



February Prayer Update



A Beautiful Kind of Hard

My grandma Muriel was one of the hardest working people I've ever known. Even in her seventies and eighties, with osteoporosis in her fine, fragile bones, she rarely complained. After a full day at the deli and an afternoon of baking for the farmer's market, she would still pull on her rubber boots and head to the garden. Her hands were often tired by then, her knees stiff from standing, but she bent down anyway.

I would trail behind her, barefoot and eager, as dusk settled in and the first fireflies flickered across the lawn. The garden looked like a field to my child's eyes. I wanted to help, mostly by taste-testing sun-warmed raspberries and sugar snap peas straight from the vine. My

grandma would toss down a Styrofoam pad or folded paper bag and kneel in the dirt to pull weeds or pick beans, there were always too many beans. We would talk while I flitted nearby, half working, half grazing.

I know without a doubt that at the end of each day, my grandparents were tired. The kitchen and garden were often hot and humid. Some evenings the mosquitoes were so thick, we wore heavy layers of bug spray and netted hats. But looking back, it was a good kind of tired. The kind that comes from showing up again and again, even when your hands ache and your knees protest.

My grandparents taught me, without ever preaching it, that hard and good are not opposites.

Remembering them brought Hebrews 12 to life for me.

Last week, as our small group walked verse by verse through the chapter, I found myself lingering over the imagery in verse 12: drooping hands and weak knees. I could see them. Not as abstract poetry, but as real limbs at the end of a long day. Hands that have kneaded dough and pulled weeds. Knees stiff from standing, yet still willing to bend.

The verse sits between a passage on the loving discipline of God and a call to live holy, set-apart lives. Both are good. Both can leave us weary.

Right in the middle we read:

“Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”
Hebrews 12:12–13

The timing of studying this passage felt kind. It reminded me of a steady truth: we are healed and strengthened as God trains us in righteousness through every circumstance He allows. The strengthening does not happen apart from the bending. The growth comes through repetition, through long days, through obedience when we are tired.

Just before this, the writer urges us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. As believers, we have not chosen to follow a church or an organization or even a particular group of people. And we have not signed up for a life made only of sunshine.

We have chosen to follow Jesus, in the good and in the hard.

And He set the standard, showing us that obedience to the Father carries a joy deeper than exhaustion.

Building our toolbox

Late January, we had the opportunity to host a group from sister churches in the St Paul area in our home. The goal was to encourage a partnership between our churches and Arrive Ministries which specifically works to serve refugees as they acclimate to a new country. We will likely have two groups partnering with families for a year-long commitment.



Learning about the challenges refugees face as they navigate life in a new place



Working through a case study as we learn the Focus 210 tool



Last month, our family traveled to Orlando to meet the Converge Send leaders and to receive full training on using the Focus 210 coaching tool. We got to know some amazing people and learned just how important prayer and discernment are to how Focus 210 works!

Seeing God's Work Continue

You may remember that last fall we got to help coach a group of churches on the Iron Range called Forge United. Cory and a team of leaders from that group just returned from a two week trip to SE Asia. Cory accompanied the team to get some video footage and interviews from the ground that can help tell the story of how God has brought people together across the globe to partner in reaching

the unreached with the good news of Jesus! He is still jet lagged, but excited about what he learned and saw.

We can't wait to see how God will use this new partnership to build His church among the unreached.



Ways you can pray

- Pray for Cory to have creativity and wisdom as he puts together video footage from his trip overseas with the Forge United team from the Iron Range. Pray too, that as churches and individuals see what God is doing among the unreached, their hearts would be convicted and excited to participate in this work!
- Pray for opportunities for us to meet new partners (prayer and financial partners) and for God's provision for our financial needs.
- Pray for us as a couple to work well together as we share ideas and coordinate our time and talents in family life and ministry.
- Pray for us as we enter the unique season leading up to Easter to have abundant opportunities to welcome others into our church community and family.
- This month we get to be part of a missions conference in Chisholm, Minnesota. Pray as we prepare for sharing in a breakout that we could be an encouragement as we serve as God provides opportunities.

Did you know?

One of the things that Cory and I love to share about our path into ministry and specifically missions, is the role that short term exposure to

other cultures played in shaping a love for the nations within us. We believe that seeing how God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things is life changing and this has reshaped how we live life.

Converge International Ministries has both six week internships as well as residency programs that allow individuals ages 18 and up to experience God at work in a different context. If you or someone in your church has a love for Jesus, a heart for the nations and you already see that *in action*, these are great opportunities to consider as next steps. Click the link below, or reach out to Cory or myself and we will get you connected!

[Click here to learn more about short term opportunities with Converge](#)



Our very first short term trip to Thailand in 2017! That is baby Delphine who is now NINE!

Thank you for partnering with us in the work of the Gospel. We appreciate you!

Love from Minnesota,

The Jackson Crew



We took the girls to a wildlife preserve where we got up close to alligators and lots of fish, birds, and turtles. One of our kids got a growl from an alligator that thought she got a little too close!