

Developing Faith to Release the Miracles In Your Life

Every summer my family and I read a book together. We've been doing this through the kids' teen years, and now even in their college years. Last summer we read **Mark Batterson's** book *The Circle Maker*. What a great book on prayer!

Our summer book discussions are a simple but meaningful experience for us. We eat dinner together, then discuss a chapter or two of the book. That's it! But what a cool time! I'm always amazed at the insights, comments and questions that come from our conversations.

This article isn't about Mark's book, it's about prayer, but I want to say what makes this book different to me. There are so many good books on prayer, and in the end, they all say the same thing. Pray. And that's good. But this book seems to inspire people to pray, and there is no price tag you can put on that. When the Holy Spirit is at work, He is at work!

I've been a local church pastor and leader for a long time, and **prayer** is part of my life. There have been seasons of depth and consistency in prayer, and seasons of dry bones. But recently God has grabbed hold of my heart and led me to another place, not just a fresh place, but a new place in prayer, a place of deep **belief** and expectancy.

So, back to our family summer book conversations. On the first night of *The Circle Maker* discussions, I asked everyone what miracles they had recently experienced, or heard about. Surprisingly, we had a little difficulty answering that question. That really got me thinking, and the essence of that reflection was the question: What do I believe? Do I believe in miracles? The answer: yes! Of course! Then why not pray for **miracles** more often? If you think about that much, it will

quickly challenge you about what you really believe, too.

We decided to pray more specifically, and beyond the realm of anything that could be done in our own ability. John-Peter is a computer science major at Indiana Wesleyan University. By the time you are reading this, he'll be in the spring semester of his senior year. He prayed for an internship he wanted this summer at a local IT firm. God granted it. Then he prayed that he could do something helpful, something special, and something unique. Two days later he solved a problem with a computer no one else could solve. The intern!

Coincidence? Really? What do you believe? My daughter Mackenzie is a young, aspiring filmmaker who graduated with a degree in communications. Most film work is contracted by project. She works at Starbucks between film projects and it had been quite a long time since the last one. She prayed big and specific. Mackenzie asked God to provide two paying film jobs in the month of August. We all prayed. God gave her exactly two paying film jobs in August!

Those may not seem like big prayers to you, but as a dad, the big risk for me was my college-aged kids seeing the hand of God at work—answering prayer. That made those prayers huge.

Church leaders can get discouraged, and that can dampen your prayer life. Your **faith** can grow weak, and though unintentional, you might not think God will answer your prayers. What if you begin to anticipate God answering your prayers? I'm not saying that God will grant you your every prayer, but what if you start by acknowledging that He can! Would you pray differently?

What you believe shapes how you pray.

At the core of the matter is **praying the right things**. Praying things in the will of God and things that bring glory to God. It's not always easy to know the right thing to pray, but it's not a mystery. God speaks to us. He reveals truth through Holy

Spirit prompts, and makes His will known in Scripture as well.

I think it comes down to two key questions.

- Can God do that?
- Will God do that?

We've got to wrestle both questions as we pray. You can't separate them and expect great clarity and results in your prayer life.

We were returning home from a family vacation in San Diego early in July. Delta had given us a great ride with great service and as we began our descent, a baby starting crying. Ok, screaming. Mind-numbing, bloodcurdling screaming! Perhaps you've been there. My first thoughts were not holy or pure. They were something like, "Really, can someone please shut that kid up?" I told you my thoughts weren't kind! The ironic, or perhaps embarrassing thing was that I was finishing up the last few pages of *The Circle Maker*. Yes, reading my book on prayer.

In that moment, God said, "Why don't you pray for that baby?" My response: "What? You mean you'll just quiet the baby?" God said: "What do you believe?" So I quietly uttered a quick, lackluster prayer for God to quiet the baby. Then I thought, "See-nothing." Still screaming.

God stayed with me and said: "That's it?" (My sense was He was implying I gave an unsympathetic prayer and gave up in eight seconds!) Then something happened. Something stirred deep within me. My spirit was different. I prayed again. I asked that God would send an angel to comfort the baby. Immediately the baby just stopped crying. I was moved. I looked around as if people were watching. (I know, I'm an idiot.) Now, I'm fired up. I just witnessed a miracle! I wanted to tell everyone and no one at the same time. I wasn't sure what to do, so I got greedy. I went for more. I asked God if the baby might laugh. The infant began to coo and then lightly laugh! I

was amazed.

I had to tell this story, but knew some people might not believe me. So I wanted to meet the young mom but thought I'd never catch her. I was in row 35 she was in row 31, and on a plane that big, she'd be long gone before I deplaned with my family. When I got off the jetway, she was just standing there looking in my direction. So I walked up and said hi. I made a comment acknowledging her adorable (quite a change, huh?) infant, and that she had a rough time at the end of the flight. She nodded. I said: "I prayed for your baby."

The young mom just looked at me in a sort of amazement and said, "She did just stop crying all of a sudden." I replied, "God did that." Her eyes got a little misty, I asked her name, she told me, and then she headed down the concourse. That was it.

I don't know if God did that to comfort the baby, speak to the sweet young mom, or change me. But I know what He did.

What you believe shapes how you pray. And what you pray shapes you.

God doesn't say yes to every prayer, and I can't tell you why. I don't know. But I can tell you that He is God and we are not. I can say that He loves you and He keeps His promises. God answers prayer and gives us much. But prayer isn't so much about getting what we want as it is keeping us on our knees—connected and dependent.

When God answers a prayer, or delivers a miracle, my faith grows and I am ready to trust deeper and pray bigger. I'm praying differently now for the church and the staff. I'm praying larger and more specific. I'm believing God for miracles.

How about you?

What do you believe?

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