



Turning Your Thoughts Into Prayers

By Jan Johnson

ITOLD THE MINISTER I'd be glad to distribute brochures door-to-door. But when he handed them to me, I thought, *I'd love to go home, curl up, and read a book.* All my introverted, shy tendencies oozed forth. But because I'd agreed to distribute the material, I gritted my teeth and ventured up the walk to the first house.

As a young mother appeared at the door balancing a toddler on her hip, I slipped into my habit of turning whatever's going on inside me into a prayer. Seeing the weary mom triggered it, I'm sure, because I felt like such a misfit when my children were small.

I showed her the brochure with the service times. *Give her patience, God.*

*Jan Johnson is a retreat speaker and author of the book, *Enjoying the Presence of God* (NavPress, 1996), from which this article is adapted.*

This little one isn't potty-trained. When I handed her the pen with the church's name on it, she smiled. *What a glowing smile—make yourself real to her.* As I left the house, I saw that even though my official task was to distribute literature and pens, my real task was to pray for everyone I encountered.

Soon I began enjoying this new role as pray-er so much that I stopped at homes

*Prayer can be as natural
as breathing.*

abandoned due to damage from a recent earthquake and prayed for the people who used to live there. *Living with relatives can be wonderful **and** difficult, God. Sustain them.* This task of going door-to-door, which started out as a dreaded duty, became a fun and interesting experience with prayer.

We make the command to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5: 17, *King James Version*) more difficult and mysterious than it needs to be. Perhaps it's a simple matter of making prayer the "main business of our lives," a phrase Richard Foster uses in *Celebration of Discipline*. When prayer becomes our major life activity, we experience what it means to offer a sacrifice of praise to God *continually* (Hebrews 13:15), *devote* ourselves to prayer (Colossians 4:2), and pray "in the Spirit on *all* occasions" (Ephesians 6:18). So many times the word *pray* is linked with words such as "always," "everything," "constantly," and even "night and day" (Colossians 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:2, Romans 1:9, 10; 1 Thessalonians 3:10). Our perpetual self-talk—the chatter in our head as we commute, prepare sandwiches, or do exercises—can be transformed into a continual conversation with God.

