



## Running Rabid

Balancing the passion to pursue with the pressure to produce.

# The Power of Prayer

*Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you. Saint Augustine*

In one of our recent lessons I made a statement that the three essential elements in the life of a Christian are *Prayer, People, and Pages* (the 3 Ps). When you and I are walking with Christ we are going to want to pray with Him, study His Word, and impact the world by loving people. There is not a lot of mystery when it comes to people. We either love them or we do not, want to spend time with them or we do not, and finally, we have to make a decision whether or not we are going to love people sacrificially or be focused on ourselves with our time, talents, and treasures (yes, that would be the 3 Ts!). Although there is tremendous depth in Scripture, including mysteries about God (Deuteronomy 29:29), of the 3 Ps (Prayer, People, and Pages) I believe prayer is the greatest mystery for the modern Believer.

I grew up in a home where we prayed, primarily because of my mother. Little Judy Wallace (before she met my Dad) from Snyder, Texas learned the power of prayer early in her life and taught her two boys that prayer makes a difference in who we are and who we will eventually become. Second to her love for Scripture that was imparted to us and God's grace, I am convinced my mother's prayers are the single most important reason my brother and I love the Lord as we do today. Take her prayer out of our lives and I am not sure where we would be.

I remember in 7<sup>th</sup> grade losing a folder at school. I am a bit psychotic about performance at the age of 47, but at 13 I was unbearable. I was obsessed with pleasing people, including my parents and teachers. I remember getting home and telling Mom what happened. I remember our going to my room and getting on our knees and asking the Lord help me find the folder. I kid you not, the next day I went to school and went exactly to where I had left it. That was 34 years ago, but it set in motion a pattern in my life that established this truth – **God answers prayers.**

Listed below are some of the areas in my life where I have seen God answer prayer. Most of these are a pretty big deal to me. I am sure you have some big ones in your life as well.

- Choosing a career and what type of education I would need.
- Prayer while at A&M in the Corps of Cadets, specifically about wanting God to heal my eyes so I could be a fighter pilot (answer: NO) and being Drum Major in the Aggie Band (answer: YES).
- Whether or not I should ask Tanya to marry me (answer: YES, thank the Lord she said yes!)
- Prayer about starting my own business and struggling for success (answer: YES)
- Prayer about getting an MBA at one of the top tier U.S. schools (answer: NO, rejected by 7 schools)
- Prayer about growing current business (answer: YES, He continues to do so)

I know many people struggle knowing whether or not the Lord answers prayers. If we are honest, I think what we really mean is that "God does not always answer my prayers *the way I want.*" God is not a genie in a bottle granting our every whim and fancy, although I think at times we are all prone to pray that way. I was taught early in life that God answers every prayer as either YES, NO, or WAIT A WHILE. I have not found any Biblical reason to believe this is not true.

Listed on the following page you will find six Scriptures that reflect God's thoughts on prayer and what I believe He wants us to understand when we approach him through prayer. They are reflected in the following observations on prayer.

1. **Our prayers need to be consistent with God's will for our lives.** Prayer cannot occur in a vacuum outside our spending time in His Word and with His people. God reveals Himself through Scripture and through Godly men and women who pour their lives into ours. Thursday night men's group at MBC is a perfect picture of this.

2. **We need to pray expecting that God can answer our prayers.** Although I am not sure it is explicitly spelled out in Scripture, I think God detests when we think He can't do something. There is no greater insult to God than believing He is limited. Although we might not actually say these words, our failure to pray reflects our heart.
3. **A weak prayer life is a Declaration of Independence from God.** I think I probably say this every third time I speak, but it is one of the most profound statements I have ever heard (from Dave Gibson, former pastor at Cypress Bible Church). It is very easy for us as men to live our lives as if to say, "Don't worry God, I've got this". Quoting the great philosopher Matt Foley played by Chris Farley on Saturday Night Live – "You and I don't have JACK SQUAT!"
4. **We need to put ourselves in positions where we need prayer.** This observation is based on another Dave Gibson quote, "God's desire is that we be involved in activities that are destined to fail without His involvement." You and I need to take risks for the Kingdom. Nothing great happens until you and I take risks. We need to be pushing ourselves and those around us to continually do more for the Kingdom. Failing is OK, failing to try is not.
5. **Praise the Lord for the great things He has done.** It is easy to forget this one and I almost did in preparing this lesson. In Luke 17:11-19 we read about how Jesus healed ten men with leprosy, but only one returned to thank Him and praise God. Let us not be ungrateful when God answers our prayer, but be appreciative of His goodness.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)**

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

**1 John 5:14 (NIV)**

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. **Colossians 4:2 (NIV)**

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

**Mark 11:24 (NIV)**

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. **Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)**

In wrapping things up I want you to encourage you to develop a habit of praying. Like staying in shape physically, prayer takes work. The more we work at it the more we see God's work in our lives and the building of our faith. The great prayer warriors of our Faith (including some among us at Magnolia Bible) did not start off where they are today. Many of them started praying after struggling mightily with failure, disappointment, or losing someone close to them. **God forced them to their knees and they never got up!**

### Questions for the Week

1. As you think back over your life, what role has prayer played?
2. In relation to your answer to Question #1, if you had to relive portions of your life over how would you pray differently? How can you change your prayer life in looking towards the future?
3. **Food for Further Thought** – The acronym **ACTS** is useful for helping us understand the important elements in a prayer. In what ways are **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication important?