

THE ONLY ANSWER IS

PRAYER

AN INTIMATE WALK

WITH **GOD** INTO

THE MIRACULOUS

WILLIAM McDOWELL

WITH JASON McMULLEN & CALEB GRANT

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Preface

For 21 weeks at Deeper Fellowship, God would not let us leave the subject of prayer. We had been experiencing a move of God, and we sensed that He wanted to prepare our fellowship to see it spread throughout our region and around the world. We knew that if God can do it anywhere, He can do it everywhere. But there has never been a move of God without prayer, and we knew that the healings and miracles had occurred not only because God had chosen for us to see revival but also because of our prayers. God began to tell us that there is more—more miracles, more of His presence—and at the same time, He began to awaken us to another dimension of prayer.

The revelation God poured out challenged and excited us, but more than anything, it changed us. We felt strongly that the word God had spoken to us was not just for Deeper Fellowship, so we adapted our messages into this book.

Pastors Caleb Grant and Jason McMullen and I all contributed to this project. Jason and Caleb are two of my closest friends, and God uses them constantly to deepen my understanding of His Word. This message has been no exception. Unless otherwise noted, I am generally the one talking. But

this teaching was developed through much fellowship, study and prayer among the three of us, and it reflects revelations that God gave to all of us.

The unity in which God allowed us to deliver these messages is especially evident in the teaching on the divine council. We unpack this important revelation over the course of three chapters. If we can understand our authority and the access we have been given as sons and daughters of God who are seated with Christ in heavenly places, it will revolutionize our prayer life.

And that is our prayer, our purpose for releasing this book. We want to see you awakened to prayer so that you can experience the life-changing power of an intimate relationship with God. Intimacy is the key to your authority in prayer because when you learn to pray from a place of abiding, your prayer life will radically change. You will see answers to prayer because you will be praying the heart of God.

This is not hype. This is what we have seen happen at Deeper Fellowship. We have seen people move into a new dimension in prayer, and we pray the same will happen for you as you read these pages.

God is inviting us into a deeper relationship. He is inviting us to greater intimacy. He is inviting us into a place of greater authority and agreement with heaven to see the plans and purposes of God become a reality on the earth.

We believe God wants to release a history-making revival that will touch the globe. But God never intended for there to be divine orchestration without human participation. And that human participation is called prayer.

—William McDowell

1



Don't Just Want It— Pray for It

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

John 15:1–2 NKJV

My prayer life has gone through many stages. I (Pastor Jason) used to struggle in prayer, but I no longer struggle. Prayer used to be a duty, something I would dread, but now it has become a delight. My hope for you as you read this book is that prayer would no longer be a duty, an obligatory spiritual discipline, but that it would instead become a delight—something you want to do.

Why? Because nothing is going to happen in your life apart from prayer.

No move of God has ever happened apart from prayer. Second Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) says, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Now, in recent days this Scripture has taken on a whole new meaning, but suffice it to say that God responds to prayer! Prayer changes things.

Elijah prayed, and it did not rain for three and a half years. Then he prayed again, and the heavens opened up and rain fell on the land (see James 5:17–18). Daniel prayed, and the answer was such a threat to the enemy that he exerted himself to block it in the heavenlies (see Daniel 10). In Luke 18, Jesus told His disciples a story about a persistent widow to show them that they should never give up in prayer. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 that we should pray without ceasing. This is just a sampling of Scriptures that illustrate the power and importance of prayer.

The Bible makes it clear that prayer is more than important; it is vital. But some believers treat it as something peripheral. They do not treat it as something they should prioritize. That is at least partly because they do not have enough revelation about prayer.

The three of us believe God wants to move His people to another level in prayer. He is calling us to do more than talk about prayer; He is calling us to be *marked* by prayer.

Intercession is not reserved for a select few. It is not supposed to be relegated to a group of old women who meet at church on Thursday nights. We are all called to be intercessors,

with Jesus being the Chief Intercessor. The Bible says that Jesus lives to make intercession for us (see Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25). That is what He is doing right now. Please do not miss this: Jesus is our model for everything, including prayer. He never asks us to do something He Himself has not done. He models what He teaches. He is in a posture of prayer for us. And what Jesus is doing, we also are supposed to do. We have been called to pray.

When I look at what is happening in the world around us and wonder what believers can do about it, I am convinced that prayer is the only correct posture for the Church. I am convinced that the only answer is prayer.

Whenever I have been working on my computer for long periods of time, I begin to slouch. (Confession: As I am working on this book, I am doing it.) My wife is good about coming by and lovingly reminding me that my posture is incorrect and that slouching is not good for my back. She helps me remember that if I want to avoid back problems in the future, I need to correct my posture. She loves me. In a similar way, because the Church has been slouching in the place of prayer, we have begun to experience a host of problems because of it. Our slouching looks like slacking, and it is this prayerless posture that is to blame for many of the problems we see in the Church today. We have tried to correct our posture through many other means, but unfortunately there just is no substitute power for a Church on her knees.

The world does not need a Church that is committed to politics; it needs a Church that is committed to prayer. Sometimes I think the Body of Christ has its *Ps* wrong. We are worried about playing politics when we need to be concerned about praying. God is looking for a praying Church. He

is not looking for a Church that has all the right connections and all the right political positions. He is looking for a Church that will humble itself and pray.

I believe God is calling His people to pray because He is positioning us for the greatest outpouring of His Spirit the world has ever known. We have seen some amazing things at Deeper Fellowship, but I believe God wants to do even greater things here, in your life and in the Body of Christ around the world. But there is a condition. We must pray for it. We have to do more than want God to move in our lives, our families, our nation and the world. We must actively seek Him in prayer.

If you truly want something in the Kingdom of God, you must pray for it. The Bible says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7 NKJV). Ask, seek and knock—that is the posture of the believer. We are to be perpetually asking, perpetually seeking and perpetually knocking. We do that in the place of prayer. So if you say you want God to do something in your life, my next question to you is, Are you praying for it? I am not asking if you want it. I am asking if you are praying for it.

It is time to pray. It is time to seek the face of God. It is time to get into position. Why? Because God is about to birth something in the earth, and He needs people who are committed to praying for it to manifest. There is no divine orchestration without human participation.

Confront Yourself

God has something He is trying to get to you. He has a measure of blessing He wants to pour out on you, and He

does not want anything to block it, not even you yourself. God does not want you to drown in an ocean of unanswered prayer; He wants you to experience His best and to swim in the sea of fulfillment.

The Bible says, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12 NKJV). It is only natural that if your prayers consistently go unanswered, you will begin to wonder if there is a problem. Think of it this way: If you send a text message to someone over and over, and your friend never responds, you start wondering if something is wrong with the relationship. That is kind of how unanswered prayer begins to seem. When you pray to God and begin to wonder why He does not respond, you are doing exactly what God wants you to do. His silence is meant to help you understand that something is wrong, so you will check your relationship with Him.

God does not want you to drown in an ocean of unanswered prayer; He wants you to experience His best and to swim in the sea of fulfillment.

Welcome God's Pruning

Blockages stop the flow of answered prayer, but God has a way of dealing with them. In Scripture, Jesus called this process pruning.

Pruning is the process of removal and refinement. And that is what God wants to do as it relates to your prayer life. He wants to remove the bad theology and bad habits, and refine your passion. God wants to prune your prayer life.

Jesus said,

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit,

and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:1–5

He is the vine; we are the branches. And notice the verse that says, “He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.” The pruning process does not stop once you reach a particular level in God. It does not stop once you see a specific prayer answered. No, the pruning process continues, because Jesus is after more fruitfulness. You may say, “Wow, I am producing so much fruit in my life.” But Jesus says, “Yes, you are, so I am going to prune you.” He does that because He knows you have the potential for more.

As you read this book, God wants to prune your prayer life. He intends to refine you and remove some hindrances to answered prayer so you can produce even more fruit. He does not start by changing your behavior. Why not? Because your life does not start with your behavior. Your life starts with your heart. The Bible says, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34 NKJV). Where does prayer come from? It comes from the heart. So God knows that if He deals with the heart (the unseen), the seen will take care of itself. Your future is in your heart. Your

destiny is in your heart. God wants to circumcise your heart as it relates to your prayer life.

Again, pruning is a process of removal and refinement. I hope you know that all growth is not good growth. A tumor is a growth. I would concede that a tumor that is growing in my body is not good growth. There are a lot of churches that are growing. But not all of that growth is good growth.

The job of the gardener is to remove and refine things so the plants can grow in accordance with his vision for them. That is what God does. He prunes and refines us so we will grow in accordance with His will.

The Master Gardener knows exactly what He wants you to look like, and He shapes you and makes you perfectly symmetrical, perfectly rounded, perfectly fruitful. He shapes you so that you not only look good, but you will also produce the maximum amount of fruit. He is not after growth as much as He is after fruitfulness. In the Body of Christ, we often judge our measure in God by how much we are growing. “I am growing in my faith.” “I am growing in my walk.”

Great. But the real question is, “Am I being fruitful?”

Reproduction Means You Are Healthy

Fruitfulness means you have the ability to reproduce yourself, and reproduction means you are healthy. Ultimately, God is the opener of wombs. That is why we pray for people struggling with infertility, because we believe God can give life to that womb. When a couple cannot have children, they may go to a doctor to see if there is some level of unhealth in them. When couples struggling to conceive seek out medical assistance, the doctors run diagnostic tests

in an attempt to understand how they ended up in that situation. The doctor may conclude that nothing is wrong, but he or she will not know that until the diagnostics have been run.

Just as a doctor will begin to look for signs of unhealth when two people cannot reproduce, so does God when we do not bear fruit. If you want more than growth, if you want to be fruitful, if you want to see revival not just here but everywhere, you must be able to reproduce. And to reproduce, you must become healthy.

But God is still saying, “You need to be pruned.” We have seen people get saved, and then God is saying, “Prune them!” We may begin to celebrate because we have seen somebody healed of lupus. But then God breaks in and says, “Prune them!” Why? Because He is not just after growth; He is after fruitfulness—maximum fruitfulness.

God knows your makeup. He knows not only what you have produced but also what you are capable of producing, so He will prune you to the level of your potential. Why? Because He does not want you to miss what He divinely designed you to accomplish. And He always seems to start with your prayer life, because you will never be larger than the size of your prayers. The outcome of your life will never be more fruitful than your prayer life.

God starts with your prayer life because nothing in the Kingdom happens until something is spoken. There are things that God has spoken over you but you have not come into agreement with. How do I know this? Because you say you want it, but you are not praying for it. This is why God, by His Spirit, wants to prune your prayer life so that you will have maximum fruitfulness.

You may not enjoy every minute of the process, but your loving God wants to take your prayer life to a higher level. Are you on board with Him?

Another Dimension

I believe that another level of prayer is getting ready to hit your life and catalyze you into your destiny—that it will literally push you into your destiny.

The apostle Paul wrote, “And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we do not know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words” (Romans 8:26). This verse shows it is not you praying to God; it is God praying through you. This is that other level of prayer—when God prays through you. But in order for Him to do that, you must be pruned so the Holy Spirit can attach Himself to your prayers. The Bible says the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. The Greek word translated *helps* in that verse is *synantilambanomai*, and it means “to lay hold along with.”¹

The Holy Spirit wants to make sure that your motives are right, your marriage is right and every other thing is accounted for, because He does not attach Himself to unholiness. He wants your prayer life to be right because He wants to attach Himself to your prayers. And whatever God says through you cannot be stopped. Look at creation. When God spoke, change started happening: The darkness separated from the light, the land separated from the waters, the land produced vegetation and animals, and the seas brought forth sea creatures. Why? Because God spoke. In the dimension of prayer, when we speak out something, it is not us speaking

it; it is God. And if God speaks it out, it is going to happen. He says, “Let there be . . . ,” and it happens.

Your future is not about striving. Your future is about alignment—aligning your heart. You can be sure that as you align your heart, God is going to attach Himself to your prayers. And as God begins to pray through you and for you, watch out! Things you thought were impossible will begin to happen. Things you thought were held up permanently will begin to manifest themselves after all.

Just think about this. We do not know how to pray. But the Holy Spirit says, “I do!” So He comes alongside you to help you pray. He literally becomes your prayer partner. And the Bible says, “If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you” (Matthew 18:19). There is no better prayer partner than the Holy Spirit. And if God grabs hold of your prayers, when the Holy Spirit begins to pray His will back to the Father, nothing is going to stop that.

We do not know how to pray. But the Holy Spirit says, “I do!” So He comes alongside you to help you pray.

This kind of Spirit-driven, Spirit-born, Spirit-led prayer is commanded by the apostle Paul, who wrote: “Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere” (Ephesians 6:18). This is the preferred posture for the believer—that we co-labor and cooperate with God in prayer in order to see the fruition of what He wants to happen in the earth.

Through your prayers, God wants to release His plan for the earth. Through your prayers, He wants to release His plans for your life, your family, your city, your nation and

even this world. So the question is not, “What do you want God to do?” but rather, “Are you praying for it?”

Do not just stand there wanting it—start praying for it.

Your Prayer Life Is Being Unlocked

For some of us, prayer has not been a delight because we have been trying to do in our own strength what God intended for us to do with His aid. There is no part of the Christian life that you have been called, destined or commanded to live out without the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit, and that includes your prayer life.

Part of why we struggle in prayer is because we do not include our Prayer Partner. But I believe this is part of what is being unlocked in this season—God giving us heavenly assistance and divine enabling to pray as never before.

We talk about the Spirit’s enablement when it comes to salvation, the miraculous and healing. It is obvious to us that these things are not possible without the Spirit. But how often do we talk about the enablement of the Spirit when it comes to prayer? In Romans 6:10–11, the Bible tells us that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives inside of us. He is there, ready to provide heavenly assistance to you and to me so that we can effectively pray the mind and will of God.

The Bible also says we cannot come to Him unless He draws us (see John 6:44). In other words, it is only because of God that you want more of Him. It is because of Him that you desire to do the right thing. In this season as God is unlocking your prayer life, you are going to *desire* to get on your knees and pray in the Spirit. Why? Because He wants to bring some things to birth through you. He wants to bring

radical change in your family, in your church, in your city and in your region, and He will do that through your prayers.

Amazingly, God is drawing you into the place of prayer because He wants you to have what He wants for you more than you want it. The way He brings things about on the earth is through the fervent, Spirit-led prayers of His sons and daughters. That includes you.

He is calling you into a deeper place of prayer because He loves you so much that He is not going to let you miss what He has for you.

God Hears and Answers Prayer

Many people get discouraged in prayer because they are not confident that God actually hears them. Or even if they believe that God hears their prayers, they doubt that He will answer them.

If you have ever struggled to believe God hears you and will respond when you pray, remember Romans 8:32: “Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else?”

Additionally, the apostle John shows us in 1 John 5:13–15 that the foundation of our confidence in prayer is our secured future. At first glance, the order we find there is a bit awkward, but I believe that as we labor to look, we will be empowered to see. John is grounding our prayer life in an unshakeable reality. The following understanding should encourage you: If you believe you have eternal life, then you should also believe God hears your prayers and that, because He hears you, He will respond. The lesser is contained in the greater.

If God gave you eternal life, why would He not hear your prayers? If He gave you eternal life, why would He not respond when you pray? If you can believe Him for the ultimate thing—eternal life—why can you not trust Him with your future on earth? If you believe your future in heaven is secure, do not be unsettled about earth. God has given you the ultimate thing, so why would He not give you the lesser thing? If your future in heaven is secure, then your life on earth is settled. God is saying, “Pray to Me about anything, and I am going to respond. Because I have already responded regarding the ultimate thing, you can count on Me for the lesser things.”

Sometimes the problem is that we do not know when God will respond, and since we cannot pinpoint when He will answer, we falter in our belief that He will answer at all. This is when we find ourselves worshipping our timeline instead of the Father of time. It is true that we must leave to God the question of “when.” But the question of “if” has already been settled. He is going to do it. Do not let not knowing His timing discourage you into prayerlessness.

Have confidence in God. The apostle John wrote that we know He hears us, then we have confidence (see 1 John 5:15). And when we have confidence, we will never stop praying because we know God’s desire to respond is based on what He did two thousand years ago. It is not based on the quality of your prayer in the present. It is based on what Jesus did for you two thousand years ago.

As humans, we often start with the lesser and build to the greater. God worked the opposite way. He secured the ultimate thing to give us confidence that He can give us every other lesser thing. We may struggle with the lesser things, but

they are based on the greater. So if we do not question the greater thing—our eternal security—that means we should not struggle with the fact that God hears us and will answer our prayers.

Your answer is already in your mouth. Do not stop at wanting it. Pray about it. God hears and will answer your prayers.

PRAYER

Father in heaven, I know that nothing happens apart from prayer. I admit that I have neglected to pray even when I felt impressed to do so. I want to turn a corner and learn anew how to pray. Help me to give prayer top priority in my life. Help me to do more than just read about prayer. Give me the energy and the words so that I can really pray, daily and even hourly. Holy Spirit, You pray the best. Teach me and show me why, what, when, where and how to pray, and keep me going strong. I pray this in the powerful name of Jesus, Amen.