



## The Power of Prayer

Prayer is powerful. It is powerful because of the all-power god who answers prayers.

Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

Throughout the Scriptures, we see God's people praying and God answering their prayers. We read passages telling us the importance of prayer and passages exhorting us to pray. In fact, Jesus himself left us a very important lesson on prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. He also modeled a consistent prayer life to His disciples. Therefore, I believe it is worth the effort if we give our best time and effort to take prayer seriously. The compelling evidences that God answers prayer yesterday, today and tomorrow are too much to ignore. (Hebrews 13:8)

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ON THE POWER OF PRAYER

"Be still and know that I am God." These are the very words that were clearly spoken to my right ear right after I said in my heart, "okay Lord, I will not stop serving you even if my wife dies."

Morning of October 26, 1990, my wife was admitted at the Los Banos Doctors Hospital in Laguna, Philippines. The OB/Gyne scheduled her for caesarean. She was six days past the due date. I was imagining that the baby probably thought life inside the womb was better that he decided to hang out a little longer. The problem, however, was that the baby stays longer inside the womb than necessary it will endanger his and his mom's life.

That morning, we were so excited to see God's blessing to our marriage. We were also conscious of the outcome of the surgery. We took a private room to have privacy from other patients as well as not to disturb them when friends and relative start visiting us especially the newborn baby.

At 7:30 a.m., they brought her to the operating room while I stayed behind. At the room by myself, I felt in my heart the sudden rush of joy and excitement of a brand new father. I started singing praise and worship songs as well as pray while waiting for the good news.

An hour later, there was a sudden knock at the door. I quickly opened the door excited to hear the good news. It was both good and bad news. Good news! It's a healthy baby boy. Bad news! The nurse told me that my wife has to undergo hysterectomy (removal of the uterus), that three liters of blood (3,000 cc) type AB is needed and that I need to sign the waiver giving permission for the surgery right away.

I was stunned and speechless. The bad news drowned the good news. I got the greatest shock of my life. I began to freeze and feel numb all over my whole being as I helplessly stood and listened to every instruction from the Nurse.

Before I signed the paper, I asked her, "Where I could I get the blood?" She said, "In Manila. We don't have it here." After I signed the paper, I asked her another question, "When is the blood needed?" She said, "Within an hour." I looked at my watch and it was 8:30 a.m. That means, the blood has to be available on or before 9:30 a.m.

One way trip from Los Banos to Manila is two hours. Looking at the best scenario, the earliest I could bring the blood for transfusion is within four to five hours. But the blood is needed in an hour.

Suddenly, I felt a truckload of burden. My wife's survival was placed in my hand. Bringing the blood in one hour, how could it be made possible?

I have no car and no resources to make it possible. I have to rely on public transportation. I don't even know where to go. On top of that, type AB blood is one of the most difficult blood types to find. I felt like I was forced to climb Mt. Everest barefooted.

Wasting no time, I immediately left the hospital to the bus stop. I was in extreme confusion and lost not knowing what to do. I felt so light and so alone. I felt like walking by myself in the middle of the desert with no one to turn to for help. Worst, as I look at this impossible mission given to me, my heart succumbed to the nagging thought of telling me that I will never see my wife again.

At that moment, I knew my mind was not praying because it was occupied with frustration and desperation. But inside my heart, there was the sound of a different struggle like the sound of waves pounding constantly against the rock. Back then, I don't know what it was. As I look back at the experience, I realized it was the Holy Spirit interceding for me with groans that words cannot express.

Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Arriving at the bus stop, I waited for a bus that came a few minutes later. It was packed but managed to squeeze myself in joining those standing in the aisle. The pressure within me kept on building up and became more intense every second. The bus was running like a turtle in the midst of a terrible traffic.

At this moment, I had an intense dialogue with God in my heart. I wasn't blaming Him of the situation. I was expressing to Him my frustrations, hurts, and sentiments of the ordeal that we're going through. In that dialogue, I was telling God in my heart that, perhaps, the time has come

for me to finally call myself off the pastoral ministry. However, deep within my heart, there was a gentle whisper telling me not to give up. This gentle voice of the Holy Spirit overruled my decision to quit. I still felt the frustration and the hurt. Nevertheless, I told God in my heart,

“Okay God, no matter what happen, I will not quit the pastoral ministry. If my wife won’t make it, I will accept it. I’ll bury her and I’ll resume my pastoral duty right away. I will not take even a day off.”

After making that commitment, God’s voice vividly and clearly spoke into my ear telling me these words, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Later on, I discovered that it is a passage from “Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”) My heart was flooded with the peace that went beyond understanding. It erased all doubts, fears, and desperation. That very moment, I knew in my heart with certainty that my wife will live. I can’t explain but the experience made me feel like my spirit was lifted out of my body to a restful place where the angels joyously and leisurely spend their time together.

11:30 a.m. I arrived in Manila. I immediately went to the Red Cross Station and asked them for type AB blood. It was not available so they me to go the commercial blood banks. At once, I went from one commercial blood bank after another until I have the blood I needed and rushed back to the hospital.

5:00 p.m. I was back and went straight to see my wife. I was completely relieved to see her alive. But my heart broke when I saw her extremely pale due to loss of blood.

The nurse took the blood and set it up for matching, a standard operating procedure before the transfusion. To my great disappointment, the blood I labored so hard to find didn’t match my wife’s blood. They found out, in the matching process, that her blood is not AB contrary to what she told them. (Her knowledge of her AB blood type came from the

result of the testing she had when she was in college and gave the information to her doctor.

Knowing the result, I suddenly felt extreme exhaustion and sat helplessly, But God's work kept on ringing in my mind, "Be still and know that I am God." Friends who learned the situation came over for spiritual, moral, and even financial support. Some of them volunteered to look for a type A blood, which was readily available. While waiting for the blood, I took the chance to look at the baby for the first time. He was peacefully and securely sleeping at the hospital's nursery room. As I was looking at him, a prayer from my heart went up to God.

"Lord please don't let this baby grow without experiencing the love of a real mother. Let my wife live, not for me but for the child's sake, in Jesus' name, Amen!"

5:40 p.m., the type A blood arrived and it matched my wife's blood type. 6:00 p.m., the transfusion was started and the day ended well.

The second day, the doctor told me that right after I left for Manila, my wife was bleeding profusely. Her blood pressure dropped from 110/90 to 60/40 during the surgery. Hence, the immediate need for a blood transfusion.

The doctor, acting upon the leading of the Holy Spirit I believe, started calling pastors and Christian friends around town asking for prayers. She also called her husband, who was then a Dean at the University of the Philippines at Los Banos. She asked him to gather all the artificial blood he could find from the pharmacies around town. To God be the Glory, he managed to get all the available artificial blood enough to sustain my wife until the real blood arrived. Some people call it coincidence but I call it divine arrangement as answer to prayers. The real blood was administered at time when the last bag of artificial blood was on its last few drops.

The blood transfusion was successful. But because of its delayed administration, the recovery process was badly affected. My wife was put under critical condition for 48 hours with two nurses assigned to closely monitor her condition at a very close interval.

On the third day, we felt better but the ordeal wasn't over yet. With her incision still fresh, my wife started shaking in the evening due to high fever. It was hard to ignore the presence of the spirit of death at the hospital that night.

Upon knowing this, the doctor instructed the nurse to draw blood from my wife early in the morning to conduct a blood test. While waiting for the result, she told us that if the result is vague, the only alternative would be for my wife to be transferred to an expensive hospital in Manila where blood could be cultured. Hearing this, our heart sank knowing that the current hospital bills had already depleted our funds. All the more if my wife is transferred to an expensive hospital when a much more expensive procedure.

Again, we prayed and God gave us the answer in Matthew 8:1-4. The passage tells us about a leper's experience who came to Jesus for healing and said, "Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean." Instantly, the leper was cleansed. This passage assured us in our heart that my wife doesn't have to be transferred to another hospital. The blood test will reveal the reason for my wife's fever and shaking. Sure enough, the following day, the result revealed that my wife acquired malaria from the blood given to her. She was given a high dose of medicine for malaria, an added medication but we felt a little bit lighter. My wife stayed in the same hospital.

The first three days at the hospital was quite an ordeal. Even as Christ stayed in the grave three days and three nights, we felt like we're also in the pit of death for three days and three nights.

On the fourth day, my wife's speedy and stable recovery started. I felt strengthened, relaxed, and victorious. I forgot the ordeal I've gone through. The joy of knowing that my wife was declared free from critical condition was overflowing.

On the seventh day, we were informed that my wife could check out the following day (8<sup>th</sup> day). This means, it's time to settle all the bills. The bills reached around P43000. The only money we had was P14000. But P16000 has been spent for medicines leaving us with only P8000 cash available. We cannot check out if bills are not fully paid and delay would mean additional bills (Philippine context). In this situation, God had proven once again that He is the God who provides. He made people generous towards us. We were able to pay the bills and checked out of the hospital on schedule.

Through this ordeal, I wanted to cry, worry, or panic. But I just couldn't. If I do, it would be awkward because it won't be natural.

What He said to me still rings in my heart every time I am reminded of the ordeal. The soothing, assuring, and strengthening words He gave me, as an answer to the prayers of my heart..."Be still, and know that I am God," continue to strengthen me even during the recent major surgery of my wife (March 26 –Removal of a football-size tumor from her abdomen fifteen years after her surgery).

Be still, and know that I am God."

How could I forget?

How could I ever forget the overwhelming peace that subdued and controlled the raging hurricane of struggles relentless beating against my heart?

How could I ever forget the invincible surge of power that warmed and strengthened my weakened and frozen faith?

How could I even forget the encompassing comfort that embraced my heart in the midst of suffering?

How could I forget the deep joy it kindled my soul knowing that death couldn't stand before His holy presence?

How could I ever forget the confidence it brought me, assuring me that Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, is in control?

How could I ever forget the voice of All-powerful, All-knowing, All-present God who answered my prayers?

Indeed, if we will only be still and listen to God, completely trusting that He indeed is God, no matter how hard and impossible the challenge that confronts us, we can overcome it because God answers prayers. (Written on 10:50 p.m. 9/19/95, Muntinlupa, Philippines)

## Answered Prayers in the Bible (Partial List)

Abraham	Genesis 20:17-18 Genesis 21:1-2
Eliezer (Abraham's chief servant)	Genesis 24
Isaac	Genesis 25:1
Jacob	Genesis 32:9-12
Moses	Exodus 8:30-31
Hannah	1 Samuel 1:10-19
David	Book of Psalms
Jabez	1 Chronicles 4:9-11
Elijah	1 Kings 17; James 5:17-18
Jesus	The Gospels
Tax Collector	Luke 18:9-14
Disciples	The Book of Acts



## **CONCLUSION:**

It my prayer that through this lesson, we will continue to be inspired to keep prayer as our first priority, our first course of action, if every decision we make, in every job we take, and in every option we choose.