and I choose to walk in the present. If I fail I can

learn learn from my mistakes. I certainly believe that God can take my failures and turn them around at to bring about good. I can start over. *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)*

Many years ago I came across an unique way to start over when I messed up. I was home-schooling my young daughter at the time. I made a mountain of mistakes during our many hours together daily. I heard about 'second chance' cards from a radio program. These are small index size cards that we decorated or colored in any variety of ways and then the words 'second chance' or please 'forgive me ' were written on top. When I blew it due to mis-understanding, anger, criticalness, impatience, ignorance or whatever, I would feel bad and our school day would no longer be conducive for learning. I would then find my 'second chance' card and keeping my mouth shut, set it beside her. She was quick to forgive and we would start over. I loved those cards! Sometimes I would receive a card from her too. Was my reaction to turn away, or consider that card inadequate for the offense? Of course not. My heart was delighted. And how much more is God's heart when I come to Him with my sins and failures and present my 'second chance' card to Him.

*“So he got and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming and filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. (Luke 15:20)*

My Father in heaven, I come to You with the burden of my failures. You understand everything about me. You tell me to have courage and to not be anxious but to begin again. Thank you that you carry away my guilt and lift discouragement from me. I need You today. I need Your arms of love around me. You make all things new. I choose to forget past failures, mine and others, and to remember only the good things. I praise You for the grace to move forward.

**Q. What does your support team look like?**

My dear loved ones that I interact with the most are constant inspirations to my spirit. My husband is a faithful man; steady, consistent and persevering. He is willing and available. He has always been my cheerleader and enables me to pray or outreach to others by setting aside his own agenda, providing for my needs, and by doing twice or more of the workload at home over and over again. I learn God's unconditional love from him. My children now ages 16 to 30 demonstrate to me what love in action is. They have gone on outreaches and mission trips with the faith in God to provide and the heart to help others. I have witnessed their generosity and willingness to serve and meet needs. I've seen them go out of their

comfort zones, stand for what is right, cut through hypocrisy (mine included), and go the extra mile for me and others. I learn from them what real passion and excitement for the things of God looks like. They are faithful in prayer consistently despite homework, sports, jobs, and their many activities. And they have fun, do crazy things, and laugh a lot along the way. Their joy is refreshing.

My close friends that I interact with every week are just that: close to my heart and faithful friends; real treasures. They are there for me to help, listen, understand and pray. I have seen them persevere through trials. Their personal walks with God are an encouragement to me.

These are those in my immediate surroundings. Of course there are so many others that have made and still make amazing impacts on my spiritual life. The example and spiritual foundation of my parents is a constant blessing. My brothers and sisters, extended family members, and in-laws all model various aspects of God's character.

Another huge impact are the leaders in my church and the wonderful people I interact with as we pray, study and serve together. There are so many others that I don't see as often but they pray for me and encourage me and set great examples.

Some others have passed away but their spiritual contributions still bear fruit in my life.

**Q. Who do you look up to as a role model?**

In grade school I read several books on the lives of the saints. Their depth of prayer and heroic deeds were an inspiration to me. I remember them to this day. These women and men transformed their world and impacted generations.

I have also been inspired by modern day saints. These are the ones that pray that their hearts be broken with the things that break the heart of God. They move me to compassion in their intercession, tears, and fasting for the hopeless and suffering. They humble me by their prayers of repentance as they ask the Spirit of God to convict them and expose the sin in their lives. They challenge me in their courageous prayers of total surrender to Jesus as they ask Him to take their lives and hearts, everything, no matter what the cost, so that His Spirit can live in them and change lives. I continue to learn perseverance as I hear their prayers of praise and thanksgiving in the midst of adversity and trials. I am encouraged as I continually witness people transformed, healed, set free, and provided for in answer to their dynamic prayers. These passionate ones are my role models.

**Q. What would you fight for in prayer?**

Naturally I fight for my loved ones in prayer and the things I am most concerned about; but God challenges me to look on the needs of others as if they were my own. A friend once told me about a mother who requested prayers for her troubled teen. She did not know the person very well but she prayed for the son. Then she felt that God was asking her to pray for that young boy as if he was her own son. Did that change the intensity of her prayer? She fasted and cried out to God for that child in a whole deeper way.

Often I start out faithful to pray for a certain intention but then I forget, quit, or assume that things are better without even checking. I saw such a mobilization of prayer at the start of the war for our overseas troops. The prayer support from all over was impressive. Did it last? The war did but the prayer did not in numbers and intensity. It is hard to be faithful in prayer in the long haul.

With the internet we have such an opportunity to be involved with prayer that comes through the requests of those we are connected with. Recently I was asked to pray for a baby who needed heart surgery at birth. Will I ever see that child or her parents? Probably not. But I felt it was such a privilege to be involved with praying for her along with so many others and to read the touching reports of his

father as he relayed the progress of his new daughter and poured out his heart in gratitude to his on-line support team.

**Q. What motivates you to pray?**

There are several motivations that stir me to pray.

- **Belief.** I believe that prayer connects me to God. I believe it is powerful and life changing. In a place of prayer someone can effect lives of those they don't even know half-way around the world. Prayer can influence governments, nations, the weather and turn the tide of wars. Prayer restores, brings healing and can turn a hardened heart. Gradually, through prayer I am transformed spiritually, mentally and physically in the image of God. It is a mighty weapon against evil. It releases joy, peace and spiritual grace and strength when needed. I believe God loves me passionately as His child and delights to meet with me in prayer. I believe; therefore I pray.
- **Compassion** moves me to pray. When I encounter any kind of suffering or see things that cause people bondage my heart longs to bring them relief or freedom. I come before God on their behalf. I know that God weeps with those who weep. The Bible says He hears the cry of the poor, that He is close to the brokenhearted, that He never forsakes us; so I know He puts His

compassion in us to pray for others. I may encounter a bypasser who looks distressed or greived and say a short prayer. When I see someone smoking I ask God to set them free from a spirit of addiction. Whatever moves my heart moves me to petition God for heavenly aid.

- **Love.** I long for God's love. I just want to know that God loves me. I mess up all the time and need to be reassured of His love. I want to absorb even a dot of that infinite love so I can love others. And I want to pray so I can give my love to God too. I want to give joy to his heart by seeking just to be near Him for who He is and not for what He can give me.
- **Need.** If I have a need or hear about a need, I know where to go for the heavenly supply. The need could be for money, a car, a lost item, a job, a sweetheart, a rare article, an airline ticket or favor with the weather. Maybe even a monkey cup? (I love monkeys) What does it matter to God if it is \$1000 or a simple toy, He owns the universe. I know He cares about all my needs great and small. I have witnessed His provision over and over in response to my prayers for specific needs. Although it is a vulnerable place to be in need of finances, for example, it is sure amazing to receive what God gives.

- **Scripture.** The Bible is full of examples of heartfelt cries to God for mercy, for healing, for justice, for bread, for children, for his Spirit; and then records the answers. It contains prayers of every human emotion: rejoicing, mourning, desperation, exultation, thanksgiving, disappointment, romantic love and hope. It reveals times when Jesus prayed alone, for Himself in agony; and for others. It provides comfort, assurance, protection from evil, guidance, insight, wisdom, and God's Presence. The Bible motivates me to pray, teaches me ways to praise, to thank, to repent, to intercede, to wait on God, and express my heart. It encourages me to pray with expectation and faith for God is *“able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.”* (Ephesians 3:20a) It is a storehouse of treasures. So many of the verses are my songs and words of prayer.

*“I love the Lord because He hears my prayers and answers them. Because He bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I breathe!”* (Psalms 116:1,2)

### **Q. How do you not quit and stay engaged?**

I was born into the world and therefore I am a part of the conflict of the ages: the battle between good and evil. I have seen this portrayed all my life as the theme of

endless media productions and literary works. I don't like battle and I don't really want to be a part of it. How about the option to just remain neutral? That kind of logic doesn't stop the battle. The cosmic war is real and it is constant. If I choose to remain passive I'm either a casualty or a prisoner of war. I must be actively engaged.

Spiritual warfare targets my relationship with Jesus. The forces of evil press in to remove Jesus' central place in my life. This is a daily life long struggle. I can't let up or I lose ground. The times when I move forward I need to especially be on guard because naturally any advancement will be opposed.

*“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”(1Peter 5:8)*

Devour is something that gets my attention! It is so important to regularly evaluate my priorities to gauge if my life is disciplined and ordered; and that I am in tune to the things that lull me into passivity.

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; but I have come that they may have life to the full.(John 10:10)*

I've been robbed of finances, of peace of mind, of joy, of purpose, of family time; and the list goes on. The reverse is also true that in God I have experienced the fullness of life.

*“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12)*

The fight is not against people. When I see things in myself and others that are so negative and destructive I remind myself not to go against people. I try to see how the enemy holds us as captives.

Sometimes I am deceived and knowing the truth sets me free. My sins hold me captive, and I need to deal with confession and repentance to be freed.

Unforgiveness will keep me a prisoner. I can pray for myself and others that God would open our blind eyes and lead us out of darkness to light and from Satan's power to God. (see Acts 26:18) It saddens my heart to think of people being held captive. There are areas of my life that I am still need to experience freedom in.

The verses of scripture that bring me the most encouragement are the prophecies about Christ that state:

*“He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,” (Isaiah 61:1b)*

It is helpful to know the enemies tactics. I've experienced several. Here are a few examples:

- **Deception.** Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He is called the 'Father of Lies'. He constantly takes what is true and twists and distorts or adds to it rendering it false. He does this with God's Word and with our words all the time. It can be so subtle. I always pray that God would expose the root lies that we believe and protect us from deception.
- **Distraction.** I would say most of my distractions are in my thoughts when I pray. Often the distractions are good things. During prayer for example I remember I need to call someone, help someone, or finish something important. I need to choose the highest priority here.
- **Burn-out.** It is a trap of the enemy to wear me out physically, mentally, and emotionally. I need to discern what the good things are that God wants me to do as

opposed to what the enemy is pushing me to do to the point of exhaustion. At that point I can be unproductive and also very vulnerable to temptations.

- **Fear.** The demonic forces instill fear to paralyze me from moving forward in prayer, maturity, and action. Fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of the dark, fear of pain, fear of God, fear of loss, fear of the dark and so many other fears have choked the peace from my life and stirred up anxiety and panic.

- **Isolation.** Here I have experienced attempts to keep me from prayer often with thoughts of unworthiness and condemnation; and attempts to separate me from key relationships with individuals and communities.

Those are just some of the enemy's strategies but God has provided me with weapons to overcome; here are a few that I regularly employ:

- Prayer.
- Fasting.
- The Word of God.

The Word of God is the the Sword of the Spirit that I use to speak the truth when the enemy interjects a lie. The lie says I am trash but I respond with the truth from Psalm 139 that says “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” The enemy instills fear and I respond, “*God did not give me a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a strong mind.*”(2 Timothy 1:7) I have to continue to study and memorize the Word of God so I know what the truth really is and can speak it and pray it. Psalm 91 is an awesome prayer of protection.

- The Name of Jesus. I sing it, say it, whisper it. It is powerful! It puts the darkness to flight.

- The Blood of Jesus and the Cross of Jesus. It is what won salvation for me and won victory over every demonmic power. When Satan attacks I say, “I come against you with the Blood of Jesus and the power of the cross!”

- Praise. I praise God with psalms and other Bible verses that proclaim His attributes, or I say my own praises to Him, or sing songs of praise. Praise is the devil's deathnell. It is a great warfare tactic used throughout the Bible. The musicians often led the Isrealites into battle. When Paul and Silas were thrown in prison and began to pray and sing hymns to God an earthquake shook the prison

doors open and loosened all the prisoners' chains. (Acts 16:25,26) I often will put praise music on in the house as I work or even when I'm gone to facilitate God's presence in our surroundings and to ward off the powers of darkness.

- Ephesians 6:10-18) lists the Armor of God. (The sword of the Spirit was already mentioned)

I put on spiritual armor, the breastplate of righteousness for example, to battle the enemy. I am not righteous, but with the breastplate I wear the righteousness of Christ. If the enemy accuses me of things I've done wrong and tells me I'm not fit to go on a mission trip I can stand assured with Christ's righteousness over me. No enemy can come against that.

- Doing Good. When we are generous and looking for opportunities to give we engage God to fight on our behalf. Our good triumphs over evil...“Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.”(Romans 12:21)

- Obedience. If I am out of line with God's commands and unrepentant my sin allows Satan a foothold. My sin can lead me into traps of the enemy and imprison me. Obeying God provides spiritual protection.

- Joy. A joyfull spirit is a powerful weapon against evil. Joy dispels darkness. It is contageous. It is trust in God. The joy of the Lord gives me spiritual strength. I find it by being in God's Presence.

I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died to free me from my sins and rose to bring me new life. I asked Him to to live in me as Lord of my life promising to follow and obey him. I belong to God. His Spirit lives in me now and so where ever I go I have the Spirit of God in me to conquer the powers of darkness. Because of the Spirit in me Satan is afraid of me as he is of all Christ's followers. We are weapons of warfare by our very presence.

(I still battle with fear. I am improving and learning to do things, while still afraid, with God's help.)

**Q. Thank you so much, Kathy, for your sharing your wisdom on becoming spiritually fit! And last words?**

Prayer is simply being present with God. GOD BLESS YOU!

This is my prayer for you:

“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the

love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:16-19)