

How to Move Heaven With Your Prayers

Around the turn of the millennium an intriguing megatrend swept across the body of Christ. Believers all around the globe became enthralled with an obscure, 32-word prayer found in one verse of Scripture: "And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, 'Oh, that You would indeed bless me and enlarge my territory, that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that it may not bring me hardship!'" (1 Chron. 4:10).

I believe this brief petition resonated with millions of prayerful people primarily because of the verse's concluding comment: *"So God granted him what he asked"* (1 Chron. 4:10, emphasis added).

Wow! How simple can you get? As far as we know, Jabez didn't attend any all-night prayer vigils. No one laid hands on him for an impartation. He didn't fast 40 days. He didn't prostrate himself before the Lord for hours. He didn't mechanically repeat a certain faith confession hundreds of times. These aren't bad things to do, but they are not what Jabez did. He just made five short requests combined into one sentence that took maybe 10 seconds to utter. And God was so deeply moved that He actually did it—*He granted him what he requested*. Don't you feel like echoing my sentiment? *Wow!*

I have to admit, I got swept away with the profound potency of this prayer as well, but I can remember thinking numerous times: *"If Jabez's prayer could strike such awe in the hearts of believers, surely there are other prayers in the Bible that should also command our attention, prayers that are just as weighty (if not more so) and just as effective in securing a response from heaven."*

So I embarked on a journey through God's Word, seeking not just instances in the Bible when people prayed, but specifically times when petitions also attracted some kind of supernatural response. I thought if certain prayer principles worked for celebrated faith heroes in the past, then using a similar approach should potentially bring results for believers who seek God in this era.

Prayer Heroes

I discovered a number of great examples—very inspiring prayers from key Bible figures such as Moses, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Elijah, Jonah and the members of the fledgling church in Jerusalem. Some are lengthy; some are quite short and to the point. But all were effective in bringing the kingdom of heaven down to earth.

Some of these prayers have impacted me far more than the prayer of Jabez ever did—and studying them has awakened a renewed confidence that God will do it again. I pray the same thing happens for you.

Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness." Let me assure you, we aren't trying to "force" God's hand by using any time-proven methods. Instead, we're merely aligning ourselves with God's will and getting in a receptive position.

So let's accept this challenge together! Let's determine to achieve the full capacity of a consecrated prayer life, expecting "great and mighty things" (Jer. 33:3).

Moving God Like Moses

One of these divinely moving prayers that has fascinated me is from Moses. After obeying God's call to lead the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, Moses is summoned by the Lord to Mount Sinai, where he receives the Ten Commandments. The Israelites, taking advantage of his absence, lapsed into

idolatry, convincing Aaron to make them a golden calf to be their god.

As we see in Exodus 32, Moses' first reaction was to throw down and break the tablets of stone, burn the idol, grind it to powder, mix it with water and make the children of Israel drink of the concoction. After this he displayed great unselfishness. When God set His mind toward destroying the entire nation and raising up a new nation from Moses' seed, Moses pled with God to instead remember His commitment to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God mercifully relented.

Yet in Exodus 33 we find the Most High still deliberating over what He is going to do to the Israelites. At the same time, Moses, completely frustrated with the people, turns his heart worshipfully toward God.

Let's look at the passage in verses 12-18: "Moses said to the Lord, 'See, You say to me, "Bring up this people," but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight." Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You, and that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too that this nation is Your people.'

"And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'

"Then he said to Him, 'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how will it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we will be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the face of the earth?'

"The Lord said to Moses, 'I will do this thing of which you have spoken, for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name.'

“Then Moses said, ‘I pray, show me Your glory.’”

This last petition that Moses uttered was only six words long (“*I pray, show me Your glory*”) but it elicited from God an extraordinary series of promises. Audibly He pledged: “‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’ But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’ And the Lord said, ‘Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen’” (Ex. 33:19-23).

God responded to Moses by giving him the very thing he asked. God showed him His glory. How amazing! And what He has done for one, He can do for another.

4 ‘Power Points’ in Moses’ Prayer

We can learn several things from Moses’ prayer. Let’s break down his full conversation with God into four “power points” to see how and why he obtained such a visitation from the Most High. At the conclusion of each point, I’ve included an action step for application to your own life.

Power Point #1

Moses first asked God to “show me now Your way,” the God-inspired path that he should follow (Ex. 33:13). He wanted to be in the center of God’s will.

Knowing these two things would be a confirmation that grace had truly been applied to his life, but Moses requested this so that ultimately he could experience even more of the grace of God. Whenever God pours out grace, in a sense He “stoops

down” from His level of holiness and perfection to help unholy and imperfect humanity, simply because He loves us.

Action Step: *Ask God to pour out His grace in your life by leading you in the right path. But tell Him your highest passion is to know Him.*

Power Point #2

In verse 13, Moses reminds God that “this nation is Your people,” speaking of the Israelites. Likewise, we are not just any people; we are the people of God. We belong to Him. We are “the Lord’s portion” (Deut. 32:9), the group of people out of this world whom He has inherited in a special relationship forever. So we, of all people, should expect His intervention.

Action Step: *Declare to God that of all the people of the world, you are one of those who truly belong to Him.*

Power Point #3

In verse 15, Moses makes a bold statement: “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.” He made it clear that if the Israelites lost God’s presence (the cloud by day, the fire by night, the supernatural fire on the altar that fell from heaven and the Shekinah glory cloud on the ark), they would lose the essence of who they were. It was the very thing that set them apart from all other nations.

Action Step: *Make it clear to God that His personal, abiding presence is infinitely more important to you than what He can do for you.*

Power Point #4

“I pray, show me Your glory” (Ex. 33:18). The glory of God is His manifest presence—His greatness, His dominion, His beauty, His awe-inspiring majesty and power. To see the “glory” is to transcend this natural realm, to be lifted into heavenly sphere, to behold the supernatural splendor of God. This

“glory of God” is all the more available now because of Jesus’ death and resurrection: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of *the glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6, emphasis added).

Action Step: *Appeal to God to show you the glory of who He is and to manifest His glory in your life.*

My First Encounter With the Lord of Glory

I deeply relate to this passage of Scripture because it reminds me so much of how I first encountered the true and living God. In 1970 I was teaching Kundalini yoga to about 300 students at four universities in the Tampa, Florida, area. I also ran a yoga ashram, a commune where yoga devotees follow a more intense discipline. Each day I taught various techniques geared toward achieving that illusive state referred to in eastern religions as “God consciousness.”

Every day began at 3:30 a.m. with two to three hours of meditation and mantra yoga (the chanting of mantras), then various yoga disciplines for about 12 hours. However, one unique and wonderful day I broke with my normal pattern. A friend had sent me a letter explaining that he’d been “born again” (an unfamiliar concept to me at the time) and had discovered Jesus to be the only way to heaven. I initially responded in the negative, that I couldn’t confine myself to Christianity. But my friend’s letter weighed heavily on my mind.

So one morning I decided that instead of going through my usual yoga routine, I’d spend the whole day praying *only* to Jesus and reading *only* the Bible. Though unaware of it at the time, I was using a “Moses-like” approach. All day I asked the Lord to reveal Himself, using words like these: “Lord Jesus, I dedicate this day to You. Show me the way. If You are truly the only way to eternal life, if You really died on the cross

for my sins and rose again, I pray You will reveal Yourself supernaturally. Manifest Yourself. Give me some kind of sign.”

When Moses prayed that God would reveal His glory, God’s loving response was: “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you” (Ex. 33:19).

A similar thing happened for me. I don’t have room in this article to explain all the ways God answered my prayers that day—including using a new believer, who had just left behind yoga and Eastern religions a few months before, to tell me about Jesus—but that day something supernatural happened to me similar to Moses’ supernatural encounter. God made His “goodness” pass before me (showing me the revelation of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God). The word *gospel* means “good news.” As I learned various facets of the good news, *the goodness of the Lord kept passing before me again and again*—and I learned from the beginning, God’s glory is His goodness.

When Moses asked to see God’s glory, the second part of God’s response was the pledge that He would “proclaim the name of the Lord” before Moses (Ex. 33:19). That happened to me also during that pivotal turning point. I learned the true name of the Lord was not Brahman (from Hinduism), Sat Nam (from Sikhism) or Allah (from Islam)—but *the Lord Jesus Christ*, the triune name of the triune God, the name that is above every name, the name to which every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, the name that is connected to the true revelation of the plan of God for man.

Finally, at the close of Exodus 33, we find God doing something remarkable for Moses, something that speaks in a symbolic and spiritual way to us: “Then the Lord said, ‘Indeed, there is a place by Me. You must stand on the rock. While My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I

will take away My hand, and you will see My back, but My face may not be seen'" (vv. 21-23).

In like manner, when the Lord passed by me in the fall of 1970, He placed His hand upon me, opening up my spiritual understanding. In a spiritual sense He placed me in the "cleft of the Rock"—the one who is called the Rock of Ages. From that day forward I have been "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

Several weeks later I was battling raging doubt in my mind over the concept that the Bible is actually God's inspired Word. The Lord Jesus understood my struggle and came to me in a dream. He appeared before me in glowing white apparel, so brilliant I could not make out the features of His face. Then He disappeared and in His place was the Bible, glowing with the same brilliant white light, with golden Hebrew print on the pages, and pulsating like it had a heartbeat. A river of light poured off the pages into my soul, and I realized that God and His Word are one and that the Bible truly is the Word of God. My doubts were dispelled forever when I beheld His glory!

Did all of these things happen because of prayer? Absolutely! Was it important that I asked God to show me His way (the right path) and manifest Himself to me supernaturally? Yes. It worked for Moses and it worked for me.

As Watchman Nee so aptly declared: "Our prayers lay the track down on which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, His power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails."

So lay down the rails today. You may be surprised what comes to you from above.

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