

Episode 31

Stories from General Conference

PRAYER, VOL. 2

NARRATOR: **The Bible Dictionary states that As soon as we learn the true relationship in which we stand toward God (namely, God is our Father, and we are his children), then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part.” It continues, “the object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”**

Are there blessings being withheld merely because you haven’t asked?

This is Stories from General Conference -- the second episode on the topic of prayer, here on the Mormon Channel.

In our first story, given during the April 2009 General Conference, Sister Barbara Thompson explained an incident about teaching children to pray.

(Sister Barbara Thompson, Sunday Morning Session, April 2009)

I had an assignment in the Boise, Idaho, area. After training on Saturday afternoon, I stayed in the home of my niece and her family. That evening before the children went to bed, we had a short family home evening and a scripture story. Their father told about the family of Lehi and how he taught his children that they must hold fast to the iron rod, which is the word of God. Holding fast to the iron rod would keep them safe and lead them to joy and happiness. If they should let go of the iron rod, there was danger of drowning in the river of dirty water.

To demonstrate this to the children, their mother became the “iron rod” that they must cling to, and their father played the role of the devil, trying to pull the children away from safety and happiness. The children loved the story and learned how important it is to hold fast to the iron rod.

After the scripture story it was time for family prayer. Their mother reminded the children to pray for the bishop, who was having serious eye problems. Three-year-old Brooklyn offered the prayer that evening. She thanked Heavenly Father for their blessings, and then she fervently asked Him to “bless the bishop because his eyes are broken.”

The next morning we got to sacrament meeting and got seated. Brooklyn and her five-year-old sister, Kennedy, looked up on the stand and saw the bishop standing there. The girls pointed to the bishop and excitedly said to their mother, “Look, there’s the bishop.” Then a knowing look passed between these two little girls that seemed to say “We prayed for the bishop, and now he is better.” They prayed in faith, knowing that Heavenly Father would hear their humble prayers.

NARRATOR: Prayer transcends the understanding of man and allows God to bless others through their faith. Prayers can lead to *miracles* as illustrated by the following example by Bishop Keith B. McMullin during the October 2008 General Conference.

(Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Sunday Morning Session, October 2008)

When one is sick or deeply troubled, “call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.” Faithful elders are commissioned to do what the Lord would do if He were present.

If records had been kept of prayers answered, the world could not contain the many volumes. From Elder Glen L. Rudd, an emeritus General Authority and beloved associate, comes this treasured testimonial:

“I received a phone call informing me that a family member, a 12-year-old girl named Janice, was in the hospital with critical injuries. Her mother wanted her to receive a priesthood blessing.

“Elder Cowley and I went to the hospital. There we learned details of the accident. Janice had been hit by a city bus. The double rear wheels had passed over her head and body.

“Elder Cowley and I entered the room where Janice lay. She had a broken pelvis, a badly injured shoulder, multiple broken bones, and severe head injuries that were beyond repair. Nonetheless, it was our feeling that we should administer to her and bless her. I anointed her with oil, and Elder Cowley sealed the anointing. In a strong and resolute manner he blessed her to become well and whole and to live a normal life. He blessed her that she would recover with no lasting effects from her many injuries. It was a great blessing and a truly magnificent moment.”

Elder Rudd goes on to say: “Janice didn’t move a muscle for more than a month. We never lost faith. A blessing had been pronounced that she would get well and have no lasting impairments.”

Elder Rudd concluded: “Many years have now passed since that hospital visit. I spoke with Janice recently. She is now 70 years of age, the mother of 3 children, the grandmother of 11 grandchildren. To this day, she has not suffered a single, negative effect from her accident.”

Hers is but one of many such healings. But none stands as a greater witness of how Heavenly Father helps His children through prayer than the one that took place in a hospital room, with 12-year-old Janice and two humble servants of God, some 58 years ago.

NARRATOR: You are listening to the Mormon Channel. This episode of Stories from General Conference is the second volume on the topic of prayer.

Prayer can offer comfort in time of peril. Elder Dallin H. Oaks shared a tense and dramatic personal story in the October 1992 Priesthood Session of General Conference illustrating the calming effect resulting from a fervent prayer by his wife.

(Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Priesthood Session, October 1992)

All over the world, faithful Latter-day Saints are protected from the powers of the evil one and his servants until they have finished their missions in mortality. For some the mortal mission is brief, as with some valiant young men who have lost their lives in missionary service. But for most of us the mortal journey is long, and we continue our course with the protection of guardian angels.

During my life I have had many experiences of being guided in what I should do and in being protected from injury and also from evil. The Lord's protecting care has shielded me from the evil acts of others and has also protected me from surrendering to my own worst impulses. I enjoyed that protection one warm summer night on the streets of Chicago. I have never shared this experience in public. I do so now because it is a persuasive illustration of my subject.

My wife, June, had attended a ward officers' meeting. When I came to drive her home, she was accompanied by a sister we would take home on our way. She lived in the nearby Woodlawn area, which was the territory of a gang called the Blackstone Rangers.

I parked at the curb outside this sister's apartment house and accompanied her into the lobby and up the stairs to her door. June remained in the car on 61st Street. She locked all of the doors, and I left the keys in the ignition in case she needed to drive away. We had lived on the south side of Chicago for quite a few years and were accustomed to such precautions.

Back in the lobby, and before stepping out into the street, I looked carefully in each direction. By the light of a nearby streetlight, I could see that the street was deserted except for three young men walking by. I waited until they were out of sight and then walked quickly toward our car.

As I came to the driver's side and paused for June to unlock the door, I saw one of these young men running back toward me. He had something in his right hand, and I knew

what it would be. There was no time to get into the car and drive away before he came within range.

Fortunately, as June leaned across to open the door, she glanced through the back window and saw this fellow coming around the end of the car with a gun in his hand. Wisely, she did not unlock the door. For the next two or three minutes, which seemed like an eternity, she was a horrified spectator to an event happening at her eye level, just outside the driver's window.

The young man pushed the gun against my stomach and said, "Give me your money." I took the wallet out of my pocket and showed him it was empty. I wasn't even wearing a watch I could offer him because my watchband had broken earlier that day. I offered him some coins I had in my pocket, but he growled a rejection.

"Give me your car keys," he demanded. "They are in the car," I told him. "Tell her to open the car," he replied. For a moment I considered the new possibilities that would present, and then refused. He was furious. He jabbed me in the stomach with his gun and said, "Do it, or I'll kill you."

Although this event happened twenty-two years ago, I remember it as clearly as if it were yesterday. I read somewhere that nothing concentrates the mind as wonderfully as having someone stand in front of you with a deadly weapon and tell you he intends to kill you.

When I refused, the young robber repeated his demands, this time emphasizing them with an angrier tone and more motion with his gun. I remember thinking that he probably wouldn't shoot me on purpose, but if he wasn't careful in the way he kept jabbing that gun into my stomach, he might shoot me by mistake. His gun looked like a cheap one, and I was nervous about its firing mechanism.

"Give me your money." "I don't have any." "Give me your car keys." "They're in the car." "Tell her to open the car." "I won't do it." "I'll kill you if you don't." "I won't do it."

Inside the car June couldn't hear the conversation, but she could see the action with the gun. She agonized over what she should do. Should she unlock the door? Should she honk the horn? Should she drive away? Everything she considered seemed to have the possibility of making matters worse, so she just waited and prayed. Then a peaceful feeling came over her. She felt it would be all right.

Then, for the first time, I saw the possibility of help. From behind the robber, a city bus approached. It stopped about twenty feet away. A passenger stepped off and scurried away. The driver looked directly at me, but I could see that he was not going to offer any assistance.

While this was happening behind the young robber, out of his view, he became nervous and distracted. His gun wavered from my stomach until its barrel pointed slightly to my left. My arm was already partly raised, and with a quick motion I could seize the gun and struggle with him without the likelihood of being shot. I was taller and heavier than this

young man, and at that time of my life was somewhat athletic. I had no doubt that I could prevail in a quick wrestling match if I could get his gun out of the contest.

Just as I was about to make my move, I had a unique experience. I did not see anything or hear anything, but I *knew* something. I knew what would happen if I grabbed that gun. We would struggle, and I would turn the gun into that young man's chest. It would fire, and he would die. I also understood that I must not have the blood of that young man on my conscience for the rest of my life.

I relaxed, and as the bus pulled away I followed an impulse to put my right hand on his shoulder and give him a lecture. June and I had some teenage children at that time, and giving lectures came naturally.

"Look here," I said. "This isn't right. What you're doing just isn't right. The next car might be a policeman, and you could get killed or sent to jail for this."

With the gun back in my stomach, the young robber replied to my lecture by going through his demands for the third time. But this time his voice was subdued. When he offered the final threat to kill me, he didn't sound persuasive. When I refused again, he hesitated for a moment and then stuck the gun in his pocket and ran away. June unlocked the door, and we drove off, uttering a prayer of thanks. We had experienced the kind of miraculous protection illustrated in the Bible stories I had read as a boy.

I have often pondered the significance of that event in relation to the responsibilities that came later in my life. Less than a year after that August night, I was chosen as president of Brigham Young University. Almost fourteen years after that experience, I received my present calling.

I am grateful that the Lord gave me the vision and strength to refrain from trusting in the arm of flesh and to put my trust in the protecting care of our Heavenly Father. I am grateful for the Book of Mormon promise to us of the last days that "the righteous need not fear," for the Lord "will preserve the righteous by his power." (1 Nephi 22:17.) I am grateful for the protection promised to those who have kept their covenants and qualified for the blessings promised in sacred places.

NARRATOR:

The last story in this episode was told by President Thomas S. Monson in the April 2009 Priesthood session of General Conference. What *could* appear as an amazing coincidence is *better* explained as answers to prayer on both sides of the blessing.

(President Thomas S. Monson, Priesthood Session, April 2009)

Sister Daisy Ogando lives in New York City, home to more than eight million people. Some years ago Sister Ogando met with the missionaries and was taught the gospel. Gradually, she and the missionaries lost contact. Time passed. Then, in 2007, the principles of the gospel she had been taught by the missionaries stirred within her heart.

One day while getting into a taxi, Daisy saw the missionaries at a distance, but she was unable to make contact with them before they disappeared from view. She prayed fervently to our Heavenly Father and promised Him that if He would somehow direct the missionaries to her once again, she would open her door to them. She returned home that day with faith in her heart that God would hear and answer her prayer.

In the meantime, two young missionaries who had been sincerely praying and working to find people to teach were one day examining the tracting records of missionaries who had previously served in their area. As they did so, they came across the name of Daisy Ogando. When they approached her apartment the very afternoon that Sister Ogando offered that simple but fervent prayer, she opened the door and said those words that are music to every missionary who has ever heard them: “Elders, come in. I’ve been waiting for you!”

Two fervent prayers were answered, contact was reestablished, missionary lessons were taught, and arrangements were made for Daisy and her son Eddy to be baptized.

NARRATOR: Daily prayer is a key to growing closer to our Father in Heaven. May we all use this principle of the gospel in our lives to continually feel His love for us.

This has been Stories from General Conference on the Mormon Channel. Thank you for listening. Learn more about the Mormon Channel at radio.lds.org.