



MIRACLES IN MOTION

STUDY 4 - PRAYING WITH POWER

Many of us believe that prayer changes things, that prayer changes us, and that God hears us when we pray. But stop and consider, for a moment, the words of a desperate father crying out to Jesus in Mark 9:24 ESV. *"I believe; help my unbelief!"* Our level of belief in the power of prayer (which is ultimately a belief in the power, presence, and person of God) often looks more like a classic mercury-filled thermometer than it does an on/off switch.

DISCUSS

How do you relate to this father's words in Mark, saying *"I believe, but please help me believe more!"*?

In what way might your prayers change if you believed with even more certainty that God hears every word?

DIGGING DEEPER

How have your prayers changed throughout the years as your experience of God, or your belief, has changed (for better or for worse)?

God wants to engage with us. This has been His plan from the very beginning: that humans, made in His image, would carry out His plans and purposes on the earth. Dallas Willard says, "God's response to our prayer is not a charade." He's not just playing like he's listening before He does what He had planned all along!

James 5:16 says, *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."* A righteous person is someone solely committed to knowing God's heart and doing His will. This means that the source of power in our prayer is not in eloquent words and not in how loud or how long we can pray. The source of power is God alone; it is His desire for His kingdom to come to this earth. The context of this verse is largely talking about praying for healing. Aligning our desires and actions with God's desires is how our prayers become a powerful part of accomplishing His purposes in this world.



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DISCUSS

Take a moment to share a few stories amongst your group of times when God has answered your prayer powerfully. If you don't have any stories like these to share, then move on but be sure to do the writing exercise below.

Remember that prayer starts and ends with God. Through prayer we are reminded that this is God's world, not ours. We desire His will, not ours. And the battle is His war, not ours.

It's God's world: Psalm 24:1 NIV *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."*

It's God's will: Matthew 6:10 NIV *"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

It's God's war: Romans 8:31 NIV *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*

Remembering those three things is vital to praying with power.

DISCUSS

With this in mind, take a moment to share prayer requests with your group. As you do, be sincere and free from judgement. Have someone record these prayer needs. You might think of another way of doing this next step, but as a recommendation: Have someone create a calendar event exactly one year from now and invite each group member to it. In the "notes" section of the event write the prayer requests that you have shared. In one year's time, check it out and see how God has answered those prayers. When that time comes, be sure to share praise reports and thank God for what He has done and how He has answered your prayers even in the most mysterious ways!

DIGGING DEEPER

The Psalms have long served as poems of prayer and worship, giving expression to the prayers of countless generations. Psalm 3 shows us a format of not only how to pray, but how to pray with power.

Have someone read Psalm 3 out loud.



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In this Psalm we see David's train of thought, his structure of prayer, that can be helpful for us today. He starts with acknowledging his present reality (vs 1 "*O Lord, how many are my foes!*"), then reminds himself of God's faithfulness in past experience (vs 4 "*I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from His holy hill.*") He then moves back to the present in a present determination (vs 6 "*I will not be afraid*") before concluding with a future hope (vs 8 "*Salvation belongs to the Lord...*")

As you pray as a group, why not follow this structure in your prayer. You may need to take a moment to think about it and may want to write it down before you pray.

Present reality – What circumstances are you facing in which you want to acknowledge your need of God?

Past experience – How has God shown himself faithful in this area before? This might be your experience, the experience of someone else in your group, or a story recorded in the Bible.

Present determination – In what way might God be asking you to respond right now? There's a lot that we can't control, but what will be your determination within what you can control?

Future hope – Name the confident hope that you have for the future. This could be specific to something that God has promised you directly. Or it might be a confident hope in His character, His goodness, His faithfulness, etc...