



Jo Ann Davidson*

Let's see, how does one introduce a prayer giant? Something like, "I'm delighted to present one of the most remarkable women in our little church in Eau Claire, Michigan"? (Eau Claire is a farming community with one main street and not even a traffic signal. Our church is four miles beyond that in a rural area.)

Well, that will do as a beginning. Her name is Hilary, unlike her White House counterpart, spelled with one "l." Her husband, Murray Robinson, affectionately calls her Hil. I had intended to interview her for this column, but our long-laid plans were abruptly clipped as Hilary found herself fighting for her life against congestive heart failure. Surprising, even to the cardiologists at the University of Chicago Medical Center, because the Robinsons' vigorous life style and vegetarian diet (featuring home-grown produce from their 10-acre farm) had left Hilary's blood vessels clear of cholesterol build-up,

"Something's gonna happen... when the people of the Lord get down to pray..."

and her blood pressure to be envied. Thanks to what many fellow church members feel is providential intervention, she is now recovering at home.

I first heard of Hilary through our daughter, Rahel, a seventh-grader in the Eau Claire church school. "We had a substitute teacher today, and I really liked her, Mommy. She prayed before every subject! Her name is Mrs. Robinson."

Later on, Hilary announced in church that she and Murray were starting a prayer group in their home. It would not be, she emphasized, the usual few songs and a few prayers. No, the Robinsons' prayer meeting would be a *prayer* meeting! Here, I decided, was a woman who seemed to be into serious praying. Last summer, when I learned that my

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mother was suddenly scheduled for brain surgery (only six weeks after major back surgery), Hilary was the first person I called. Within a few hours, she had organized a 24-hour, round-the-clock prayer chain. Mother pulled through, I believe, on that chain of prayer.

Now in supposed retirement, Hilary and Murray recently returned from teaching in one of the church's English language schools in Korea. Since rejoining us, several of their "Korean sons" have visited them in Eau Claire. The Robinsons have a way of endearing themselves to their students. When Hilary was principal of our Eau Claire church school, it burgeoned to 75 students. Until her heart emergency, she was leader of the junior Sabbath school in our church. A musical artist, she has a Master's degree in organ performance and is one of the three organists in our congregation. She also has more than 20 piano students—an added reason to get well. As she says: "If I don't get with it, a number of my students won't get any music lessons at all, because they can't afford the usual rates."



The Robinsons

Surely the Lord knows all about the Robinsons (they spend so much time with Him), and I thought you should know them, too. In fact, should you ever visit us on a Sabbath in Eau Claire, I'd like to introduce you to the Robinsons. Even their warm marriage will inspire you. And

when they pray for you, you'll feel prayed for!

I want to focus the next couple of columns on prayer. Hilary's example has made me "face up" to my own need for a more fervent prayer relationship with my Saviour. Coupled with the persuasion of her life is a comment from

Ellen White that has jarred my complacency:

"Jesus opened his public mission with fervent prayer. . . . *He frequently devoted the entire night to prayer just before he was called upon to work some mighty miracle.* During these nightly seasons of prayer, after the labors of the day, he compassionately dismissed his disciples, that they might return to their homes for rest and sleep, while with strong crying and tears He poured forth the earnest petitions to God on behalf of humanity" (*Sigms of the Times*, July

24, 1893, emphasis added).

Jesus praying all night before accomplishing a miracle? I have always been stirred by the account of His agonizing prayer in Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion. But here we see that He prayed with similar intensity on nights before working miracles. This revelation stunned me. Why would Jesus need to pray all night for power to work a miracle? He is God, after all! And to pray with “strong crying and tears” as He poured forth His “earnest petitions to God in behalf of humanity”?

Have you ever tried to pray for an hour? Two? Three? At night, when you’re tired? Pray *all* night? Let’s face it, I would fall asleep! But through Hilary Robinson’s influence, I’m seeking to deepen my prayer life. Again, Ellen White has helped:

“The power of God has not decreased. It would be just as freely bestowed now as formerly, but the church have lost their faith to claim, their energy to wrestle, as did Jacob, crying ‘I will not let thee go, except thou bless me’ [Gen. 32:26]. . . . Many are so absorbed in their worldly cares and perplexities that they have little time to pray, and feel but little interest in prayer. . . . Such have departed widely from the Pattern. Jesus our example was much in prayer; and oh, how earnest, how fervent were his petitions! If he, the beloved Son of God, was moved to such earnestness, such agony, in our

behalf, how much more need that we, who are dependent upon Heaven for all our strength, have our whole souls stirred to wrestle with God” (*Review and Herald*, Sept. 4, 1883).

Dear Hilary, God answered our congregation’s many earnest prayers for you and spared your noble life. I thank God for that, and also for your influence on my praying. Next time, because of you, we’ll probe the biblical model of prayer.

The words of Ken Medema’s modern “spiritual” spur me on—

“Something’s gonna happen
like the world has never known,
when the people of the Lord get
down to pray.

A door’s gonna swing wide open
and the walls come a-tumbling
down,

when the people of the Lord get
down to pray.

“You’re gonna know it,
when the Lord stretches out His
hand,
and the people of the Lord get
down to pray.

There’s gonna be a brand new
song of victory in this land,

When the people of the Lord get
down to pray.” *

*Words and music by Ken Medema; choral arrangement by Jack Schrader. Carol Stream, Ill.: Hope Publishing Company.