artisan volume 11.
Well, it’s one louder, isn’t it? It’s not ten.

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This edition of Artisan goes out to you around the world with much love and support. As cheerleaders and co-botchers on the side of your life pitch our desire is to encourage you in the pursuit of God in the context of your profession and place of operation in the Media, Arts and Fashion industries.

As we enter another year, prayer continues to be the major focus and the catalyst to everything. For over eight years in London we have been creating space for industry people to come together to Unite, Humble ourselves and Pray for one another and the industries where God has called us and placed us. This simple call is now being replicated in other cities including New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol with potential events starting in another eight cities around the world over the next eighteen months.

The Artisan website is a work in progress but is beginning to facilitate networking and the promotion of your gigs, exhibitions etc. This will be developing further throughout this year. If we don’t have your details please register on the site – www.artisaninitiatives.org Of course alongside the web and the prayer events around the world the publication will be distributed three or four times this year. The publications in the past have grappled with issues such as ambition, rejection, money, touring, success, image, sex, the bible, Jesus and the Church. This publication looks at the issue of prayer.

To pray is to walk in the full light of God and to say simply, without holding back, ‘I am human and you are God.’ At that moment conversion occurs, the restoration of the true relationship. A human being is not someone who once in a while makes a mistake and God is not someone who now and then forgives. No, human beings are sinners and God is love.

With Open Hands by Henri Nouwen I was chatting with someone recently who was beating himself up about his own spiritual mediocrity, ‘I don’t read the Bible enough, I don’t pray enough.’ Then the surprising question to me was, ‘How do you do it?’ He was under the impression that as a person who leads prayer events he must be up at 4am to pray. I had to disappoint him and admit that as a father with two young children, I was always tired and could not get out of bed to pray until 4.30am. Yeah right, dream on Coley!

To communicate 24/7 with the creator is mind blowing. It is clear from scripture that God is not interested in flashy words or well constructed sentences. He longs for relationship that is as natural as breathing. We develop this through engaging with the Bible, and also through opening our mouths and learning this exhilarating and diverse art of silence, ranting, worship, confession, listening, shouting, complaining, thanking... or prayer as most people call it.

Get outside and see God’s handiwork, be visually inspired and allow your words to simply react to what you see. Don’t spend so much time praying for yourself and your bank balance, look around you, be alert and see the situations and people that interact with your life day by day – allow these to shape your God talk. Prayer is more than a one to one rant or conversation, there is an important corporate dynamic and significance when people agree something together. On the global day of prayer in 2006 over 200 million people in 199 nations united together to pray. This year on Pentecost Sunday 27th May 2007 the momentum continues in stadiums across the globe (www.globaldayofprayer.com) so get involved in a nation near you!

One of the foundational scriptures they use for this day is from 2 Chronicles 7:14 which says, ‘If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.’ The repercussions from prayer changes people, situations and whole nations. For me I believe that God has called us who are involved in the most influential industries in our world to unite, humble ourselves and pray. In different hubs around the world with many different churches and organisations we pursue this call, not to create headlines or draw attention to anybody but simply out of obedience and a passion to see change. Alongside us coming together to pray, there is a growing network of intercessors who are committed to praying for issues relating to us and the industries.

As people involved in the industry our hope is in the Lord who loves us and longs for us to relate with him individually and corporately. Prayer is an exciting privilege and has been the catalyst to things happening from day one. So get out, buy a latte, enjoy God, kick some leaves, show him your molars and ask the Lord to give you faith to enable you to pray big stuff.

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be
During my first year at art school I began each day on my knees in prayer. I was asking God to lead me, anywhere, except to a place of pain. I had decided I had dealt with pain, and now was the time to be with God, have fun and build a career in London – faith would inspire me and God would wield my imagination. I think I cried every few days for the first six months. I became angry, as every real idea seemed to bounce back to early, painful memories. My tutor decided that my first real work was an installation in which I placed my childhood dolls with broken arms and legs, tumbling down a dirty stairwell. Standing next to the tutor with tears rolling down my cheeks and offering him an unwrapped sweet from my pocket (to give him something to do as I wept) was not being an artist. I listened to the praise and then sat in the toilets and cried further. I remember, leaving the toilet and deciding then that I had to take control. Over the remaining first year I prayed anxiously each morning, seeking God’s guidance yet dismissing any conversation with God during school hours. Without thinking I began to firmly separate blessings in my life from the power of the Holy Spirit. Waiting on God to speak his ideas, was not an option – I thought I was too upset. So I started a series of multimedia works on paper and found a mechanical way of working, without thinking about God. Over two hundred and fifty A3 sheets later, sheets covered with newspaper cuttings and juxtaposed with random gallery rubbish, postcards, tickets etc., I realised I was lost. People seemed indifferent to the crap I was presenting, I was asked to find an explanation. The show at a church in central London resulted in an invitation to exhibit the work within lawyers’ chambers and become a first artist in residence. I remained throughout the second year within a plea bargaining agreement I had set myself – prayer but no personal pain. I could not yet trust God. I allowed myself prayer to heal others and pray for art that engaged with the injustices in society; I grew in strength yet inwardly I felt very alone. Within my third year at art school I felt quietly hollow and experienced a sensation that can only be described as falling away from myself. I then decided I would be a photographer and started to take pictures in the style of a favourite image – oranges in a marketplace in Brazil. I made a series of photographs of oranges scattered around markets in London. I gathered oranges from Paris, Mexico, Singapore and Bali. One day using a Christingle orange I lit a candle and prayed aloud, ‘God here are my oranges let them mean something,’ I then stood in my garden and asked God to find me, take me home and help me experience his idea for my life. Standing on the street with a large white wooden cross, next to Denis, a Brazilian migrant worker holding an advertising sign for a guitar shop, felt odd. I had received a prophesy at church that God was going to use me as an evangelist, but it was the last thing I wanted to do. I began to meet with Denis regularly and through our conversation we produced an indictment of a Human Rights Bill, declaring the injustice of migrant workers. I met with Denis and I prayed as we chatted about the misery he experienced, standing holding an advert for six hour stretches. God’s simple plan was to introduce me to a person I had walked past in the street each day for over a year. Denis and I continued to work together to produce a second body of work relating to the death of Jean Charles de Menezes. I prayed during the making of this work that God would be at the very centre of his own work, using my mind and body as his tools. The show at a church in central London resulted in an invitation to exhibit the work within lawyers’ chambers and become a first artist in residence. Invitations to create projects and exhibit in New York, Dubai and Tokyo have followed this exhibition. Asking God to bless his fruit and to wholly inspire my work is something I now cannot ever live without. It feels like not breathing. I try to pray as I think about work, hearing God’s word like gentle conversation, yet yielding control when saddened, often because I have said too much and not left space for him. I seek God’s gentle guidance of his blessings within my life when making art and see things falling away when I do not.
If you are pushed back, and about to fall, if it seems that no man can (or will) help, perhaps you can find hope in the story of a desperate warrior poet who moved the hand of God.

I was pushed back and about to fall. Though these words were penned centuries ago by a desperate warrior poet, they still resonate today. It is not difficult to relate the author’s position to our own. All of us have been, will be, or are now in the very same peril. One translator calls it the ‘cliff edge’. What is perhaps different between the warrior poet, and us, is the nature of the precipice. Our precipice may be marital collapse, career disaster, or sexual addiction. But whatever the cliff edge, we cannot bear to fall.

I was ‘pushed back and about to fall, but Yahweh helped me’. The addition of these five words offers a new ending, a ‘happy’ ending, but what happened in the desperate warrior poet’s story of his living cloud.

As from some rocky cleft the bees’. This same metaphor was used by a later poet, Homer, whose eloquence may help us to envisage the true danger: ... the following host, Poured forth by thousands, darkens all the coast. As from some rocky cleft the shepherd sees,

Rolling and blackening, swarms succeeding swarms,

Clustering in heaps on heaps, the living cloud. Homer’s choice of the phrase ‘swarms succeeding swarms’ captures the essence of the most horrific kind of desperation. For the author of Psalm 118, and for many of us, distress may come in succeeding ‘swarms’. Before we can recover from the last onslaught, we are assaulted by the next. This succession of failures can deplete the last reserves of even the strongest. Hope can give way to anguish. I have tasted such anguish. In 1997, I found myself facing the bitter end of a long, painful journey. Four years earlier, I had promised a group of shareholders that I would do everything possible to produce a new television series. I was too ‘green’ to recognize the near impossibility of my promise. Each year forty thousand new series are proposed, but only about forty are actually produced. How could I ever expect to win a place among the select forty? I had never even produced a single show.

I was determined, but with each passing day, the stark realities of my challenge grew clearer. After the usual bout with agencies (ICM, CAA, William Morris), with network executives, and talent, I found myself personally and financially exhausted. I needed the call, not the call from God (I thought that God had spoken). I needed the phone call from Rysher Entertainment. I needed to hear ‘yes’.

My four year tour of duty had been brutal. Like the assault described by Homer, I had endured ‘swarms succeeding swarms’. It was one disappointment after another: a deal with A&E had dissolved, as had another with CBS, and then with FOX. A co series with Don Johnson fell apart when our show runner left EP the new hit JAG.

Time was running out, and Rysher was my last hope. I knew the call would come. It had to come. I had faith. I expected a miracle. And as none had yet materialized, the whole problem seemed to simplify itself. There was no more time. There were no more partners. Thus, by process of elimination, it grew apparent that Rysher would be the ordained agent of God’s rescue.


I had been on the cliff edge; now it seemed I was falling. I had spent four gut wrenching years and small fortune all for naught. How would I face my shareholders? How could I face myself? I knew I needed to trust God more than I trusted my understanding of God. But how could I live and lead, if my fundamental world view was flawed? I thought God had led me into this venture. Clearly, he had not – unless, his primary purpose was to ‘crush’ me.

In my anguish I cried to Yahweh

If there is a relationship between the story of the warrior poet, the story of my television series, and the story in which you are living, it is likely this: that each of us eventually finds ourselves at a point of absolute despair, and that such despair can force an ‘anguished cry for help. The ‘anguished cry for help’, the prayer of the panic stricken, is the stuff of spiritual breakthrough’.

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For anguish can be the catalyst of breakthrough – it can transform the language of prayer. Under 'normal' conditions, our prayer is entitled to three voices, and any three voice conversation: (1) the voice with which we address God, (2) the voice with which he responds (if we are able to hear him), and (3) the voice with which we evaluate the other two voices. This third voice is an obstacle to earnestness. We pray, 'Dear God, please forgive me', but while we are forming words with our tongue, we are filtering them with our mind. We think, 'I've already asked for this a hundred times – will God still listen?'; or 'Was that really sincere enough?'; or 'How can he answer me with all of the sin in my life?' We proceed as though the only voice God can hear is the one with which we are addressing him. The whole illusion is ludicrous. We fool only ourselves.

Honest prayer does not begin until we integrate the third voice: ‘Father, I have asked you to forgive me so many times, I am afraid to ask again... I don’t even know how to convey my heart; the words seem stilted, artificial... the words you know.'

Hemingway said, ‘Write the truest words you know.' We might substitute the word 'write' with the word 'pray'. While for most, this transparency is difficult, there is a certain circumstance wherein the first and third voices are compressed if not entirely integrated. This is the very circumstance in which the warrior poet found himself. The 'prayer of the anguished' is a prayer of extreme intensity – an intensity that demands a ruthless, inward honesty. Such honesty can move us from what one writer calls, 'wishing upwards' to searching inward. And 'searching inward' is the beginning of honest, effectual prayer. 8

This, then, was the first heart move in the life transforming prayer of the warrior poet. In his bitter, inward honesty he discovered that a reversal of conditions must sometimes begin with a reversal of focus. His fixation on the outward problem ('they surrounded me on every side') 9 was eventually turned to the realization of an inward problem. He confesses, ‘The LORD has chastened me severely.' 10 In doing so, he repents. And in doing so, he acknowledges that God is not just using the man to influence the circumstances; he is using the circumstances to influence the man. The lesson is well articulated in a 20th century psalm penned by yet another desperate warrior poet: He placed thee mid this dance Of plastic circumstance. This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fail arrest Machinery just meant To give thy soul its bent Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed. 11

YAHWEH IS WITH ME

Fyodor Dostoevsky, in the Brothers Karamazov, observed, 'If your prayer is sincere there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education.' 12

Dostoevsky’s observation captures the essence of the heart movements in Psalm 118. Three of the novelist’s words serve us as truth markers. They are the words 'sincere', 'meaning', and 'courage'. We may connect 'sincere' to the concept of integrating the third voice, and we may connect 'meaning' to the concept of reversing our focus, but we have yet to discuss the connection with 'courage'.

For the person who is ‘on the cliff edge about to fall’, who in their anguish is crying out to Yahweh, inward focus is not enough. One needs hope – hope that the inward change will be followed by an outward change. One needs Dostoevsky’s ‘fresh courage’. The warrior poet of Psalm 118 found such courage. We may do the same by examining a pattern of truth woven into his poetry. His declaration, ‘Yahweh is with me’ encapsulates the second heart move of his life transforming prayer; and it is rich with philosophic insight.

The meaning must be examined in two parts:

Of most import is the actual essence of the concept 'Yahweh is'. The Hebrew poets were not the first to pen psalms for their God. The pagan poets of ancient time penned moving passages similar, at least in form, to those of the Hebrews. An Akkadian psalm from the Ugaritica 13 reads similar to the Hebrew psalms of thanksgiving. 14 However, there is a distinctive difference. In keeping with the Akkadian view of God, their psalmists implore him with magic, with rituals, and with self mutilation. Their God is dangerous, temporal, impossibly to predict. The Hebrew psalmists write of a different God. Psalm 118 is replete with an essential declaration: 'That God is good; that his love endures forever.'

The warrior poet begins and ends his psalm emphasizing two vital elements of Yahweh’s essence: (1) he is good, and (2) his love endures forever. This confession is vital. It answers and anticipates the answer to four thousand years of philosophic and theological query, establishing the conviction that God is good and that this supreme condition will not change.

Yet this essential answer is not enough. If the warrior poet is to find courage, he must answer one more question: will this good, unchanging God rescue him? In his heart of hearts, he is confronted by his own unworthiness. What right does he have to expect help from a holy deity? Yahweh is able, but is he willing?

The answer is addressed in just two words, ‘with me’. They may be interpreted in dual connotation. First, that Yahweh is near me. Second, that Yahweh is for me. The warrior poet is surrounded on every side, but he is not alone. God is near him – and thus he experiences intimacy. The warrior poet is unworthy of divine rescue, but God is for him – and thus he experiences grace.

‘Yahweh is with me’. Out of such intimacy and grace comes fresh courage. It is a special courage commensurate with an absolute shift in dependency. I am not able, but Yahweh is both able and willing. I will trust. With this shift, the warrior poet transcends the danger expressed by a modern psalmist who warns that the ‘moral sweat’ pouring off our brows can ‘blind our eyes to the action of God in and around us’. 15 And with this shift, the warrior poet experiences the third heart move, crying out in defiance against his calamity:

Yahweh is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Yahweh is with me.

The significance of these words is found in their tense and their tone. The tone is defiant; the tense is present. Before the rescue, comes the present tense, defiant declaration of absolute trust. Only after this declaration of holy defiance, comes the rescue work of Yahweh. Defiance is the anti venom for despair. One does not overcome despair with a halting effort to be ‘hopeful’. It takes the ‘stronger stuff’ of present tense holy defiance. It is expressed in the counter challenge of one who dares to trust in spite of the risks. It is David hurting faith at Goliath. It is Ruth
refusing to abandon Naomi. It is Elijah taunting the priests of Baal.

The tireless missionary, C.T. Studd, who at age fifty three risked everything 17 to establish a mission church in the Congo, expresses the heart move of one who has overcome despair with a present tense, defiant declaration of absolute truth: ‘The God of Heaven, he will fight for us ... we will a thousand times sooner die trusting only our God, than live trusting in man.”

The Heart Move: The Warrior Poet of Psalm 118

The Gospel of Heaven, he will fight for us ... we will a thousand times sooner die trusting only our God, than live trusting in man.

ONE

The Warrior Poet, in absolute desperation, experiences integration in the voices of prayer – the voice of ‘address’ becomes one with the voice of ‘evaluation’. In this way, he discovers a reversal of focus – learning that God is not just using the man to influence the circumstances; he is using the circumstances to influence the man.

TWO

This reversal prepares the Warrior Poet for a shift in ultimate dependency. Such dependency is predicated upon the conscious decision to trust, and this trust is predicated upon two essential faith propositions: that (1) God is unchanging good, that (2) God is both the God we crave. It is natural, then, for spontaneous prayer, discoveries that God is more than strength; the one who experiences such life transforming circumstances to influence the man. It is Elijah taunting the bees may be compared to Deuteronomy 1:44. The Psalm points to the punishing power that comes upon them. They are extinguished (v.18) like a fire of thorns. Cf. I. T. Kerr and F. Dalttich Commentary on the Old Testament (2:7-11). (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

Homer, The Iliad ii, ver. 86. Translated by Alexander Pope.


8 As T.S. Eliot writes, “To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not, you must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.” Four Quartets, Quartet No. 1. East Coker (Orlando: Harvest Books 1968).

9 Psalm 118:11

10 Psalm 118:18

11 Oswald Chambers, Christian Disciplines: Containing the Disciplines of Divine Guidance, Suffering, Prayer, Prayer, Loneliness, Patience (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1896, CPIS). See also Chambers’ The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers 2005). Chambers, educated in art and architecture, was part mystic, part theologian, and part poet (he started a society dedicated to Robert Browning). He resigned his position as the Principal of The Bible Training College in London to serve as a chaplain during World War I. He was assigned to Zeitoun in Egypt, where he died on the 15th of November in 1917. The news of his death was cabled to England, “Oswald In His Presence”. Though his wife preferred a simple burial, the soldiers whom he served demanded that full military honours be given to their fallen comrade.

12 Feodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, Part II, Chapter 3 (Garden City, New York: Literary Guild of America, 1949).


14 Cf. Psalms 86. See also Psalm 36a.

15 This position offers a primary warrant both for the fields of metaphysics and ethics.


17 Charlie Studd’s missionary venture to Africa was opposed by everyone, including the mission board, and the business leaders who had supported his previous work in India. Studd insisted that he would go with or without their help. His obedience to God resulted in a fellowship of churches that is now reputed to number more than 200,000 people.

18 See www.nathan.co.za/ct_studd.asp.

19 I owe a special debt to the other Executive Producer of the series, Rasha Draschavitch. Flint has been quoted in more than 13,136 online and offline sources, including The Washington Post, Rolling Stone, and Internet News. Flint has served as the Co-Executive Producer of the FOX Family series Courage, hosted by actor Danny Glover. He also serves as a senior advisor or board member to twelve growing companies and four charitable foundations. His writing and television production activities have won two Oscars, the Mountain Land Grand Prize for Short Fiction, and an Emmy. In 2000, the McDonald Council named his business research group the ‘Best in America’. Flint has been a pastor for 21 years, married for 19 years and has 3 children.
Prayer non-stop

Prayer starts with the acknowledgement that God wants to chat all the time! It's a two way dialogue. Please don't think I'm being irreverent, I'm just being real. I think God even wants us to ask him for parking spaces. He wants us to ask him when the evil parking ticket men will next be on the prowl as to how long we've got after our ticket has run out. He wants to be involved in the most menial tasks and thoughts of our everyday life – and of course, all of our big decisions, that goes without saying. You hear people saying that there is an issue of 'over spiritualising' everything. Well, in my opinion, if God tells us to ask him for everything we need, then who's to say that a parking space doesn't count?

I don't know why our prayers don't always get answered, but I do know that when Jesus prayed, he always saw that what his Father had asked was done. So let's ask the Father what's on his heart, and we can join with Jesus asking to see it happen.

Hearing God speak back can be a tricky one. But then, what relationship doesn't have communication issues? We just have to learn his way of talking to us. God talks just like thoughts in my head – now you're thinking I'm crazy! I still hear him wrong sometimes, but more often than not, I have learnt to distinguish between what's him and what are my normal nattering thoughts. If you don't hear him already, I dare you to try it out. Dare you to ask him some meaningless little things about the quickest route home tonight, or what time a certain TV programme is on, or which of your friends needs an encouraging text right now. When you hear him right, try to build up to bigger things.

I heard Pete Greig speak on prayer the other day (the guy behind the 24-7 prayer movement – check it out if you haven't come across it). He reminded me that although our prayer doesn't always seem to start revivals, every revival recorded in history EVER, started with a prayer movement! I don't know about you, but I'm so desperate to see our cultures completely transformed by God – our industries too. So, let's start a prayer movement. Not just praying every other month, but daily, hourly, every minute. Let's be the people who persistently present our requests to God, diligently doing what God is telling us to do. Then and only then, will we see our industries changed for the good here on earth. Not forgetting the unseen battle in the heavenly realms, let's pray in the spirit at all times.

Let's start to meet to pray in our work places too. If we wait on God, praying with expectation, we will be transformed by the presence of God, so that we can be making a difference in our industries today. Let's be prayer warriors and see God really do things far beyond our wildest dreams in our industries today.

I guess I've been talking with God for about 22 years now, but I write this not really knowing the first thing about prayer. I just know the God who being fervent. I'm just being real, I think God even wants us to ask him what's on his heart, and we can join with Jesus asking to see it happen.
For a number of years dancers from the San Francisco Ballet Company have been meeting together to pray, study the Bible and support one another. In recent months this group has grown considerably and so we asked three dancers to share about life in this high profile dance company.

Frances It has been really encouraging to see answered prayer with many members of the SF ballet expressing an interest in faith and being part of the support group. Dancers in the company have this attraction to us as people, they know us, but when some of them hear we are Christians many of them react negatively.

Miriam It’s frustrating to them, yet they still feel comfortable with us.

Courtney People associate Christianity with us in little ways, like using bad language and catching it, then saying sorry. So they’re aware and accepting, but usually shy away from the deeper conversations. In the light of this my challenge is constantly walking the talk making sure there is integrity with how my words line up with my actions. Faith is such a big part of my life – it gets harder and harder to section off. When someone asks me, “How are you?” I feel an overwhelming desire to say exactly what God’s been doing in my life.

Miriam The physical, emotional and spiritual challenges of being part of this company are really intense. A typical day consists of hours of physically demanding rehearsal and performance. I am learning to bring God into the centre of all these demands, drawing from his strength.

Courtney The physical and emotional demands are so challenging. I remember being 16, having a big role, and being sick just before the show. I laid down in desperation and prayed, ‘Lord, please take this away.’ Instantaneously, it was gone. That was one of the biggest experiential turning points in my faith. I recognized this is God – he has complete control.

Frances For me to dance is my greatest expression of worship to God. It’s challenging at work, with the pressure, the choreography and all that, but for me there’s nothing more exciting than communicating in this way – nothing compares.

Miriam By grace we learn that passion is God’s gift to us. I imagine that’s why we’re here, to remind others of that. Everyday we face the physical and spiritual demands, performing uncomfortable things in front of a mirror and focusing on the smallest details. Every minute of every day you are dealing with issues relating to identity and failure, and one’s fragile nature that the enemy is good at highlighting. It’s amazing, in the midst of this struggle, how much God can work in us.

Courtney We got to a point where the bible study we were running was so big it was overwhelming. We didn’t want to divide up, but we also wanted people to really feel safe. Now a lot of our fellowship happens in twos and threes, just going out for coffee. Newer Christians were looking for more immediate applications, like how their faith would effect their attitudes, their relationships, their dancing. That’s been a constant challenge – to be in the Word and give them scripture that’s meaningful, so they can grow right away, but understand too.

Frances And inviting a person to a bible study isn’t always effective, because it’s structured, and has the name bible attached to it which is not for everyone. Going to coffee with someone is less intimidating and for some has been a non threatening space for questions about faith.

Courtney As years have gone by we have sought to be more proactive about accountability and encouragement in the workplace. In one ballet production, five out of the nine dancers in the piece were Christians. This is such an encouragement.

Frances We would stand on stage together before the curtain went up. The stage manager would be shouting, “Onstage call” and we’d already be there, hands held and praying. That was so amazing. With thanks to Ben Roy for facilitating this interview.
In Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples in John Chapter 17 we hear him in prayer with his Father. He says, “I have made known to them all the things you have given me. For yours is the power to forgive sinners, and this I have received from you to do it.” This is a clear indication that prayer is not a shopping list. It is not what we bring to God but a means by which he invites us into relationship with him – this intimacy is a relationship by which he is able to change our true nature, through healing, restoration, and praise. This can only take place as we open ourselves honestly before him allowing his communication of love and truth to flow into our lives.

What we have come to understand and call the Lord’s Prayer sums up the purity and purpose of this communication. This great teaching, given by Jesus early in his ministry, can be embraced as a prayer of praise, provision, pardon, protection and power. A five fold pattern flowing from God to us and from us to him in sincere worship.

I recall as a young believer beginning to understand that prayer was and is our two way lifeline. British rock and roll singer Cliff Richard had a line in one of his early lyrics: “throw down a line, help a poor boy, who’s a drowning in the deep blue sea.” Direct access to the Father through the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit is our communication. I am told that stuff on the internet takes three seconds to get around the world. Prayer takes no time at all, for from God’s perspective there are no blockages. Prayer is after all letting God know what he already knows. Why then do we pray? Because he wants us to know that he knows – pure communication. Prayer does not require technology to boost it or to promote it but technology may serve prayer’s purpose.

Nothing can silence prayer, nothing can stop it or prevent it. Nothing and no one can get in its way. Prayer gives us instant access into the very Holy of Holies, the presence of the Almighty - everyone is invited to participate. The amazing thing is that almost every human being chooses to pray at some time or another. Sometimes out of panic or fear.

Humans long to know that they are safe. Even militant atheists will call out to God when they are in desperate need. A wonderful example of this was John Newton, both slave and slave trader. In a storm off the coast of Ireland he found himself crying out, in blasphemous cries, to a God he did not previously believe existed. And this God heard him and answered. From Newton’s pen came the now popular hymn Amazing Grace.

Can we change God’s mind when we pray?

This is a huge question and one that has instigated much discussion. In my own personal opinion I would answer no. We can through prayer understand something of God’s mind. Prayer draws us into a deeper, closer relationship and comprehension that God is sovereign. Prayer doesn’t alter God’s will, it discovers, discloses, and uncovers God’s will. Prayer brings those who pray into a closer and more meaningful relationship with God and with his plans. We know that God is sovereign and that he has all things under his control.

God also has a permissive will. He allows Satan to operate for a while. It had to be possible for human beings to make wrong choices in order not to be machines. God is not willing that anyone should perish without first having the opportunity of knowing him. His patience is enduring. His desire is for us, his creatures to come to know his mind and his will for our lives. For this to happen it is necessary to be obedient to his word. Sometimes our struggles within this calling, perhaps especially in the media and the arts, are not so that we may change God’s mind but rather that he may change ours. His great desire is that we might know him, intimately, deeply and personally.

Praying is hard, most ‘Christian books’ make it sound like we are supposed to have a relaxed coffee shop chatter with the Creator of all things, which is slightly patronizing. Have you any tips/ advice on how to approach God in prayer?

This question is so right on – prayer is indeed hard work. It is a work in progress because we are his work in progress. The Old Testament shows us the enormous respect that the Hebrew people of God had for Yahweh. That to come before or into his presence was an awesome thing indeed. Christ in the New Testament has made a way for us all his sons and daughters. This new and living way opens up the possibility to come directly into his presence both respectfully and humbly, there is no room for cheap grace. When we cheapen others our own relationship to God is cheapened. If our relationship to the one who has saved us and brought us from death to life is of so little cost then we demean ourselves and represent God as no different to the gods of other nations.

I look on prayer as narrowcasting in its essence and broadcasting in its effect. Even in a group God’s perspective is for each one of us to get our hearts right with him. In the final analysis we will stand in his presence holding hands with no one else. Together we can in agreement with him and with one another, both be and become an awesome wave of love and truth for a broken, fragmented and deeply divided world.

How not to approach God

- Don’t shout and yell at him – he’s not deaf
- Don’t boast or brag to him – he’s not blind
- Don’t dress up or down – dress comfortable, he is our aroma
- Don’t bash, push, bully, or shove – his touch is deep
- Don’t offer him things – he requires only you

How we may approach God

- Reverently, quietly, prepared to listen – he hears us
- Humbly, honestly, openly – he sees everything
- Empty, thirsty, desiring blessing – his spirit fills us
- In stillness that we might know him – to embrace his intimacy
- Naked, vulnerable, broken – to be renewed in relationship with him

Finally in our prayers why not thank him daily, moment by moment for who he is, our great God, letting him know how much you love him. How very refreshing and real are the prayers of a new convert. A baby Christian tells their Father convert. A baby Christian tells their Father

My prayer is this, dear family of artists - if you seek him with all of your heart you will surely find him.
Dear God

I am the boss. The boss of a creative business. My days are filled with requests from clients who need help with their business and rely on me to make them look good in front of their colleagues, clients and superiors. They give me deadlines and naturally bring my aptitude and integrity into question if these deadlines are not met. I live in a world driven by data and empirical measures. If I don’t measure up, someone different will replace me, who will be replaced by someone else when crisis comes and they don’t measure up either.

Unfortunately God, you and I have the same problem. ‘In your time’ and ‘On your terms’ in this day and age is frankly unacceptable. If you don’t answer the brief promptly I’m afraid your clients will, and are, dwindling. Perhaps we should talk.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A loyal consumer
Cultural revival

ARTICLE
KAREN COVELL

It’s God’s job to change people. It’s our job to invite God in to do it.

In a year of faith-based films and film companies, such as Fox Faith, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and The Weinstein brothers (who now have a Faith Based Film Division) one would think that Hollywood is finally getting the message that faith based and family-friendly films can indeed work. But are ‘faith based movies’ really the answer to Christians having an impact on the media and the world? While those box office dollars certainly speak volumes, they don’t necessarily change the hearts of Hollywood’s decision makers or creative community. Making a ‘clean’ movie, song or TV show is wonderful, but changing the hearts of the people creating these products is what will truly and eternally make an impact. That’s why we need to pray.

In the US, while Washington is the global seat of power, Hollywood is the global seat of influence. But instead of rallying to pray, as many have done for Washington, Christians often have rallied to rail against Hollywood. Even Christians in the media have struggled with trying to love the people here.

For years, Artisan, The Hollywood Prayer Network, and Mastermedia International are the only known ministries who have been challenging Christians around the world to pray for people in all areas of film, television, theatre, music, news, print and new media. At least 50,000 people have rallied around to join in prayer for this influential yet mainly unevangelized ‘people group’, but that’s a far cry from the 2.6 million on the Presidential Prayer Team who pray for our government. The Church has poured prayers into missionaries in Africa, but have we thought to pray for the producers of CSI or Lost? We send Christians to mission fields around the world, but could it be that we try our hardest to keep Christians away from the world’s most influential mission fields: the arts and entertainment cultural centres of the world? We have to step back from our stereotyped beliefs about the people in the arts and the creative culture changers in Hollywood, New York, London, San Francisco, Nashville, Paris, Chicago and Hollywood, to name a few, and ask the creator of the universe (who is the creator of creative people too) how we should look at our leaders and peers in entertainment. We need to listen to God and hear his plans in order to make an eternal difference.

As artists ourselves, do we single-mindedly pursue our careers, work toward our vocational advancement and avoid reaching out to the non-believers around us? Or do we go out each morning as missionaries to work side by side with our associates, building relationships, serving and praying for the people around us in order to love them to Jesus? The truth is that people in the entertainment industry are not just radical personal change, but a shift in their subject matter and an increase in the quality of their work as well. And it all began with prayer. For example: A film producer stopped making exploitation films after turning her life over to God. In fact, after much prayer, her most recent film has a theme of abstinence. A network executive became a Christian and threw out an immoral script he had been writing, saying that he couldn’t write that kind of stuff anymore. A godly writer of a controversial sitcom got assigned an uncomfortable story line, asked for prayer from his friends — and suddenly the story line disappeared. An actor became a Christian while on a set because he made friends with another actor who brought her Bible to work and answered his questions about who Jesus really is, while praying for him every day.

The only answer to ‘the entertainment industry problem’ or immorality, lack of ethics, violence, bad language and inappropriate subject matter is not just making more ‘faith based’ movies, but praying with loving, life-transforming prayers. Our job is not to ‘convert’ but to pray.

There are no vacancies in the Trinity. It’s God’s job to change people. It’s our job to invite God in to do it.

Changing the media, changing culture or even trying to impact it with one great film is not a battle of flesh and blood. We’ve tried that, and it doesn’t work. It’s a battle of spiritual powers, authorities and principalities, and the only way to win this battle is for Christians to pray together for God to redeem his people in the media.

God’s greatest commandment is to love him and then love others as ourselves. We must love our peers in our industry and ask God to touch and move them, to humble themselves before him, and to change us so that our hearts break for them. Then and only then will we see lives change — starting with our own.
prayer points

If we were 'on our knees' daily, at every opportunity, the difference would be obvious. Wouldn’t it?
As an up and coming film producer and one of the best surfing photographers on the planet what is the greatest piece of advice you have been given in your career?

‘Get an agent.’ You can’t do it all on your own.

What was your most extreme shoot so far?

We were pioneering a spot called Chopu in Tahiti about fifteen years ago. On my first day out the waves were small and I was stalked by sharks. The next day got to be dangerous. We found giant walls of water sucking up everything in their path – breaking below sea level. It was like standing on the edge of a black hole – seeing stars and planets sucked in and compressed into nothingness. Got the shots – some of my best stuff.

Have you ever been financially broke and how did you deal with that time?

At the start of my career I was always broke. Couldn’t even buy film. I learned that when I gave away more money, more flowed back somehow. I’m still waiting for that flow back thing to happen this year.

Paul, John, George or Ringo?

My friend from the Grammys gave me front row tickets to Paul’s concert a few months ago. It was me... and a bunch of the King’s Basketball cheerleaders. Even though we were surrounded by 17,000 people, Paul kept looking to me and my new cheerleader girlfriends for encouragement. I think he was looking at them more than me though.

Matthew, Mark, Luke or John?

Luke. He’s all about the details.

What is your future vision?

Of one united world government and a serpent with 12 heads... and bacon for everyone. Or not, I’d really like to connect people in the arts through networking and being generous with each other. I owe so much to great people who guided my career. I feel responsible to pass that on.

How do you react to criticism?

Bring it! How else can you improve? I’m always asking people what they think – how I can be better, how my work can be better. Even when the criticism isn’t constructive, and it’s just plain mean, I still appreciate the challenge. I used to think I knew everything but now I know that at least twenty percent of what I thought I knew to be true ten years ago was actually just, well... not true. So I try not to take myself too seriously. In the end we’ll all know the truth – that’s good enough for me.

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What has been your biggest encouragement?

Yesterday I did a helicopter shoot and driving to the helipad the sky was looking cloudy and the waves were choppy and disorganized. Not good for tow in, big wave surfing. It was costing us $800 an hour so I prayed pretty desperately that the sky would clear and we’d get good coverage. The sky cleared... but we went from spot to spot and the waves weren’t coming. I could feel the money draining from my pocket. We were just giving up when we cruised over Pipeline to catch Reef McIntosh on the wave of the day, on what turned out to be the day of the year. It’s the sickest shot I’ve ever taken out of the water. Like one of those posters I had on my wall when I was a kid that I couldn’t stop staring at. I keep staring at this shot. I love these days!

How do you keep your faith central when away from home for so long?

It’s tough and, honestly, it’s not always central. But I’ve got (at least) two things going for me. Firstly, I have the most supportive and amazing friends everywhere I go, all over the world. They help me stay committed to moving forward with God no matter what. That’s heavy. Secondly, I remind myself that Abraham and all those guys, they didn’t have a Bible or know exactly how to pray this way or do this or that or... whatever. God just saw them and hung out with them and made them righteous because they believed him. I think God liked them too (boom, third thing in our collective favour!). So I just move forward, ask God to remind me to pray and be thankful, and trust him to make all things right in the end.
Pray without fear

As someone once said about prayer, 'easy does not do it'. I can chat to God quite happily – I can sit in his presence, be in awe of him, hear from him, and have revelations about him, but warrior style intercession? Not so much.

One time I stayed up all night praying for someone who should have died. By about three or four in the morning, there was a breakthrough, and by the time I got home, I knew we had what we had asked for. The next week he was right as rain. I know what it means to pray like that, and even how it can be done, but I am lazy. Plus there's the spectre of disappointment looming when you start to 'pray with faith'. This, I think, has basically been my undoing.

A while back I read James in The Message version. I was familiar with the New International Version, which encourages us to ask for wisdom and believe he'll give it to us. Easy. Why wouldn't he, after all? But this darned Message unsettled me, James 1:8 says: 'People who “worry their prayers” are like wind whipped waves. Don't think you're going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open.' I like keeping all my options open! That way God can do whatever he likes, which will always be the best thing anyway.

Who am I to tell him what to do? In any case, he always does whatever he likes in the end. It doesn't really matter what I say… does it?

I think, in truth, I started slipping into prayer oblivion when God chose not to heal my mum of cancer when I was thirteen. I lost my faith for quite some time. Unwilling to let his sheep wander off, God hunted me down for years, eventually battering me into submission with his unrelenting unconditional love, like Pépé le Pieu. But I have to tell you prayer and faith have not been quite the same for me since. Now, twenty years since The Great Prayer Disaster of 1987, God has graciously decided that it's high time to get this one straightened out. He is beckoning me into a life of petition – of asking without fear of disappointment, with understanding of his character and with faith. He has established his existence, his power and, most importantly for me, his love and his goodness.

It's time to teach me to pray, looking the possibility of disappointment in the eye and charging ahead anyway.

In order to have a meaningful relationship with us, God has actually given us some power – some sway. A relationship where one party holds all the cards is not a real relationship at all – or at least not a voluntary love relationship. God has chosen to allow us freedom to pray, and remarkably, the ability to move his hand. He will not just 'do what he wants anyway' as I had often supposed. Of course he is the ultimate authority, but it is important to establish the fact that God has given this incredible gift to us, and it's ridiculous not to use it. Petitionary prayer is not simply nagging (as if we could conceivably grind down the Maker of All Things), nor is getting others involved in ganging up on him to exert pressure on the Rock of Ages. He cannot be forced, cannot be intimidated, and the very idea of wearing him out is laughable.

Here's my thinking. Sacrifice releases power. When a human being puts themselves aside in favour of God's agenda, Satan is kicked in the teeth, and God's power flows. Praying, as anyone who has done it for more than twenty minutes at a time well knows, is not easy. It's a challenge and a sacrifice to bring things before God, trusting him to deal with them. We have to discipline our minds, to focus ourselves, to believe and trust that God is on the case, and to keep going until it's done. It's actually very hard. I guess that's why they call them prayer warriors. I'm not there yet. I'm just arriving at boot camp with my suitcase, looking nervously around me. I have been handed my uniform. I am a soldier in training.
Every quarter Artisan produces and distributes over 4000 publications around the world for no charge. This is a huge step of faith for us each time.

We are seeking to find four partners each year who would each pay £5000 or $10,000 to cover all the costs of producing and distributing one of the quarterly publications. In the meantime we are dependant on the support of readers like yourself to make a donation towards this publication and the wider vision.

Alongside the publications, Artisan in 2007 will be organising over 50 industry prayer events in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco with new cities coming on board in the next twelve months. We are also in the process of raising £8000 to further develop the potential of the website – to enable you to network, and to promote your work and vision more effectively.

Apart from all these costs we also have to find money to pay salaries. Today Artisan needs around £80,000 per year to fulfil its vision. We currently have regular giving amounting to just under half of this amount so please consider giving £10 or $20 today or setting up a standing order.

You can support Artisan in three ways:
- Give online through our arrangement with PayPal www.artisaninitiatives.org/contribute
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Hong Kong, like all dramatic cities of the world, is famous for many things. Skyscrapers, narrow trams, cheap tight Chinese dresses, ill chickens, and a little kung fu. Post handover, post SARS, Hong Kong features a brand new, high tech airport, a low crime rate, fit old people, a cable car to a big Buddha on a mountain, a lot of yoga, Disney Land, an 88 floor skyscraper finished a year after 911, and updated border crossing that has thumbprint turnstiles for super fast, cross border commuting.

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is a democracy ruled by a communist party. We have free access into the world of China, but their world is still firmly contained. One country, two systems.

What most people don’t know is that apart from the concrete jungle, Hong Kong has plenty of nature reserves with some great mountain walks. It has 234 islands, the famous mountain only taking up 7% of the total land area. There is also a picturesque mixture of colonial old and new in the central area of the island. In the 15 minutes it takes me to walk down the hill from where I live, I pass the old police station, walk through steep alleys with English names lined with various market stalls selling fish, vegetables or ribbons.

There is also a plethora of glossy bars and eateries, offering any cuisine under the sun, together with art galleries and antique shops. On the mountain with the spectacular view is one of my favourite restaurants – The Peak Lookout (tel: 28491000), which looks like a Swiss chalet with a fountain on its big terrace. Along the south coast the South Bay Beach Bar (tel: 98389794) kicks back with its own DJ at sunset on Sundays. Another beach restaurant is South African The Stoep on leafy Lantau Island (tel: 2960 2699). On weekdays, head to infamous Lan Kwai Fong’s al fresco Malay/Thai eateries collectively dubbed ‘rat alley’, hidden amongst the drinking crowds on Wing Wah Lane.

The annual spring Hong Kong Artwalk is in effect a marathon of roughly two dozen private views in one evening, of which the entry fee goes to charity. These are retail art galleries and the only spaces to view modern art from the region. There’s also the annual Arts Festival with many high calibre imported dance and music acts.

Founded on the opium trade, Hong Kong is a generous country, and came out top giver in the global charity drive following the Tsunami disaster. Moving here from London in 2002, my social life did a 180. Everyone is close by. Ex pats work hard, earn a heap and spend it fast. For some though, it’s an unrealistic bubble and they leave after a few years in search of more grounded relationships back home. As Christians, we have our work cut out for us to show another way.

CHURCHES

The Vine Fellowship, Central – a small church with a huge vision. Set in lounge style atmosphere in an office building, it is the most creative minded of all the churches in HK.

www.thevine.org.hk

Union Church, Kennedy Road, Mid levels – Anglican.

EEC, Convention Centre, Wanchai – mainly expatriate congregation.

International Christian Assembly, King’s Road, North Point – overseas Chinese congregation.

St Andrew’s Anglican Church, Nathan Road, Kowloon – ex-pat and overseas Chinese congregation.

St John’s Cathedral, Central – HK’s number one vintage, dwarfed by the sky high bling of corporate central.

PLACES TO STAY

Chungking Mansions on Nathan Road, Kowloon – plenty of inspiration à la The Beach, and hands down the cheapest option. There are several more salubrious hostels in the Causeway Bay area on the island for budget travellers (Lung Poon Villa 28389864, Wang Fat Hostel 28951015, Lung Tin Guesthouse 28329133). The business/luxury traveller is more spoilt for choice, from the brand new Four Seasons, to the classic Peninsula with Philippe Starck restaurant.

www.hongkong.peninsula.com

www.fourseasons.com/hongkong

www.hotelclub.com

EAT

The Cornershop, corner of Staunton and Peel Street in Soho – a bistro, run by a Nepalese couple, this is a great little spot for people watching.

The Cavern, Lan Kwai Fong – crazy psychedelic Austin Powers deco, but fantastic food.

Manchu Bistro, Elgin Street Soho – cute Chinese restaurant with great selection of dumplings. Refreshingly nothing like those vast strap it joints serving chicken feet.

www.discoverhongkong.com

www.fourseasons.com/hongkong

www.hotelclub.com

DRINK

Feather Boa, 38 Staunton Street, Soho – tiny antique shop deco bar serving huge fresh fruit martinis.


Drop, 39-43 Hollywood Road – heavy beats and lychee martinis.

www.worldsbestbars.com/city/hong-kong

Philippine, Chinese and English speaking congregations.
HANNAH ATKINS
Hannah is a singer songwriter and one of the Directors of MassiveUK – a music/art/media company that seeks to have an innovative and positive influence on the creative arts scene. In April, she is releasing her second album. Hannah also coordinates the Artisan events in Manchester.

JO BLOWER
Jo works in the communications department of Agapê UK in Birmingham, and loves to ponder on the Jewish search for God in graphic novels and films.

STEVE COLE
Steve has been married for thirteen years to Rach and has two children. Sam and Jasmine. Steve founded Artisan ten years ago, is a sport fanatic, loves travel and dreams of turning left on a Virgin Atlantic one day!

KAREN COVELL
Karen is a TV producer and the Director of the Hollywood Prayer Network. www.hollywoodprayer network.org

CHRIS DYBALL
Chris’ work for Getty Images has taken him to six continents shooting by land, sea and air. He’s fluent in Russian (though no one knows why), and he recently moved to LA to work as a producer on several feature films.

FLINT MCLAUGHLIN
Flint is the Director of MEC Labs. He is also a pioneer in strategy and communications, has advised more than 1,500 companies and is a regular keynote speaker. Flint has served as the Co-Executive Producer of the FOX Family series Courage and also serves as a senior advisor or board member to twelve growing companies and four charitable foundations. Flint has been a pastor for 21 years, married for 19 years and has 3 children.

CASSANDRA POSTEMA
Cassandra lives and works in Hong Kong where she moved in 2002 having previously been based in London as a New Generation fashion designer. She has initiated new labels Dialog and Hope Tees with St Martins college friend Dong Chi.

NIGEL GOODWIN
Nigel trained as an actor and has worked in film, television and theatre before combining this experience with theological training. After helping found The Arts Centre Group in 1971 along with his wife Gillie, Genesis Arts Trust was set up to expand Nigel’s work.

MIRIAM ROWAN
Frances Ching
COURTENEY ELIZABETH
Frances, Miriam and Courtney are dancers in the San Francisco Ballet Company and are also part of the Artisan group in San Francisco that meets every two weeks.

SARAH STRANG
Sarah lives and works in London. She graduated from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 2005. Sarah is represented by BEARSPACE in London.

DISCLAIMER
The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of Artisan.