

A Christian Bookseller's Prayer

Dear Lord,

When we started out it all seemed so easy. You opened doors and directed our paths. We saw your hand in everything in those early days. We have our victory stories.

But now it's different. Changing market conditions and rising costs are closing in on us. We're stretched in so many ways. We have to work so much harder for the same results. Like soldiers in a battle, we grow weary and discouraged as we watch fellow-soldiers falling all around us. We're pained and hurting from those who were once closest to us — local church staff — who no longer support our stores with their church purchasing; bulk sales we really need to make everything else possible.

Yes, we're still reaching people. There's nothing like the feeling that comes with selling a child or a teenager their first Bible. Or a middle-aged person who is connecting with you for the first time. There's nothing like being there for someone in the middle of a life crisis, to offer a resource, or just to say, "We'll remember you in prayer." (And then to remember!) There's nothing like helping a young worship leader locate that song they heard on the radio, or having a greeting card that puts perfectly into words the hope and encouragement someone wishes to offer.

But it's getting harder and harder. We keep saying, "The ministry side only happens when the business side is viable." These days, the financial side of things just isn't happening.

Lord, we need wisdom. Lots of it. Probably a lot more than other people in retail. We need a sense of your direction for our lives as we seek to respond to an ever-changing landscape. We also need assurance, encouragement, confirmation. We need to find favour with our suppliers, our landlords, various levels of government, local churches and parachurch organizations, and even a renewed sense of common purpose with our employees. We need opportunities to help out other bookshops who are struggling, and interactions with other stores who might be able to help us out.

We also need revival. As individuals. As local communities. As the Church as a whole in this land. We know that if people hunger and thirst after you, they will also hunger and thirst to read the Bible, to study the scriptures, to reach out to their

friends and neighbours and co-workers, to fill their homes with Christian music and Christian literature.

So many Christian radio stations, television stations, websites, megachurches, books being published; so why do those of us who have taken Christian resources to the marketplace struggle so much right now?

We face a time when people are apathetic about reading which converges with a time when people are spiritually apathetic. We need people to once again learn to love the word and to love The Word.

Lord renew our passion for you first, and then, secondly for the things of you. Help us to find the means and the methods to lift your name in the middle of a hurting world. Keep us from buying products that do not truly exalt you. Keep us from being caught up in enthusiasm and emotion and purchasing things our local customers neither need nor want. Help us to have what it is that broken people are searching for at the time they most require it.

Help us to continue to show your love in the part of the world where you have placed us. Help us to be gracious when our closest friends and Church staff don't support us. Help us to do our best to place the book and music items we have into homes and families.

Lord, we don't deserve your blessing. But we humbly ask you to be merciful to us as we face unprecedented challenges.

For the honour of your name and the building of your kingdom, we pray;

Amen.