



## WHEN WE PRAY

By Tauren Wells

It takes faith to pray. Faith is the foundation on which we build our knowledge of the reality of God. Faith is the currency of heaven, and prayer is the means by which we exchange sorrow for joy, ashes for beauty, and spiritual deadness for supernatural power. Great prayers reveals great faith, and great faith releases great prayers. Join me in learning more about prayer, its meaning, and its importance. I look forward to going on this journey with you! -Tauren Wells.....

### WHEN WE PRAY / Day 1

#### **Hebrews 11:6 NRSV**

*“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”*

#### **Matthew 13:31-32**

*“He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.””*

#### **Matthew 17:17-20**

*“Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.””*

#### **Mark 11:23**

*“Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.”*

## **Hebrews 11:6**

*“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”*

Show me a **praying person**, and I'll show you a person full of faith!

Before we talk about prayer, we must first address faith. In fact, the prayers we pray say a lot about the faith we possess. It takes faith to pray. **FAITH IS THE FOUNDATION** on which we build our knowledge of the reality of God. Faith is the currency of heaven, and *prayer is the means by which we exchange sorrow for joy, ashes for beauty, and spiritual deadness for supernatural power.*

When we attempt to fulfill ourselves by placing our faith in anything other than God, we always come up empty. Instead of praying and receiving the joy of the Lord as an outflow of our relationship with Jesus, we try to purchase joy and peace by other means. Life becomes one social escapade after another—buying as much stuff as our credit card limit will allow, hanging out with friend after friend after friend, filling our lives with shallow relationships and meaningless things—and all the while, *true joy and real peace and genuine companionship and lasting satisfaction are waiting to be found in an intimate relationship with Jesus, a relationship which is initiated and sustained by faith.*

Jesus speaks of faith as a “grain of mustard seed.” In this parable about the mustard seed, Jesus is sharing an important idea with us: **faith begins in seed form.** Faith in God is planted in the soil of our hearts and cultivated by the Spirit of God, and over time, it produces joy, peace, humility, fulfillment, power, and every other rich quality of the character of God. Faith is the source of these blessings, and prayer is the way that the source gets into the soil.

Some people do not feel inclined to pray because often times, prayer just looks like a seed. Nothing too thrilling about a seed, right? But through the eyes of faith, we don't just see our prayers for what they are when we're praying them; we see the potential of what they can become when God answers them! *Great prayer reveals great faith, and great faith releases great prayers.* Great faith isn't measured in magnitude but in our resoluteness to believe God against all odds.

Jesus tells the disciples *to have faith in God and to speak to mountains without any doubt in their hearts.* Perhaps instead of seeds of faith, you've had seeds of doubt and fear planted in your heart. **Pray for the Spirit of God to uproot those things today and activate your faith through prayer.**

## WHEN WE PRAY / Day 2

### Proverbs 3:6

*“In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”*

I have often heard it said, in one way or another, that prayer is good but that ultimately you have to do something. Although I completely agree with that statement, I have to admit that in my own life, I’m typically very good at “doing something,” even while the track record of my prayer life is dismal. From my perspective, we are quick to act and slow to pray when it ought to be that we are quick to pray so that our activity is directed by the clarity and understanding we receive when **God aligns our hearts with His.**

Now, I’m no car junkie, and I know very little about car maintenance, but I do know that proper alignment is essential to keeping a vehicle moving in the right direction without constantly pulling one way or the other. In the same way, alignment is integral to the life of the believer. **Prayer is about aligning our heart’s preferences with God’s will.**

When Jesus teaches the disciples to pray, he begins by saying, “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, they will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” Notice that **before we petition God** to meet our daily needs or to forgive our sins, **we align ourselves** with the glory of God and His will for His kingdom.

In your journey today, do you feel your soul pulling to the left or the right? Is your life full of activity but without clear direction? **Seek God in consistent prayer, and He will align your steps with His purpose for your life.**

## WHEN WE PRAY / Day 3

### Job 42:10

*“And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”*

### 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*“Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.”*

Today, I have two questions for you...

The first is a question Pastor Tim Rutledge asked me years ago: *"If God answered the prayers you've been praying, would it change anyone else's world but your own?"*

The next is a question God put on my heart: *How much of God's miraculous power are we unable to experience because we never pray prayers that are bigger than us?*

Now of course God is concerned with the details of our lives, and what a glorious truth that is! But He's much more concerned with His kingdom, will, and glory being expressed through our lives as ***we activate His power through our prayers on behalf of others.***

In the world in which we live, with the deep issues and problems we face as people, we often look to governments, kings, policies, presidents, and world systems to cure the symptoms of the spiritual depravity present in humanity. *The truth is, we will always come up short hoping to cure the ills of society with man-made systems.* There are many strongholds that dominate our culture. We often point to a people group or a person on which to place all the blame for the issues of our culture. However, *the Bible teaches us that it is never merely a person—"flesh and blood"—but spirits—"principalities and powers"—that we actually fight (Ephesians 6:12).*

***Spiritual issues require spiritual solutions. The answer to spiritual strongholds is prayer.***

Prayer will do more than politics, protests, or even pulpits. Practical solutions are good and necessary to manage symptoms, but they are ultimately inadequate in overcoming them.

Who and what can you pray for today beyond your own immediate circumstances and dreams? How about praying for the several thousand victims of human-trafficking? **Pray** that God would expose the deeds of evil people and bring rescue to those held captive. How about praying for presidents, kings, and countries? **Pray** that God would grant godly leadership, justice, and harmony in various places all over the world. How about **praying** for that girl in your class or that co-worker at your job? Perhaps they need encouragement and hope.

**Pray prayers beyond the scope of your own life, and watch what God will do in your own life.**

#### WHEN WE PRAY / Day 4

**James 5:17**

*"Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth."*

**1 John 5:14**

*“And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”*

### **Joshua 10:12-13**

*“On the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the Lord; and he said in the sight of Israel, “Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.” And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in midheaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.”*

### **1 Kings 18:30-39**

*“Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come closer to me”; and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down; Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, “Israel shall be your name”; with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.” Then he said, “Do it a second time”; and they did it a second time. Again he said, “Do it a third time”; and they did it a third time, so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water. At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.””*

I read a book several years ago that transformed the way I prayed. It’s called Circle Maker by Mark Batterson, and now I read it every year. In it, Batterson emphasizes the point that **in order to see God work in a specific way in our lives, we must pray specifically; conversely, general prayers get general answers.**

I know that there have been times that I’ve prayed very generic, vague prayers—prayers like, “Lord, touch my life and lead me in your ways.” Not a bad prayer, right? And that’s a good place to start perhaps, but admittedly it isn’t a very specific prayer. A much more powerful approach to this prayer would be, **“Lord, you see** what’s happening right now in my life. I am being faced with the difficult decision to relocate due to my job. **Align my heart with your will. Examine the motivation of my heart** for wanting to follow this opportunity and relocate. **Help me see the**

*impact* of this move on my life and family five or ten years down the road. *Give me clarity* about the right decision to make. **Your Word instructs me** not to lean on my own understanding and to submit all my ways to you. So **I submit** this opportunity to you. If this is what I should do, make the path plain before me. If it's not the right direction, close the door before me. **I place it in your hands and trust** you to be my guide." That direct prayer will often yield a direct answer from God.

There was a time in my own life when the band I was in really needed a better touring vehicle than the 15-passenger van we'd put 300,000 miles on. I began to pray specifically for a Mercedes Sprinter, built out for touring. I prayed for the finances to purchase it and for the right relationships to make it happen. I reminded God, (as if He forgets), that He called me to spread the Gospel and that I would need his provision to continue. Well, after praying that prayer consistently for several weeks, we found a few different Sprinters we considered purchasing but none of them were exactly what we needed, and we didn't have the funds for a down payment anyway. Then I recalled a business owner that I had connected with that told me if I ever really needed anything to let him know. I prayed about calling to ask him for advice about how to purchase such an expensive vehicle. After several days of prayer and talking myself into calling him, I finally picked up the phone. I shared our situation and asked him if he had any ideas. His reply to me was, "How much would you need to put down on that?" I ballparked an amount and he replied, "Who do I make the check out to?"

WHAT?! Talk about an answer to prayer. Prayer pointed me to the person who already had a 'yes' in his heart for this request. I still thank God for that man and his open-handed generosity on that day. But the story didn't end there. We were in a church green room that day getting ready to play a show that evening. I couldn't contain my excitement and had to celebrate this answer to prayer with a lap around the church followed by a brief moment of busting into the Running Man. Don't judge me. Seeing my excitement, one of the promoters of the event became curious about the commotion I was making and asked about it, so I started unpacking this miracle. Come to find out, he worked for a Mercedes manufacturer and told us that he could get us a Sprinter at COST! I was in the right room, on the right day to meet the right guy that God would use to help us continue to do what we were doing to reach the next generation. A few months later, we were traveling in a custom Sprinter with five bunks, a television, a microwave, air conditioning, the whole shebang! A specific prayer yielded a specific answer.

Let me clarify that Jesus isn't some "genie in a bottle." But ***when we make His kingdom our priority and when our lives revolve around His will, the desires of our heart will align with His and He will make a way for us to live out what He has called us to do.***

**Could your prayers be more specific today?**

## **WHEN WE PRAY / Day 5**

### **Daniel 6:10**

*"Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously."*

### **Matthew 26:36-46**

*"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.""*

My father-in-law recently pointed out to me a passage of Scripture regarding the call to pray that really struck a chord in my heart. Matthew 26: 36-46 recounts the instance when Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples to pray. We find that at a certain point, Jesus instructs the majority of the disciples to stay back while asking Peter, James, and John to come with Him deeper into the garden to pray. Then the Bible says that Jesus "went a little further to pray."

There is something to be said about the example of Jesus illustrated in those five words: ***“a little further to pray”***. ***When God desires to take us further in our purpose, He calls us to go further in our prayer life.*** And in order to go a little further in our purpose, ***we must purpose to go a little further in our prayers. Sometimes prayer requires an extra effort or a greater intention; sometimes it needs to be elevated in our priorities.***

A friend once told me that if you don't have a time and place to pray, it won't happen, and I think he was right. Having a set time and place or an appointment on the calendar helps in making our prayer life more consistent. ***Sometimes when God wants to take us “a little further,” He calls us to change not the length of our prayer time but the consistency of it.***

***Our prayer life is not the litmus test for our spiritual discipline but rather the indicator of the health of our relationship with God.*** Relationships are built and sustained by constant communication. Of course, God already knows the details of our lives, but ***there is an expressed dependence upon God when we invite Him into those details.*** The man or woman who does not pray is essentially telling God, “I've got this,” revealing alarming pride and self-sufficiency.

***God desires to take us beyond what we can do in our own strength in order to fulfill His purpose in our lives.*** But truthfully, we can only journey in our calling insofar as we've paved the distance in prayer.

***God equips us for our destiny in the moments we share with Him in prayer.***

**How consistent is your prayer life? Do you have a designated time and place to pray?**

## WHEN WE PRAY / Day 6

**Jude 1:20**

***“But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit;”***

**Romans 8:26**

***“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”***



As maturing believers, **we must learn to pray “in the Spirit.”** *This means not simply praying under the guidance of our own small intellect but allowing the Spirit to actually lead us in prayer.* When I was growing up, church folks would call this “praying through.” I had one friend whose mom always encouraged him to pray until he had “prayed through.”

Now, there is incredible power in praying in the Spirit using our own words, speaking from our heart to God about our personal thoughts, desires, and petitions. These prayers are led by the power and unction of the Spirit of God, but they are still made in accordance with our own understanding. This is powerful and essential, but **there is another dimension of prayer that many believers seldom experience.**

In some circles this aspect of prayer is referred to as a prayer language; in others, it’s referred to as a baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is often evidenced by speaking in what the Bible calls “other tongues.”

Different denominations—and even different churches within the same denomination—can vary in how they interpret Scripture in regards to speaking in tongues or praying in the Spirit. The issue has become so convoluted that what the Bible actually says about praying in tongues is rarely addressed, and I think the result is that one of the beautiful gifts of God is absent from the prayer lives of many believers.

Personally speaking, the greatest moves of God I’ve experienced in my own heart and life were when I **moved from praying in my own understanding to praying in the Spirit.**

I would describe this as ***being truly broken before God in prayer and worship.*** Even if you’ve never experienced this dimension of prayer or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, **it is the promise and gift of God to all believers.** Find a place to pray and ***ask God to baptize you in His Spirit,*** speaking in other tongues just as so many believers in the New Testament experienced regularly. ***You will never be the same.***

Pastor and author Mark Batterson says it like this, “Don’t just pray for, pray through.”

***What do the following Scriptures lead you to believe about praying in the Spirit?***

**1 Corinthians 14:14-15**

*“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive. What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also.”*

**Acts 2:38**

*“Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

## WHEN WE PRAY / Day 7

### Luke 4:1-2

*“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.”*

### Exodus 34:28

*“He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.”*

### Daniel 10:3

*“I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks.”*

Spoiler alert: I’m not really a foodie. I know, I know, it’s disappointing. I apparently have the taste buds of a picky 4th grader. On the flip side, I need to eat, and I have a tendency to get hangry if I don’t (hangry = hungry + angry)! With that info, you can probably deduce that fasting isn’t exactly my favorite part of the Christian life. However, I think that God intended **fasting** to be just that—**a denial of our temporal pleasure to reset our appetite for what is most satisfying: God.**

Fasting is a necessity in the life of a believer, but many Christians have a misunderstanding about what fasting is and what it accomplishes. It’s actually a very simple concept that can profoundly affect our lives.

Many view fasting as some kind of devotional currency they can use to get what they want from God. That’s fake news. At its core, fasting is about bringing the prayer of “less of me and more of you” to life. ***Fasting is about the denial of self, the shifting of priorities, and the acknowledgment of what it means to hunger not just for mere morsels of food but for the life-changing presence God. It is a resolute course of action anointed by His Spirit, not by our will.***

***When was the last time you fasted? Could God be calling you to the next step of regular fasting?***

