

What Audacious Prayers Can Do

In today's culture, prayer has been all but forgotten. Like a powerful muscle that atrophies from neglect, the believer who fails to pray becomes extremely carnal and rife with all kinds of issues. A believer who neglects prayer is like a fish that avoids water. Prayer is literally the lifeline of the Christian.

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To top it off, the word *prayer* has become cliché in this culture. It has become a term we use when we want to provide encouragement but have nothing of substance to offer. Believers and nonbelievers alike use it, freely saying, "I'll keep you in my prayers," only to never pray at all. The promise to pray serves as little more than a dismissive end to an uncomfortable conversation for which there are no apparent answers.

When a national tragedy strikes, even those who have had a hand in kicking God out of the schools, the government, the courts and the public arena start talking about prayer. The truth is, God and prayer cannot be expelled from any of these arenas as long as believers continue to walk the earth.

As a pastor I have told people I would be praying for them, and though I diligently followed through to do so, I left the conversation thinking, *I wish I could do something more*. Like others, I sometimes feel praying is the least I can do—when, in fact, it is the greatest and most productive thing we can do for those who are facing the battering ram of life.

Life has a way of extracting hope from its participants, but

prayer re-establishes hope. Hope anchors the soul and allows the fresh sunshine of the love of God to come pouring in. Like the breaking of the day after a dark night of despair, prayer causes the believer to emerge from trouble with a new lease on life and anticipation for the future.

Are you ready for that kind of prayer?

The Time for Audacious Prayer Is Now

Before reuniting with his brother Esau, Jacob prayed all night. He was determined to receive assurance from the Lord that his brother would not kill him the next day. So intense was that prayer meeting that Jacob emerged with a name change and a limp that would mark his every step for the rest of his life (see Genesis 32).

Have you ever had the audacity to go before the Lord with such passion for the burden you were carrying that you decided you would not leave until you were able to emerge with an answer? The desperate cry of the righteous in a prayer closet strikes a chord in the heart of God.

The Bible is a book about fervent prayer and the resulting answers to those prayers. From Genesis to Revelation, the power of audacious prayer is emphasized virtually from chapter to chapter and verse to verse. One would be hard-pressed to read the Bible without coming to the conclusion that prayer actually does change things. In fact, prayer changes everything. Faith and prayer are the tandem vehicles that move things from the realm of the spirit to the natural arena. They cause the unseen to become reality.

Contemporary Christians would do well to once again pray over their families and lives in an audacious manner. The promise to reverse negative circumstances is only guaranteed to those who pray: "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 heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14, NKJV).

If we humble ourselves in prayer and turn from our wicked ways, He will "heal our land." What does God mean by "our land"? Our land is not only our nation and world but also our lives. He has promised to heal the lives of those who are serious about prayer and righteous living.

Jesus Himself implored us to pray audaciously: "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). He told His followers, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8). These are not the words of some popular success guru; these are the words of Jesus!

Peter Kreeft, author and professor of theology at Boston College, made this observation concerning prayer: "I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers to God make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those prayers down through the centuries, we would be so paralyzed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off of our knees for the rest of our lives." What a great admonition concerning prayer! Only eternity will reveal the effects prayer has had on this world and in the lives of untold scores of individuals through the centuries.

Intimacy Leads to Audacity

For the believer, all intimacy with God is born out of trust that has been developed in times of prayer. Intimacy leads to faith and audacious praying. Faith and audacious prayer produce the miraculous.

Individuals who have a consistent prayer life over the long haul can testify to personally witnessing the power of the living Christ at work in their lives. They trust God, and they

trust His Word. Praying people become persons of great faith.

In the first-century church, miracles were in abundance. When one looks at the behavior of these believers, we readily discover prayer was one of the foundational stones of their existence.

I believe God is calling His children back to their prayer closets. If we will begin to commune with Him and possess the audacity to pray, the miraculous will once again become the norm.

Desperation is the environment in which miracles are birthed. Most people never contend for a miracle until the possibility of all human help has been exhausted. That is not intended to be an indictment; it is just a fact. We try everything in our power to alleviate the dilemma that we face. Then, when we have come to the end of ourselves, we turn to God in audacious prayer. That is just the way we are wired. God knows this, and He is always standing at the end of the path with His hands outstretched saying, "Come unto Me," (Matt. 11:28).

7 Vital Reasons for Audacious Prayer

The Word of God makes it clear: Prayer is the act of communicating with God. If prayer is the means of communication between an earthly believer and the heavenly Father, the believer should look forward to this means of speaking with the Father who is also our mentor. Let's explore seven vital reasons for prayer.

Prayer is required to be forgiven. I've spoken to you about miracles already, but the greatest miracle that could ever be performed is for God to forgive sin.

However, one cannot be forgiven simply by thinking he is sorry for his sin. One cannot be forgiven by having good intentions. The only way a person can be forgiven is by confessing sin before a holy God. This requires prayer.

The psalmist provided us with an excellent example of this relationship between confession and forgiveness that comes through prayer when he wrote, "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5).

Prayer is required to develop an intimate relationship with God. Another psalmist, writing in Psalm 116, describes how the habit of prayer caused him to know God hears and answers prayer: "I love the Lord because he hears my prayers and answers them. Because he bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I breathe! Death stared me in the face—I was frightened and sad. Then I cried, 'Lord, save me!' How kind he is! How good he is! So merciful, this God of ours! The Lord protects the simple and the childlike; I was facing death, and then he saved me. Now I can relax. For the Lord has done this wonderful miracle for me. He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I shall live! Yes, in his presence—here on earth!" (Ps. 116:1-9, LB).

As one reads through these verses, the intimacy between the writer and his God is striking. The practice of prayer led to an intimate relationship between God and the psalmist. He says of God: "He answers my prayers." "He bends down and listens." "I will pray as long as I breathe." "How kind he is." "How good he is." "So merciful, this God of ours." "He saved me."

As I mentioned earlier, for the believer all intimacy is born out of trust. Through this psalmist's prayer life, he learned to trust God. We should practice prayer for the purpose of developing intimacy with God. No prayer, no intimacy.

Prayer is required to maintain purity. A believer can break fellowship with God while serving in various roles. Serving does not promote purity, nor does it insulate us from failing. The only thing that can prevent a person from being caught up in a sinful lifestyle is a consistent, audacious prayer life.

Believers who have a daily prayer time are much less likely to backslide.

When we are tempted to sin, the fact that we know we are meeting with God later in the day or the next morning can keep us from committing that sin. A believer who is consistent in prayer knows that sin causes him to dread his prayer time.

A consistent prayer life causes a believer to quit sinning, or else sin will cause the believer to quit praying. The choice is left to the believer. In our journey, the only way we can hope to live according to God's standards is to have a consistent prayer life that develops purity within and manifests itself in every action we take.

Prayer is required to walk in faith. In 39 years of ministry, I have yet to meet one person I believed to have great faith who did not have a consistent prayer life.

According to Romans 12:3, every believer begins his spiritual journey with exactly the same amount of faith: "God hath dealt to every man *the* measure of faith" (KJV, emphasis added). When I read this verse, I often picture the Father holding a specific unit of measure and doling out faith to each of us. The level of faith a believer is capable of attaining depends on how one goes about exercising his faith, and the exercising of faith is directly tied to our prayer life.

We should pray, making our requests known to God. When He answers our prayer, our faith rises to a new level. Each prayer we see answered enables us to believe God for larger things. Consistent prayer grows our faith, and our faith unlocks the door to the storehouse of God.

Prayer is required to walk in freedom. Take a look around you. People are grappling with addictions and phobias of all kinds. Sadly, the bondage of believers often mirrors that of the world. These things can be broken through the power of prayer.

Psalm 34 lays out the freedom God affords through prayer. In this passage we are told the Lord will do the following things in response to the prayer of the believer:

Deliver us from fear (v. 4)

Save us from our trouble (v. 6)

Guard and deliver us (v. 7)

Bless those who trust in Him (v. 8)

Supply all our needs (v. 9)

Hear us when we pray (v. 15)

Redeem us (v. 22)

But we are to receive these things through crying out to Him (vv. 6, 17), trusting Him (v. 8), fearing Him (vv. 7, 9), humbling ourselves (v. 18) and serving Him (v. 22)—in other words, through being in active relationship with God.

God promises great blessings to His people, but many of these blessings require our active participation. In this instance, our participation is a consistent prayer life. Prayer is a requirement of living an overcoming Christian life. If we hope to live free, we must be people of prayer.

Prayer is required to persevere. My definition of *persistence* is “the steadfast determination to complete a task without regard for the sacrifice it will require.” By its nature, the Christian life demands a boatload of persistence. Any achievement worthy of the effort it requires merits the investment of persistence.

I believe two things are required for a Christian to make the commitment necessary to persist in achieving the will of God: 1) becoming a person of prayer and 2) knowing whom they serve and whose vision they strive for.

It is a fact that praying people are persistent people. Prayerlessness, on the other hand, produces a lack of persistence. The reason? Persistence is born out of intimacy, and intimacy with God is not possible without a prayer life.

Following that, if we are sure it is God's purpose we are serving and His goals we are striving to achieve, we become confident He will bring it to pass.

No matter what long shot God's will appears to be in one's life, if we are people of prayer and know we are going for His will, we patiently endure the days when there seems to be no movement in the circumstances. We know He will bring it to pass.

Prayer is required to have power with God. There are no shortcuts to God's power supply. The path to God's power source leads directly through His prayer room.

The bottom line is this: No prayer, no power. This probably answers the questions echoing through churches all across America: "Where are the miracles?" "What must we do to see His miracles?" "Where is His power?"

Why do you suppose God set up the distribution of miracles in such a way that they flow through those who pray? Well, think about it: Praying people are intimately connected to God to the point of having developed a heart like His. They see things as God sees them. They hear things as God hears them. And praying people are humble, not allowing pride to enter in when a miracle occurs.

The prayers of righteous people are a source of great power to the world. We should pray so we will be capable of allowing God to dispense miracles through us to a world that desperately needs them.

Will You Be Audacious?

God reacts to our bold, desperate, audacious prayers. It is my hope that your prayer life will be enhanced and your faith will begin to soar once again.

In his book *Master Secrets of Prayer*, Cameron Thompson writes, "There comes a time, in spite of our soft, modern ways, when we must be desperate in prayer, when we must wrestle, when we must be outspoken, shameless and importunate." This statement sums up perfectly what I mean when I talk about audacious prayer. Prayer can take the impossible and turn it into new opportunities for the future.

Winston Churchill is quoted as saying, "The nose of the bulldog has been slanted backwards so that he can breathe while holding on."

We must become people who have hearts that will not be dissuaded from doing the will of God. We must develop bulldog tenacity in pursuing the purposes of God.

We must, my friends, become audacious.

Don Nordin is the pastor of CT Church in Houston and author of *The Audacity of Prayer: When Ordinary People Receive Healing Answers from God*, which releases next month. With a focus on training leaders, he travels extensively as a speaker in revivals, camp meetings and conferences.