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THE PRAYER WARRIOR'S WAY

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## INTRODUCTION

*Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place,  
when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him,  
“Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”*

—LUKE 11:1



**I**MAGINE THIS SCENE for a moment. This is not the beginning of Jesus's ministry. In fact, because this is pretty much in the middle of the Book of Luke, it is likely the disciples had been walking, eating, and living with Jesus for some time now. They must have learned many of the nuances of Jesus's habits the same way you and I learn the individual quirks of siblings or roommates. They had certainly seen several miracles and heard some powerful teaching by this point. They had heard Jesus answer dozens of questions with astonishing wisdom and field the many cleverly veiled attempts to discredit Him without a single embarrassment. They had seen Him command storms, feed thousands, cast out demons, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and raise the dead. They were getting a glimpse of the new kingdom He was telling them about and the power His words commanded. They knew that whatever He promised, He could perform.

And during this time, they experienced Jesus's dedication to prayer firsthand.

I am sure it wasn't uncommon for them to fall asleep waiting for Jesus to come back from prayer, or wake

up to find Him gone off to some lonely place to get more personal time with His Father. At first it must have concerned them when He disappeared, but by this time they must have been able to surmise, "Oh, He's probably out praying again. Should we start breakfast? It could be awhile."

Waking to find Him gone this time, they probably whispered among themselves something like: "You know, Jesus does things that no one else has ever done, but He also prays like no one else we have ever known. He disappears for hours at a time every single day just so He can *pray*. It's as if prayer is more important to Him than we are! He skips meals to pray. He doesn't speak until He has prayed. In fact, He manages His entire schedule *around* His prayer time, not His prayer around all the other things He has to do! Even though we have been taught about prayer from the time we were children, there is something He must know about prayer that we don't. Do you think we could get Him to teach us to pray with the same effectiveness?"

And so, when He finally returned to them that morning, they asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Why? Because they knew that there was something in the way Jesus prayed that got answers.

So Jesus taught them:

When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive  
us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who  
is indebted to us. And do not lead us into  
temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

—LUKE 11:2–4

It was an outline for prayer—a disciple’s prayer to address every need of every day. It was a place to start. But it wasn’t all He had to offer—with the outline, the disciples also needed to come to prayer with the proper attitude and resolve, so He continued to teach them:

Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within and say,

“Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you”? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

So I say to you, 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.

If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

—LUKE 11:5–13

In essence, Jesus was saying, “Who in need would come to the door, knock, and then go away without an answer? Even if the person were asking at the worst time possible, wouldn't he or she continue knocking until



the need was met? Even if the individual were asking someone who was cantankerous and uncooperative, wouldn't he keep after the person until his need was met?

“You see, our Father is a good Father, and He wants you to have what you need. When you ask for one thing, He is not going to give you something that is of no use or might be harmful. But He's not a vending machine you can just pop a few coins into, get what you want, and then walk away from either. He wants a relationship with you. To have this, you must give Him what He wants—your heart. You must continue to knock and seek if you hope to find. You have to spend time sitting at His feet, letting Him teach and purify you. It is the only way you can cut through the static of your own mind in order to hear His answer.

“If you do that, He will not refuse you, nor will He withhold from you the most precious thing He has—His own Spirit—that you might be able to do and be all He desires for you. Do you have faith like an impertinent neighbor? Will you go to the door of heaven and keep knocking until you get what you need? Do you believe that when you go and knock you

will hear an answer from the other side of the door? Because, I'm telling you here and now, if you don't keep after it, if you're unsure you will get an answer, if you are hesitant or grow frustrated, you will never get what you are after; but if you have patience and faith in prayer, there is nothing in heaven our Father won't make available to you."

The disciples had certainly seen Jesus's persistence in prayer, but the idea that they could go into prayer and then come back with the answer they needed was new. Certainly they were aware the patriarchs had prayed and conversed with God just as Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden, but they were special, weren't they? God had called them into those unique relationships with Himself. Could it really be that God wanted the same kind of relationship with each of them?

In the revolutionary disciple's prayer Jesus offered in this passage, He not only gave them an outline of what to pray for daily—a starting place for consistently knocking on the door of heaven—but also the means of transforming their own minds from men and women trapped in a world of doubt, oppression, and failure into a mind-set of heaven: one of faith, provision, and

overcoming. He was not teaching them something to be repeated *ad nauseam* in church services and prayer closets, but a dynamic way to open hearts to the infinite and eternal each and every day. It is a meditation, a discipline, and a practice to let God speak into and through. It is as simple as saying the words from memory, but also as rich as taking each line—even each word—and letting God speak through them to develop in us the lifestyle and faith of someone who turns their world upside right.

In the following chapters I want to look at each of the parts of this prayer more closely and help you see the mystery God planted in each word for us to open up and put into action. Whether you were just born again yesterday, are a ministry leader, or have been leading prayer at your church for decades, I know there is something in the following pages that you haven't seen before that could be the key to the breakthroughs you have been struggling to see realized. God has the answers you need, and they are there for those who ask, seek, and knock without reprieve or shame.

I believe that as you read this book, just as happened as I studied to write it, that what is within these lines

will transform your life in miraculous ways. God has so much He is trying to convey to you, but you must first become the person who can pray and hear His voice—one who can confidently follow the prayer warrior's way.

Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach,  
only how to pray.

—ANDREW MURRAY<sup>1</sup>



PART ONE

*The Big Picture*

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come. Your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

—MATTHEW 6:9–10





# THE GREAT PARADIGM SHIFT

Turning Reality Inside Out

*Our Father in heaven.*

—MATTHEW 6:9

*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to  
your children, how much more will your Father who  
is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

—MATTHEW 7:11





**O**UR FATHER.

There is a spiritual revolution in those words. Jesus didn't teach His disciples to start their prayers, "O God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses," or "O Maker of heaven and earth," or even "O great Spirit who sees all and knows all," but "Father"—and not just "Father," but "*our* Father." He didn't start it with "My Father," so that people might mistakenly think it was supposed to be only "Jesus's Father," but "*Our Father*," expressing the fact that "you are My brothers and sisters and God is *our* Father." Paul, who received the revelation of this, amplified what Jesus said here, explaining, "You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba [we would say "Daddy"] Father.'" (Rom. 8:15).

It is what Jesus prayed in the garden as He asked that He might not have to suffer the cross in Mark 14:36. In essence, He asked, "Daddy? Father? I'll do whatever You want Me to do, but couldn't We save humanity some other way?" He was calling on the intimate relationship He shared with His "Daddy" while appealing to the authority of the head of His household, who was His "Father." Bowing His knee to

each, He went to the cross, but because of the quality of His relationship with the One He could call "Daddy," He didn't go alone.

By instructing us to pray "*Our Father*," Jesus told us we had the right to go to God in this same capacity. If you learn nothing else from this book, I want you to get your mind around this revelation: You are God's child, and He wants to have a relationship with you like a father to a son, a daddy to a daughter. God wants to hear your prayers and see that prayer develop in you the power of an overcomer. As Pete Greig, one of the founders and leaders of the 24-7 Prayer movement, described it:

Prayer is about power. Prayer is about miracles. Prayer is about breakthrough. Prayer is about the extension of the kingdom. But more than any of that, prayer is about being intimate with God. It is about the lap of the Father, and being chosen by Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The beginning of confidence in prayer is realizing that there is Someone on the other end who not only wants the best for you, but who also wants the same

relationship with you that a parent has with a child. He wants to see you born whole, admiring your every little finger and toe; see you grow; see you learn to walk; see you learn to fend for yourself; and never be farther away than a phone call or a text message as you mature and go out to fulfill your purpose in the “family business.” He wants to hear what you have to say; He wants to see your needs met; He wants to answer your questions; He wants to give you understanding, wisdom, and revelation; and He wants to meet your friends. He always has your back, He always has wise advice for you, He has words of encouragement and edification, and He has the power of the universe to use on your behalf when He sees fit. All you have to do is make the connection with Him.

Now I know this may be a hard concept for some of us to grasp, especially if our earthly fathers weren’t exactly focused on “connection.” Many fathers are absent—if not physically, then emotionally. I truly believe there has been an attack on fatherhood in our world for exactly this reason. The enemy doesn’t want us to have a good opinion of fathers that might put us one step closer to God *the* Father. Satan wants us to think

of fathers as guys who leave when we are too young to remember them, men who drink too much, who use their hands to beat us rather than train or comfort us, who are selfish and lazy, aimless and thieving, reckless, uncaring, destructive, and flawed.

As *The Shack* author William P. Young described this feeling: "I spent most of my life trying to wipe the face of my father off the face of God."<sup>2</sup> If that is what your father was like, I want you to lay that aside. I want you to let that mind-set be broken off of your life because it is a curse that doesn't belong to you. Your heavenly Father has none of those negative characteristics.

Instead I want you to imagine what the best father on earth would be like. Your heart knows more about real fatherhood than you may realize. God put a bit of Himself into each of us. Think of the good fathers you have read about in books and seen in the movies or experienced in the homes of your friends. What characteristics of those dads gave you clues as to what a truly good father is like? Take some time to imagine how the best possible father would be, and then think again because God is a Father above what we can ask for or imagine.

Meditate on the goodness of God the Father and let Him fill your thoughts with Himself. That is “our Father”—that is “your Father” and “my Father.” That is the Father who created all of heaven and earth—the entire universe, in fact—just so we would have a place to play. That is the Father who planned out the best for you before you were even conceived in your mother’s womb. Again, look at how Jesus describes “our Father”:

If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn’t think of such a thing. You’re at least decent to your own children. So don’t you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?

—MATTHEW 7:9–11, THE MESSAGE

Even if you didn’t have a good father, you still know on the inside what a good father would be like. While it may take awhile for these truths to be real to you, the beginning is in going to “our Father” in prayer. Go and sit in His presence and let Him teach you who He really is. Spend time sitting in His lap. He won’t

mind—in fact, it is what He has always hoped you would do!

## GROWING UP WITH GOD

Once the revelation of God as Daddy and Father begins to sink into our awareness, the next thing we need to realize about prayer is that we have some growing up to do if we expect the communication to be two-way. Prayer monologues are easy—like grocery lists of needs or pages of memorized scriptures or books that prompt us to just insert our names and those of our loved ones into the blanks provided in prewritten prayers. I am not saying these are bad. I have written out such prayers and confessions myself, and find them very reassuring, positive, and transformational. Repeating such prayers and confessions are wonderful ways to reset our hearts about who God is and what He really wants for us. They are a key to unlocking the impossible, but they are not all that prayer is about.

Two-way prayer is something beyond all of that. It is asking God for or about something, and then receiving His answer. It is a conversation. Yet, in order for that conversation to take place, our spiritual ears must

mature enough for us to discern God's voice from all of the others that speak into our heads and our lives. There is more to prayer than most people think. We must do work within ourselves in order to become mature enough to talk to our Father as a friend and partner.

When a baby is born, it doesn't really know how to do anything. The child's five senses may work perfectly, but the child has to learn what the input from those senses means. A child isn't born knowing that some things it sees are people, others furniture, and still others walls, doorways, or parakeets. The child doesn't know what to focus on. Babies have no depth perception. If you have ever held a newborn, you will notice its head and eyes wander randomly around as the child's brain begins the process of distinguishing one thing from another.

The first thing a baby learns to focus on is the face of the person holding him or her as that person coos and goo-goos and caresses his or her cheek. Babies learn to focus on their mother's face as they suckle or on their father's as he rocks them to sleep. They learn to distinguish noises from voices and words from gibberish. They learn what cries to make to gain attention and

which gurgles to make to receive smiles and affection. It is a process that takes months and comes slowly, but the more the baby interacts with his or her parents, the faster he or she learns to know them. Is it really any different when we are born spiritually? If you remember when you were first born again, if you were anything like most new Christians, you became a sponge, soaking up everything you could learn about God and His spiritual world. With the miracle of spiritual birth still so close to your experience, everything about God seemed so vital, vibrant, and real. When you prayed, it was as if you could feel His breath on your face as He drew near. Answers to your requests seemed to come almost before they were out of your mouth! The new world of getting to know God was so full of wonder and excitement!

But as we mature, so do our relationships, both spiritually and physically. Eventually babies are expected to learn real words to get what they are after; they cannot just cry and think they will be given what they want. They must understand the words *no* and *don't* to avoid the things that might hurt them. Then they are expected to learn to obey instructions and recognize



the voice of their parents over the voices of the world around them. As they learn to walk and move about on their own, they enter the world of “toddlerdom.” They learn the power of willfulness and the rewards of obedience. This is the phase spiritually where I believe the vast majority of Christians gets stuck and stagnate.

Most of us have witnessed a toddler throwing a tantrum on the floor because the child didn’t get what he or she wanted. Children do this because they remember crying out when they were only a few months old and seeing help come immediately. But when a child does this at three years old, crying doesn’t achieve the same response. Suddenly mom and dad hang back for a bit, waiting for the child to calm down and “use words” because mommy and daddy don’t understand what the child is asking for. Even though the parents or caregivers probably do know intuitively what the child wants, they cannot respond to the cries of a three-year-old in the same way they did for a three-month-old.

It is time for the child to grow up a little and start learning to respect others and self, to think about why he should have something rather than simply believing mom and dad should immediately respond to his every

whim. The process is gradual, but the relationship between parent and child must change as time progresses if the child is ever to become a responsible, contributing, successful member of society. No matter what great plans parents have for their child, if a child never gets past the phase of kicking and screaming and thinking the entire world is centered around him, he will never near his potential as a human being.

That is the place I believe most of the church is today in our efforts to follow Jesus. We crave our own satisfaction and comfort more than we crave the voice of God. This is why we haven't yet learned to distinguish the voice of God from the voices of the rest of the world. We don't want to grow up and separate ourselves from the things that are holding us back. We want all the rewards of being a member of God's family, but we don't want to sacrifice our time in prayer and studying God's Word in order to grow up to the point where we could handle all He longs to give us.

## **CULTURE SHOCK**

You see, the problem is when we grow up physically, we don't have the confusion of differing realities that we

do when we grow up spiritually. It is perplexing when some of the voices we have speaking in our heads and making decisions for us are those of our own mind, will, and emotions. A physical baby has a mind that is also a baby physically, and a physical three-year-old typically has a mind that is also three years old. When a three-year-old personality speaks out of a three-year-old body, no one is fooled into thinking that the child has enough wisdom to be left totally to himself. We know to guide the child toward the right decisions and sometime still let him or her fall down when the lesson isn't too costly.

However, when a thirty-year-old physical mind brought up in this world starts contending with the three-year-old spiritual mind that God is trying to mature in the truths of the spiritual world, the thirty-year-old mind must be willing to humble itself and listen. If not, the spiritual voice can easily get ridiculed and overruled "because the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). As our spirits start to mature and God draws back from us enough to let us begin growing toward responsible citizenship in His kingdom, we are faced with the same problem as someone who relocates to a new country and culture.

We must either start conforming to the new culture, or things will repeatedly go wrong. We will have to learn a new language, a new way of doing things, and even a new way of thinking, or else we will never succeed in the new country no matter how well versed we are in the old.

This is the perplexity we have as beings with feet in two different realms: the culture and realm of this world—a place of limitations and lack, setbacks and failures, arrogance and deceptions, obstacles and stumbling blocks—and the culture and realm of heaven—a place of limitlessness and abundance, possibilities and solutions, humility and truth, stepping-stones and breakthroughs. Our problem is that the culture we grew up with will always hold us back unless we are willing to let it go to embrace the new. We are stretched, as if by wild horses, between our two worlds. If we try to straddle one foot in the finite, physical world and the other in the infinite, spiritual world, we easily become people of two minds. We can be people of carnal desires with spiritual ambitions. But one realm must have control and dictate our actions in the other. We will never have the discipline in the natural to do the impossible

if we do not keep the spiritual in its proper place of precedence.

It is a simple biblical principle: those who would walk in the realm of the spirit and enter the kingdom of God must choose to be like the child (spirit) within them. (See Matthew 18:1–5.) We must choose the truths of the spirit that we are still growing into and reject the parameters set by the natural world, because until we can embrace the childlike faith that “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26), we will forever be limited in what we can accomplish. In the same way, until we can overcome the weaknesses of our physical desires and needs, we will never pursue the spirit far enough to tap into the power of God.

In *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Andrew Murray describes the process of growing into spiritual authority and competence in this way:

The words of John (1 John 2:12–14) to little children, to young men, and to fathers, suggest the thought that there often are in the Christian life three great stages of experience...

In Christ’s teaching on prayer, there appear to be three stages in the prayer-life, somewhat

analogous. In the Sermon on the Mount we have the initial stage: His teaching is all comprised in one word, Father. Pray to your Father, your Father sees, hears, knows, and will reward: *how much more* than any earthly father! Only be childlike and trustful. Then comes later on something like the transition stage of conflict and conquest, in words like these: "This sort goeth not out but by fasting and prayer;" "Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him?" And then we have in the parting words, a higher stage. The children have become men: they are now the Master's friends, from whom He has no secrets, to whom He says, "All things that I heard from my Father I made known unto you;" and to whom, in the oft-repeated "whatsoever ye will," He hands over the keys of the kingdom. Now the time has come for the power of prayer in His Name to be proved.<sup>3</sup>

How many of the people of God today are limited in this way by wisdom that comes from the world and keeps them childish and selfish instead of humbly and openly embracing the possibilities of God that allow them to

grow into the fullness of maturity in Christ? There is a big difference between being childish and childlike. The first is self-absorbed, lazy, and undisciplined; the second lays down one's own wisdom and position for that which comes from above, leaning not to one's own understanding (Prov. 3:5), and is disciplined by a love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). It's like the story of the emperor's new clothes. To be childlike is to have the simple, frank honesty of a child to realize that sometimes the doctrines we are dressing ourselves up in are nothing more than air and hubris. Instead we must earnestly seek to develop and discipline our senses in the spirit that we might become more proficient in the reality of spiritual things. This cannot be done without a prayer life that is active, unrelenting, and thriving.

## **GOOD THINGS OR GOD THINGS?**

If we took a survey, I would bet you that far more than half of Christians would either say they believe God doesn't speak to people today as He did to the people during biblical times or that His voice comes only through tradition, the words of Scripture, or the

leaders of their churches. I imagine most believers would say He rarely speaks to the common person sitting in a pew. Not only that, but there are tens of thousands of different ways in which this is taught, and thus tens of thousands of different denominations that have been formed—tens of thousands of different “day cares” housing toddlers who will never grow up because they are too attached to the earth and too disconnected from heaven. Sadly, that equals hundreds of millions of believers who will never grow up into what God has for them—and the world we live in is the worse for it.

Now I am not trying to be critical of our churches today—I'm really not. Every follower of Jesus—baby, toddler, growing adult, or elder—is my brother or sister in Christ. I am part of them as a member of the body of Christ on the earth, and if I am going to grow up in spiritual things, I need to have their welfare and blessing as much in my heart as Jesus does in His. The truth is it is likely there are things they know that I need to know to accomplish all God has called me to do. I will never really be able to accomplish my mission on the earth without them accomplishing theirs as well. Why? Because if God's will for good is not being done



on the earth today, either we as Christians *as a whole* have deceived ourselves in some way that is keeping us from the power of God or else there is something we are supposed to be doing that we are not. It doesn't take an Einstein to look at the world today and come to the conclusion that God doesn't exist, He is sadistic, or for some reason things are not the way He wants them to be. Because I know that God exists and that He is good, I also know the last of these options must be true. There is some disconnect between heaven and earth, and if that divide is not on God's side, then it must be on ours.

Too many of us as Christians are ineffective in our missions because of this very disconnect. We are not plugged into the heavenly headquarters that is trying to coordinate our individual part in God's overall strategies and campaigns. Too many "generals" are doing their own thing rather than doing God's thing. Too many foot soldiers are doing little or nothing at all. Too few are getting in on the big conversation that is going on in God's throne room in which all of the shortages, deficiencies, and exploitations of the earth are being troubleshot and addressed with the wisdom

of God. The answers are there, the long-term solutions are there, but there is nothing but a bunch of toddlers rolling around on the floor self-absorbed, bickering, and crying, too lost in their own worlds and shortcomings to listen in and translate God's instructions into programs of action and victory upon the earth.

Toddlers don't transform kingdoms—at least not in good ways. If we want to plug into the purposes, plans, and victory strategies of heaven, then we have to endure the rigors of the boot camp of prayer and pass its obstacle courses and challenges with flying colors.

## **A NEW MIND-SET FOR PRAYER**

While much of the religious world would have us think that God is a distant curmudgeon, stingy with His blessings and advice, that is simply not the picture Jesus painted by starting His teachings on prayer telling us to open with “our Father.” As if we didn't understand from those two words, He goes on to explain, “If you, being corrupted and selfish, know what is good to give to your children, how much more does God know what is good to give you?” (See Matthew 7:11.)

It's an analogy worth taking a little further.

If God is our Father and He is good, just what kind of parent is He? Scripture tells us that He loves us, that He created everything in the universe just so we would have a place where we could live and He could walk with us, that He is not short of resources with which to bless us, and that “every good gift and every perfect gift” (James 1:17) comes from Him. However, good parents never give their children anything that they know will harm them. They don’t spoil their children, nor do they pamper them or do anything that would encourage them to remain immature, selfish, and incapable of playing well with others. Good parents, like good coaches, want their children (or members of their team) to reach their full potential.

Success in life and victory on the field of competition depend on competence and excellence. Good parents don’t want their kids to grow up physically but continue living in the basement because their children don’t have self-discipline. They will never abandon their children, but they also want them to have lives, loves, and children of their own. God wants the same things for each of His children as well, but too many of us want to be coddled rather than disciplined.

Look for a moment at how the writer of Hebrews expresses this need to spiritually mature as God's sons and daughters:

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight

paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

—HEBREWS 12:5–14, ESV

If we kids are going to stay “in the family business,” we need to keep in close contact with God. We can’t just come by on Sundays for brunch; at the minimum we should be receiving daily instructions, if not hourly. If we are doing something truly world changing, then we should be communicating even more frequently than that. We should have regular planning meetings and strategy summits with God and one another. We should be in constant two-way communication about every detail of what needs to be done along the way. We should endure the times of silence in prayer as well as the times of overflowing revelation. We should also be partnering together in Dad’s work, “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, caus[ing] growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). It is only when we can do this that nothing shall be impossible for us.

Calling God “Father” demands a different type of relationship with Him. A god is worshiped and obeyed but rarely known or understood. A father is different. When we are children, we live in close union with our fathers—we live in his house, under his protection, and in his care. He is the one who gives us our weekly allowances, provides for us, and tucks us into bed at night. He talks with us and tries to answer our questions, not make life even more mysterious and obscure than it already is. He corrects us when we misstep.

As we submit to his authority and grow under it, he leads by virtue rather than demanding obedience like a dictator threatening punishment. He is no idle idol; he is a living, breathing father we touch base with every day and have access to every moment. As a loving daddy, he longs to provide our hearts’ desires but will never give us something he knows will hurt us.

Now think about going to your father when you want him to give you something. The way you ask matters even more than what you want, doesn’t it? Not only does a good father demand the “magic words” of *please* and *thank you*, but also if you ask casually, chances

are he won't think you are serious, so he won't give you what you want right away. He will wait to see if you ask again. He wants to see if you are willing to work for it and show yourself responsible enough to handle it. If a child asks disrespectfully or selfishly, how is the father going to respond? If the child hasn't spoken with him for some time and then calls up, spits out a list of things he or she wants or needs, then abruptly hangs up, how would an earthly father respond? If even earthly fathers know that giving children something when they are disrespectful is bad for them, how much more does our heavenly Father know it?

He also does not want to give you something you cannot handle. He is not going to give a six-year-old a car, nor is he going to give a sixteen-year-old a car until that child gets a license and proves he or she can be safe on the road. Sometimes God's answer is as much in the nature of the asker as in the asking. As Spider-Man's uncle told him, "With great power comes great responsibility." Would a good father ever give great power to someone who shows no responsibility?

This is the maturing process that happens in prayer. Sometimes we ask, and in return we are asked to do

something rather than receive an immediate answer. Is this a no? Not really. It is more of a “let’s give it some time and we will see.” After all, is there any child who has never been told by his father, “Let’s wait until you are a little older before we think about that”? There are so many things God wants to give, but until we mature in the faith and in our character enough to show that we can handle these gifts, it would be irresponsible for Him to do so.

God doesn’t give mixed blessings, for in Him “there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). There is no dark side to God’s gifts—there is no apparent blessing that will ultimately turn into a curse. However, if we stay in close contact with Him and on the course He sets before us, there will be nothing we can’t ultimately accomplish. There is no guarantee of blessing in the disconnect, however. When we go it alone, we set our own limits on what the grace of God can do in our lives, just as the Israelites did. (See Psalm 78:41.)

Peter also speaks of this growing up process as we continually present ourselves to God in prayer: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand



of God, that He may exalt you in *due time*, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:6–7, emphasis added). When is *due time*? It is when we are mature enough for God to promote us into our next phase of responsibility and leadership authority without our childishness derailing the blessing.

Friends, it’s time to grow up.

## **THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM**

Do you have a dream from God that people have told you is impossible to realize? If you are not getting power from God to live every day in that dream, then you are living in your own strength, not God’s. If you’re not actively aware of your shortcomings in accomplishing what God has put on your heart and not seeking Him daily for the wisdom and character to see it come into fruition, then what are you doing? Worldly wisdom will never right the world system. Only the wisdom and power of heaven can do that!

Prayer is the conduit to whatever we need to turn this world upside right, because it is in prayer that we become the children of God—by getting in step with the leadership of the Holy Spirit: “For as many as are

led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). How do people know you are a child of God? They see evidence that you are led by His Spirit, which gives way to miraculous things that happen around you.

That is why the apostle Paul told us we needed to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). You can't be led by someone you never hear from or take the time to talk with.

In his book *Just Courage*, Gary Haugen speaks of the calling and work of Mother Teresa: “Mother Teresa said that she couldn't imagine doing her work for more than thirty minutes without prayer. Do you and I have work that we can't imagine doing for thirty minutes without prayer?”<sup>4</sup> If we don't truly have instruction and strength from heaven for what we are doing periodically throughout the day, then who are we really working for? If we don't rely on God's abilities and wisdom every minute of every day to accomplish the tasks before us, whose strength are we operating under? Do we really think we can work without God's incredible power to overcome the problems our world faces? If it is something we can accomplish without needing to pray every thirty minutes or so, if we can in essence do it in our

own strength and wisdom, are we really striving to accomplish anything that significant?

After being baptized by John, the first message Jesus preached was on what the kingdom of God is all about:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.

—LUKE 4:18-19

Today poverty still cripples the vast majority of the nations of our world. There are still people who go to bed hungry every night and who have no clean water to drink. Because of this, their children are often sick, and many don't live past the age of five. Selfishness and oppressive circumstances still break families, lives, and hearts every day. Slavery and sex trafficking are more prevalent today than ever in the history of the world—and much of it involves children. Sickness, disease, and disabilities are still not a thing of the past. Murder and

religious, racial, political, and economic oppression still ravage neighborhoods, nations, and continents. Then we still have friends and neighbors who don't know Jesus. Christ came to do much that still has not been done.

In John 17, which records Jesus's high priestly prayer, Christ prays that everything God made available to Him while He was on the earth would be made available to us: His glory, His power, His love. Look for a moment at the end of that prayer:

I do not pray for these alone [the disciples], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [that means you and me]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Father, I desire that they also whom You

gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

—JOHN 17:20–26

In this prayer, there are further clues for us about tapping into all God has for us through prayer. We will discuss several of them in later chapters: that we would be one with each other as we become one with Jesus, that we would know His glory and power and see it manifested upon the earth, and that we would exude His love so that everything we set our hands to will prosper.

The bottom line is that there is no way to be an effective Christian if you do not have a regular time of prayer and Bible reading for at least a half hour every day. As members of His family, we have the right to go to our Father and ask for His plans, strategies, and resources to fulfill our mission, assignments, and

purpose on the earth. Prayer is the conduit that not only reveals the will of God for our individual lives, but also helps make us the people we need to be to do the impossible on the earth. It's time to plug into that power like we never have before.

Prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Ghost can teach us. . . . Pray for prayer—pray till you can pray.

—CHARLES H. SPURGEON<sup>5</sup>