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He's Only A Prayer Away

By Rev. Burton Barr Jr. & Kobalt Books

Imagine a man throwing his needles and syringes into a dark alley, only to later find that same man on his hands and knees with a cigarette lighter, desperately searching for his next high. It was in that position that Rev. Burton Barr Jr. learned that God is just a prayer away. His new book, "He's Only A Prayer Away", gives 9 Examples of Praying Until Your Breakthrough while helping others get closer to God, through prayer.

St. Louis, MO - Over a 22-year period, stemming from age 20 until his early 40's, Rev. Burton Barr Jr., was a lost soul. Arrested over 30 times – and wanted by the police in over a half-dozen jurisdictions -- Barr had done everything possible to mess his life up. It's not the life you would expect from someone who was ordained a preacher at a young age.

- "I was not a family man. I was a dope fiend, a con man, a liar, and a thief. I used anyone that came in contact with me. Every turn that I made was the wrong turn, and every road that I took was the wrong road," says Rev. Barr.

Everyone was after Rev. Barr, including the drug dealers he'd stolen from, the cops, and family members whom he'd ripped off to support a drug habit that peaked in the mid-1980's at up to \$500 a day. His out-of-control life saw his career struggle, his marriage fail, his freedom taken, and his life jeopardized.

- "By the age of 20 I was shooting heroin, smoking weed, getting drunk and stealing to support myself. Turning away from the church that would eventually offer me an opportunity for redemption. 22 years later, I had hit rock bottom. My lifestyle humbled me to my knees and it was in that position that I discovered that my breakthrough was only a prayer away," says Rev. Barr.

Rev. Barr managed to finally turn the tide, get sober and stop his life of crime. He now invests his time and heart into serving his church and community once again. Since 1994 he's been preaching at prisons, churches, and schools, helping to change lives and make a difference. With the help of God, Barr's life was saved and now he helps others. A film based on his life and autobiography, "The Hoodlum Preacher" is currently in development.

Rev. Burton Barr Jr.'s new book, "He's Only A Prayer Away: 9 Examples of Praying Until Your Breakthrough", was written to help others realize the importance of having a relationship with God. "He's Only A Prayer Away" is available anywhere quality books are sold.

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What Others are Saying About the Ministry of Rev. Burton Barr Jr.

"As the reader digests the humor and sadness, reverence and awe that is skillfully and dynamically ensconced within these pages one might tend to forget that this is not a novel or a writing of fiction that is before us. It is a real life story, with real situations and with an authentic and practical message for people of every walk of life. Your life will be profoundly impacted by his. It has been both my privilege and my pleasure to serve as his pastor, prayer partner and friend."

--Rev. Ronald L. Bobo, Sr., D. Min, West Side Missionary Baptist Church/St. Louis, Missouri

"This is a book for the person in the street or in the pew. It warns of the danger of Satan's snares in contrast with the message of God's love, His grace, sufficiency, and peace."

-- Richard R. Blake, The Midwest Book Review

"It just confirmed for me that we've all fallen and it's by the grace of God that we can get up."

-- OOSA Online Book Club

"For those of you who need inspiration or just feel like you've gone too far for God to care, taking the time to read this book will let you know that it is never too late for God. Burton Barr Jr. has written an unbelievable testimony to the amazing grace of God and his unconditional love for us, which is something we all need to be reminded of at times."

-- Books2Mention Magazine

"The Hoodlum Preacher helped get me through some discouraging times while being imprisoned. The book confirmed the fact that I can accomplish anything, as long as I have faith."

-- Project Pat, Hip-Hop Artist

"Riveting and inspiring, this book offers a brave model from which all sinners, great and small and most of us in the middle, can gain confidence in themselves as they deepen their faith in God."

-- Dr. Eugene C. Kennedy, Author

"I always knew God's power to heal and transform. Burton Barr Jr. is living proof."

-- Maya Azucena, Grammy Winning - National Recording Artist

"Rev. Barr, I bless the wonderful name of Jesus for you and the inspirational blogs you pen each week. You constantly remind us of the life-changing/transformational power of the Master. More so, you remind us of our earthly purpose and preparatory work before the hereafter. We are to serve here, so that after we can hear Abba Father say, 'Well done my good and faithful servant, well done!'"

-- Denita Robinson, **Heart 2 Heart, Inc & SIGMA**

Keep on your journey for Christ. We need more brothers who know the struggle and can say "been there, done that" and mean it. Love all your books!!! God Bless you and your work.

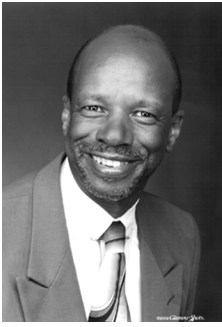
-- Tenesha Davenport, Sales & Marketing Coordinator at Fox Cable Networks

"I highly recommend this book to anyone struggling with anything and who wants to find a better way of life. This book is also good for anyone who just wants to read a good book."

-- Kesha Mixon Burns, DDS

"Thanks Pastor Barr. Giving is a fundamental part of living that we often forget. The word says, 'to whom much is given much is required!' The gifts we are given are really divine requirements of God, and not for our own gain. It's the work he has put us here to do."

-- Monica M. Hill, Carpe Diem Communications



The Rev. Burton Barr Jr.

Biography

Rev. Burton Barr, Jr., Associate Minister
West Side Missionary Baptist Church

Rev. Burton Barr, Jr. has served as one of the associate ministers of the West Side Missionary Baptist Church under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Ronald L. Bobo, Sr. since 1994. He is a member of the senior staff and serves as Director of the Prison, Substance Abuse, and Outreach Ministries.

He also serves as Director of Prison Ministry for the Missionary Baptist State Convention of Missouri, and the Berean Missionary Baptist District. He is Commissioner of Prison Ministry for the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc., and Chairman of the St. Louis Clergy Coalition's Law and Order Committee. He is a member of the Coalition of Prison Evangelist (C.O.P.E.), the Eastern Missouri Coalition To Abolish The Death Penalty, and the Missionary Baptist Ministers Union of St. Louis & Vicinity.

Rev. Barr is the author of the bestselling autobiography, "The Hoodlum Preacher," which is currently being developed into a film. He preaches and teaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ in jails and prisons all over the state of Missouri and in many parts of the country. He also preaches and lectures at churches, youth rallies, and youth revivals in an effort to keep our young people from ending up in the prison system. He's in the process of being certified by the Missionary Baptist State Convention of Missouri's "Congress of Christian Education" to teach prison ministry classes. Rev. Barr's other books are entitled, "Amazing Grace: The Storm Is Passing Over" and "He's Only A Prayer Away: 9 Examples Of Praying Until Your Breakthrough".

He is a native of Chicago, IL but currently resides in St. Louis, MO where he's a student at Western Baptist Bible College majoring in Christian Ministry. He is the husband of Charlotte Anne Barr, a proud father and grandfather.

For more info: www.kobaltbooks.com | www.thehoodlumpreacher.com

Q & A with Rev. Burton Barr Jr.

He's Only A Prayer Away

Burton, your new book *He's Only A Prayer Away*, gives examples of praying until your breakthrough. Give me an example of how you've prayed until your breakthrough. Some people confuse praying until they get a breakthrough with praying until they get what they want. There is a difference. Our wants and desires have to be in line with the wants and desires that God has for us. What are you praying for? Is it fame and fortune? That might not be what is in your best interest or what God has in store for you. Seek God's face and pray that your life is in line with His Will. Another breakthrough that I prayed for was deliverance from drug addiction. It didn't happen overnight. Maybe it took longer so I would appreciate it more. Maybe it was so I wouldn't look down my nose at other addicts.

It must be difficult for people to emotionally and painfully explore their past the way you have done with your life. What advice would you have for someone who is open to looking back so they may move forward? Alcoholics Anonymous has a medallion for people who have been clean for one year or more. Inscribed on that medallion are the words, "To thine own self be true." There are two people in this world that you cannot fool. They are God and yourself. You cannot change the mistakes that you made in the past. But you can learn from them and use them to make a better future for yourself and for others. You start by examining yourself and taking responsibility for your actions, and not blaming someone else for your mistakes. To thine own self be true.

What do you think is the first step to getting closer to God? The first step in getting closer to God is realizing how far away from Him you are. Then you have to want to get closer to Him. Do you remember how you felt when you first fell in love? You wanted to be with that person as much as possible. You would do whatever you could to please them. When you start feeling that way about God, you are getting closer.

Do you consider yourself a soldier for God? If so, why? I am a soldier in God's army. As a preacher, I am not only a soldier, I am an officer in His army. He is my Commander-in-Chief. When I was in the Marines, we had to learn and obey the "General Orders." God has given His soldiers a list of general orders as well. They are called, "The Ten Commandments." As Marines, we were expected to study and follow our "Guide Book." God has given His soldiers a guide book to study and follow as well. It is "The Holy Bible."

You took every illegal drug known to man, from PCP to heroine, coke, crack, and marijuana. How were you able to finally get off the drugs for good? That was only by the grace of God. I could not do it myself, and Lord knows, I tried. There were so many times that I threw those needles and syringes off my back porch and into the alley. But less than an hour later I was out there in the alley, in the dark, on my hands and knees with a Bic cigarette lighter looking for them. But it was not until I honestly cried out to Him, begging Him to forgive me, that I was able to quit. I also thank God that I had a strong support system consisting of my mother, a niece, several cousins and many friends.

But you still had a problem kicking the booze even after you stopped taking drugs. How is that battle going for you? I think my biggest problem with alcohol was I didn't see anything wrong with it. It's not illegal and a lot of people can drink socially. But I can't. I was an alcoholic and didn't know it. I came from a family of alcoholics. I was in complete denial. Once again, I put my trust in God. I attend A.A. meetings and if something is bothering me I talk about it with someone instead of holding it in.

A lot of your friends died from drugs and violence or went to prison. How did you manage to survive to tell your story today? Once again, it was only by the grace of God. I didn't realize it at the time but God had His hand on me. That is why men who were bigger and "badder" than me had been raped, beat up or killed in prison, but I wasn't. It wasn't me. It was the hand of God. There were people who shot less dope than I did and died from an overdose. It wasn't me. It was the hand of God. It is because of His grace and mercy that I am here today. It is not because of me, or anything that I have done. Because, if the truth be told, I should have been dead a long time ago.

You often carried around a gun and pulled it on some people. You also had guns pulled on you. With the reckless lifestyle you lived for so long, isn't it a miracle that you didn't die of a drug overdose, AIDS, or violence? It is a miracle. I don't know how many times I overdosed on drugs. I remember overdosing on heroin one time. B.B. told me that Poopy shot some salt in my arm to revive me. I don't know if it was true or not. I just remember sliding down the bathroom wall with the needle in my arm and waking up on the sofa. I overdosed on cocaine so many times I lost count. But every time I realized that I wasn't going to die, I went and got some more. I had guns pulled on me many times. I ripped off a lot of people including drug dealers. I wasn't really that tough. I was just crazy.

Burton, let's face it, you hurt or disappointed many people -- family, lovers, friends, co-workers, church members and just about anyone who knew you. Why should we like you now? The hardest part of writing the book was reliving some of the things that I had done. Like the times my father couldn't buy food because I had conned him out of his money. Like the time my aunt couldn't attend one of her church member's funeral because I had stolen her coats and sold them. Like the countless times that I ripped off anyone that I could so I could get the poison that I needed to put in my arms. But that's the life of a dope fiend. I just hope that some young person who thinks it is OK to smoke a little weed reads my book and sees where they are headed.

Can we really believe you have turned your life around? Is it really possible that someone so evil can now be so good? I am not good. I'm just not the same person that I used to be. The Bible says that anyone who is in Christ Jesus is a new creation. Old things are passed away and all things become new. I am truly sorry for the people that I have hurt and the pain that I have caused them. All I can do now is do God's will and help people to avoid making the same mistakes that I made. I also want them to know that just because they messed up, they don't have to give up. They can get back up again.

You're very active in the community now. What do you tell young kids to do that you yourself couldn't when you were their age? I speak at a lot of schools, youth rallies, and youth revivals, and I always start off by talking about my first felony arrest. I had just gotten off work and was standing at the bus stop when, Red, a friend of my brother's drove past. He lived around the corner from me and offered me a ride. I got in the car but before we went two blocks, the police pulled us over. To make a long story short, Red had some marijuana on him, and although I hadn't done anything wrong we both went to jail. The significance of that story is, my father had always told me to stay away from Red. Listen to your parents.

It appeared that you had attempted to start life over on many occasions and go legit and clean up the drug habit, moving from city to city or job to job, but something always sucked you back into the crappy life you had come to feel comfortable in. Why? I was always trying to do things my way instead of God's way. I wanted to run my own life and do what I wanted to do. In a sense, I was a fugitive. I was running from God. But I belonged to Him and He had a call on my life. But everyone could see that but me.

You admit you were a lousy father and an even worse husband. You beat your first wife on occasion, even describing one scene where you wanted to kill her. Why do you think you turned against those that loved and supported you? We always seem to hurt the people who are closest to us. They are the ones who open up their hearts and their lives to us. I had one of the best

fathers anyone could ask for. But instead of following his example, I was one of the worst. It was not because I didn't love my children. I did. But I loved the streets and the drugs more.

You're now a commissioner for the Prison Ministry for the National Baptist Convention. What do you do in this role? I work with inmates, trying to let them know that they don't have to let where they are dictate who they are. I also minister to their families and children. After they are released, I help them with jobs, housing, or whatever else they need to make a smooth transition into society. I also teach other churches and volunteers how to minister to inmates, their families, and their victims.

How do you encourage people to develop faith in religion and to live a clean life? Just what do you tell a violent punk who is eager to steal to get high? The youth of today are under tremendous pressure. Drugs are pulling at them. The gangs are pulling at them. The streets are pulling at them. Many of them think going to jail is a badge of honor or rites of passage. They are surrounded by negativity. Many of them are from broken homes. Their fathers are not around and their mothers, or sometimes even their grandmothers, are on drugs. Some of them have never seen the inside of a church before and they don't know anything about God. They need our help. But sometimes we cannot share our faith with them until we show some faith in them.

How are you helping God take back the streets? We are not at war with sinners. We are at war with sin. We must remember that when we are on our mission of taking the streets of our cities, gang members are not the enemy. Drug dealers are not the enemy. God loves them just as much as he loves me. We must love them too. They are the ones that Jesus died for. Satan is the enemy. The Bible lets us know that we are not fighting against flesh and blood. This is spiritual warfare. We have to kneel down and pray for peace and wisdom, and stand up for right and righteousness. The biggest difference between gang members and church members is gang members are willing to die for what they believe in.

Select Excerpt from HE'S ONLY A PRAYER AWAY

PLAYERS

What causes people to stray? How can someone that grew up in church get so far off track and wander off into the wrong direction?

One day, Jesus told the story of the lost sheep (Luke 15: 1-7). How did that sheep end up getting lost? I believe he nibbled himself away. There might be a herd of sheep that are just walking along, following their shepherd and the rest of the sheep. At the same time, some of them will be nibbling at the grass. They will nibble a little and then look up to make sure they are still following the shepherd and the rest of the sheep.

Sometimes there is that one sheep that gets so engrossed or caught up in his nibbling that he does not look up. He's just wandering along with his head down, enjoying the grass so much that when he finally does look up, he doesn't see his shepherd or his fellow sheep anywhere.

He is lost. He has wandered off in the wrong direction and he cannot find his way back. He didn't mean to get lost. He just nibbled himself away from the fold. Our jails and prisons are full of men and women who have nibbled themselves away from God. They have nibbled themselves away from the church. They have nibbled themselves away from everything they have ever been taught. They are not bad people. They were just distracted.

Some of them started looking at the players that were hanging out on the street corners and they became so fascinated with their fancy cars, their designer clothes, their grills and their bling, that they lost sight of their dreams, their goals and their ambitions. They started nibbling at a lifestyle that wasn't meant for them.

They started nibbling on alcohol. They started nibbling on marijuana. They started nibbling on crack. They started nibbling with the gangs. They just nibbled, and nibbled, and nibbled until one day they looked up and realized they were lost.



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