

valerie woerner

PRAY

**pray confidently & consistently**

ALLY

finally let go of the things  
holding you back from your  
most important conversation

This book! Val has written a classic—the book we all need most. There is no more important relationship than with our Father, yet it's one of the most mysterious. Val has broken down the walls of fear, hesitation, and insecurity we so often face with prayer. Get ready to experience freedom as Val skillfully guides you to God's truth about our most important conversation. With practical, real-world wisdom, *Pray Confidently and Consistently* will equip you to deepen your faith or cultivate it for the first time! A must-read!

**LARA CASEY**, author of *Cultivate and Make It Happen*

Powerful, biblical, and practical, *Pray Confidently and Consistently* will ignite a desire in your heart to be a prayer warrior in daily life. In this book, Val exposes the weights that burden us and keep us from praying with confidence, and she leads us into freedom as we talk to God. I've been waiting for a book like this to recommend to many women and know this will lead us into a deeper walk with God!

**GRETCHEN SAFFLES**, author of *The Well-Watered Woman*, founder of Well-Watered Women

Seeking to deepen her own prayer life, the great writer Flannery O'Connor once penned in her journal, "Can't anyone teach me how to pray?" No doubt, Flannery needed this book. In a refreshing guide to prayer that will embolden you to seek more conversation with God, Valerie takes us into the raw and personal parts of her journey. She is both a guide and friend as she uncovers and dives deep into the hard-to-talk-about topics. Her words are both inspiring and encouraging, and this book is one you will pull off the shelf again and again. The wisdom within these pages is the kindling for the fire you need to take your prayer life to the next level.

**HANNAH BRENCHEER**, author of *Fighting Forward* and *Come Matter Here*

What's causing you to neglect prayer? Pause to think about your answer, and then dig into this book to find in Val Woerner a trusty companion who will walk you through the process of overcoming that obstacle to nurture a thriving prayer life.

**ASHERITAH CIUCIU**, author and host of the Prayers of *REST* podcast

I am delighted to see a resource on prayer that is approachable, practical, and dedicated to the truth of God's Word. This would be an excellent starting point for both new believers and long-time Christians who desire to know God intimately through prayer. Val doesn't just teach it—she lives it, and it comes through in her book.

**PHYLCIA MASONHEIMER**, author and founder of *Every Woman a Theologian*

We too easily stand at a distance from the most important topic of the hour: How can we talk to our God? And Val shows us how to close that distance—not as a dispassionate expert but, instead, as a real human who is desperate to talk to God, just like you and me. This book is a needed guide for days like the ones in which we've found ourselves.

**SARA HAGERTY**, bestselling author of *Unseen*

Inside these pages, Val shares God's truth that shaped her own prayer life. While guiding you to realize the same consistency and confidence is possible for you, she's honest enough to let you know of the struggles you'll inevitably encounter. Get ready to be encouraged and challenged by this real conversation about prayer to better know the even more real God who is listening.

**MICHELLE MYERS**, founder of She works HIS way

I believe that talking to God should be simple. It should feel accessible. It should come naturally to us! And yet we live in a fallen world where we've forgotten that he is as near to us as our own bodies and breath. So we need guides . . . encouragers . . . women with wisdom to remind us of the power and practicality of prayer. Val has been that guide for me the last few years—first through her products and now through this book. I am so grateful for her and cannot suggest reading her words enough!

**JESS CONNOLLY**, author of *You Are the Girl for the Job* and *Breaking Free from Body Shame*

**pray confidently & consistently**

PR

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# Pray Confidently and Consistently

Finally Let Go of the Things Holding You Back  
**pray confidently & consistently**  
from Your Most Important Conversation

**Valerie Woerner**

finally let go of the things  
holding you back from your  
most important conversation

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## Introduction

I DON'T RUN. Don't get me wrong. I *have* run before but don't make it a habit.

It wasn't always this way. I have a fond memory of running barefoot through the seemingly never-ending hall of the middle school building our church met in when I was eight. It felt as if just the tips of my toes hit the linoleum floor with each step, as if it took everything in me to slow down enough so that I didn't actually lift off the ground. I felt weightless, unstoppable, and even superhuman.

I'd give anything to run that way again. Twenty-seven years later, I feel beyond clunky. I feel the weight of pounding the pavement in my flimsy knees. I feel my flesh rise and fall, and I even get dizzy when I hit the ground. I feel the air, all right, but it's heavy and thick like humidity, and it seems to push me down.

Have you ever felt that way before—not on the pavement but in your prayer life? Have you felt the weight of

distractions and responsibilities thick like a humid southern Louisiana morning? Something you just can't seem to cut through?

I sure have.

I desperately want to feel weightless and unhindered in my prayer life, but instead, these things I can't even see keep dragging me down.

I neglect to pray because I need to spend time on a screen keeping tabs on people I hardly know.

I hit snooze, assuming those last few restless minutes in bed will refresh me more than time with God.

I offer trite prayers because I know I *should* say something, but I forget that prayer actually has power.

Prayer can be one of the hardest spiritual disciplines in the Christian life. If you have felt that way, you are absolutely not alone.

It makes sense. I can measure so many things, even in my walk with God, but not prayer. I know when I've read a few chapters of the Bible. I know how much I tithe. And you'd better believe I know if I skipped a meal and fasted instead. But the gates of prayer are wide open. The structure can be so fluid that I sometimes don't know if I can even label what just happened as prayer time because somewhere in the last five minutes, I drifted off to my to-do list.

If you're nodding along thinking, *This gal read my diary*, I promise I didn't. But I have read my own. I've struggled to take my own prayer life seriously. I've struggled to understand its power. And sometimes I recognize its power and *still* choose my dumb cell phone.

Since I created a prayer journal seven years ago, my own prayer life has grown. And my simple desire to share

a product that helped me focus in prayer morphed into a mission to understand the everyday struggles women face so I could cheer them along in this conversation of a lifetime. Since then, I've put together multiple prayer-oriented products, developed a prayer course, and created an online community where women can support each other through the challenges they face in prayer. After years of facilitating these conversations, one thing I know for sure is that there are external *and* internal distractions causing us to miss out on a prayer life that goes beyond anything we can fathom—and this book will focus on the internal things our prayer journals weren't able to address.

**We don't have to limp through our prayer lives carrying unnecessary weights.**

In 2019, Crossway surveyed fourteen thousand people about their prayer lives, and 2 percent were “very satisfied.”<sup>1</sup> Two percent. That means you likely fall in the camp with those of us who are not satisfied and are longing for more.

Another stat revealed that 30 percent of people surveyed said they hadn't even spent ten continuous minutes in prayer in the last week.<sup>2</sup> I won't dare ask how many continuous minutes we've spent on our phones this week. Yikes, right?

That's the bad news.

But here's the good news. We don't have to limp through our prayer lives carrying unnecessary weights—such as unfounded expectations, our desire for control, distractions, or pride. When we throw these weights aside, we can move forward at a steady pace.

Hebrews 12:1-2, which I'm using as the key passage for the book, gives the sweetest visual of running unencumbered:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

NLT

Back in ancient times, when the book of Hebrews was written, many men wore long outfits with fabric that hung down. I imagine basically muumuus. When athletes raced, they would throw off as many clothes as possible so they could run without hindrance.<sup>3</sup> Word on the street is that some ancient Greeks, surely the most competitive, even ran nude.\*

A moment from *The Biggest Loser* helps me further visualize this. Near the end of one competition, the contestants, who by now were significantly lighter than when they started, ran carrying weights that equaled the number of pounds they'd lost during their time on the show. With each mile, they removed some of the weight until, finally, they threw it all off and could run free.<sup>4</sup> It was emotional to see what could happen when the competitors weren't so burdened. And it wasn't just the physical weight; you could see they'd also been freed from emotional weights.

I want us to run free too.

I want our prayer lives to be unencumbered by the

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\*Or nekkid, if you're from the South like me.

distractions that threaten to steal precious time with the Lord in favor of trivial things. I want us to learn to pray with confidence and really know the God we're praying to. I want our prayer lives to be rich and deep and to transform the way we think. I want us to love God so much that we can't imagine not being in conversation with him every day. I want us to experience the joy of persistent, consistent prayer that glorifies God.

### **Throwing Off the Weights**

Did you ever wonder why prayer is so hard? After all, it's just talking and listening to God. Why is it so much easier to reach for my to-do list, remote, phone, or even a really good book? The short answer is that our enemy knows prayer is powerful. He knows what will happen if we pray, and he's scared. He's attempting to sabotage our races because he knows that once the weights come off, he doesn't have a prayer.

In *The Compound Effect*, Darren Hardy writes about how this idea of compounding helps us when we're trying to develop any habit:

It's like the wheels of a steam locomotive. At a standstill, it takes very little to keep it from moving forward—a one-inch block of wood placed under the front wheel will do the job. . . . But once the train starts rolling, the wheels get into a rhythm. If the pressure remains consistent, the train gains momentum, and watch out! At 55 miles an hour, that train can crash through a five-foot, steel-reinforced concrete wall and keep on going.<sup>5</sup>

We can be stopped by a little piece of wood, or we can plow through steel and concrete. We can get distracted by a fly buzzing around our bedroom or by dishes in the sink, or we can pray with *Tangled* playing in the background, while we're facing a full inbox, or even through big moments of fear.

I want to plow through my distractions. I need to.

Our intimacy with God is dependent on our prayer lives.

We cannot have a close relationship with him—we cannot experience his power, his wisdom, his peace, his joy—if we aren't *going* to him.

**Prayer invites action into our lives by the God who is more powerful than we could ever be on our own.**

Prayer invites action into our lives by the God who is more powerful than we could ever be on our own. I don't want us to

miss out on those possibilities! What are the weights we need to throw off so they don't hold us back from a deeper conversation with God? What distractions are slowing us down like a thick humidity when we could be running freely with our Father?

Stephen Nielsen says the weight referenced in Hebrews 12:1 “is an impediment, or a hindrance, or an encumbrance . . . that which keeps us from hearing the voice of God or that keeps us from desiring to hear His voice. It is whatever dulls our spiritual senses, puts us on the path of sin, saps our endurance, and keeps us from looking toward Jesus.”<sup>6</sup>

Friend, what weight, if identified, would lose its power and become merely something that threatened to take you out but fell completely flat? The weight of expectations, distractions, or emotions? What about the weight of facades

or valleys? In the chapters ahead, we're going to talk about fifteen specific weights on our prayer lives, what they cause us to miss out on, and how we can remove them.

We all know that prayer is more important than Netflix or sleeping in. I think we'd get that Sunday school question right every time. But in this book, I hope you'll find the motivation to actually figure out how to make it a priority in your everyday life. (A quick note as we go forward: Have your Bible handy! I learned so much about prayer as I studied Scripture this year, so you're going to get a ton of it. Dive into the full passages if you can. One of the biggest ways we transform our prayer lives is by knowing God's Word.)

Now let's take off the weights that are suffocating our prayer lives and leaving us gasping for Jesus. It's not worth walking through this life in our own feeble strength when the God of the universe is beckoning us to come sit with him, share our needs and our hearts, and simply know him.

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## Why pray?

- Because God said so (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). If this were the only reason we had, it would be enough.
- Because it brings glory to God (John 14:13).
- Because we were created for communion with God (Revelation 21:3-4).
- Because prayer changes things (James 5:16).
- Because it's the way we live at the center of God's will (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- Because we are needy, and only God can help us (Matthew 11:28-30).



We see spiritual giants of the past who seemed to live with peace, purpose, and effectiveness because of their close communion with God. We want that kind of life, but it doesn't happen through fractured prayers or drive-by conversations. It requires waiting and fervency and time. We don't like to say that for fear of overwhelming those who already feel overwhelmed by life, kids, and a job. But the truth is, if I don't mention it, you're left thinking that part-time prayer isn't all it's cracked up to be, or worse, that God lied when he told us throughout Scripture that he wants us to ask. The worthwhile things in life require effort.

I want to run with the Lord like my eight-year-old self, who felt as though nothing could hold her back. And I'm finally embracing the intentionality it will take to do it. I'm grateful that those weights that so easily entangle me can actually be removed. How hope-filled is that?

We might be weighed down right now, but that isn't the end of the story.

The weights are coming off.

And we're about to run like our feet barely touch the linoleum.

*Father, thank you for each person reading these words right now. I pray you would fill them with hope for the possibility of going deeper with you. Give them a passion that helps them soar, and, Father, protect them from our very present enemy who's desperately doing all he can along our way so that we slow down, stop, or turn around all together. Draw us nearer to you. In Jesus' name, let's do this!*

APPROACH

approach

throwing off the weights that keep us  
from coming to God with confidence



# 1

## **Where's My Genie in a Bottle?**

*Understanding Who I'm Praying To*

I WASN'T QUITE OLD ENOUGH to drive yet, but I had one thing on my mind: a hunter-green Saturn. It was my dream car, and I wanted one so bad that I could smell the gasoline and toxin-laden air fresheners.

How did I land on a Saturn? After surveying the showroom that was the car pickup line at school, I set my sights on the Saturn my friend Tiffany's mom drove. It felt so put-together with its sleek hood and tidy doors. I'd checked out the menu and had my order ready to beam up to the Big Guy in the sky: one hunter-green Saturn, please. No substitutions.

At thirteen, I thought I had a deep understanding of prayer and a faith that could move mountains—or at the very least, a faith that I hoped would move a Saturn into my family's driveway. I must have recently heard John 15:7, “Ask

whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” I glossed over that whole “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you” part in the first part of the verse, but how important could that be? God was telling me to *ask for anything!* The way I interpreted it was, if you have enough faith, *your prayer will come true*. That should have been my first clue how off I was. “Will come true”? I’m pretty sure I only remember that line from magic-filled fairy tales.

Regardless, I was ready for my green Saturn. And let me ease all your minds as you think, *Uh . . . you were only thirteen*. Relax. I had an airtight plan. My dad had a machine shop with the perfect air-conditioned spot to store my new Saturn till I could actually drive it. Everything was falling into place. *The stars were aligning*. Maybe that should have been my second clue as to how I viewed God. I had a plan, and now, if God would just do what I’d read he could do, we’d be great.

That was when it happened. I remember being in the upstairs bedroom I shared with my twin sister. Our white wicker daybeds faced each other, and right at the top of the walls was the most mature trellis border of maroon, navy, and hunter green you had ever seen grace a thirteen-year-old’s walls. I sat on my bed and prayed. And I believed with all my heart that God *could* give me the hunter-green Saturn of my dreams. I really believed he was powerful enough to do it. So when I said, “Amen,” I ran downstairs with the gusto of the disciples running to the empty tomb and opened the door to go test-drive (or sit in) my new Saturn.

And would you believe it? It wasn’t there!

At this point, I had some ideas to wrestle with. Why, despite my big, faith-filled prayers, did God not give me my

Saturn? And how was I supposed to keep praying when it looked like the genie had run out of magic?

**This is the weight of expectations.**

**We miss out on fostering our most important relationship when we start with inaccurate assumptions.**

This experience could have shaken me or even turned me off to prayer completely. I mean, *God didn't even answer me like he promised he would!* But I had a praying momma, and I think the way she kept going to God helped me keep going to him too. Regardless of the fact that *he totally ignored me even when I believed him most.*

Notice it? Go back and read the italicized phrases. Did anything make you wince as you read my story? Or did it go undetected because these are weights you carry too?

I had expectations of God that were in no way based on reality. They were things I made up or assumed from an isolated verse in Scripture. I convinced myself that if God didn't answer my specific request, he either didn't care or didn't hear. Neither was a great quality for the God of the universe, in my humble opinion.

At the ripe old age of thirteen, I still had a lot to learn about God. I'm thirty-six, and that's still true! But in those early years, I prayed to a one-dimensional God who I thought was there to give me anything I asked for.

**What we subconsciously believe to be true about God determines whether we will view prayer as essential and fulfilling or worthless and dull.**

What we subconsciously believe to be true about God determines whether we will view prayer as essential and fulfilling or worthless and dull. When we have accurate expectations of who we're praying to (as much as is humanly possible), we

will pray differently. When I don't understand who I'm praying to, I ask for a hunter-green Saturn and then assume that if I don't get it, God's ears were clogged, he fell asleep during the conversation, or he didn't really mean what he said in the first place when he told me to ask.

I miss out on who God really is when I bury him in my own unrealistic expectations.

So who is he really? And what makes him worthy of my prayers in the first place? Let's talk about six prime characteristics of God that will affect how we pray.

## **1. God Is the Creator and Savior**

We're getting back to basics, which may feel like overkill, but it will lay a solid foundation for our prayers. Genesis 1:27 (yep, all the way back) says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." We weren't accidentally created by some unknown force. We were intentionally formed and created for relationship with God.

Sin messed up that relationship, and the reality is that we've all sinned (see Romans 3:23). Because sin leads to death and separation from him (see Romans 6:23), God sent his Son to pay the price for our sins (see Romans 5:8) so that if we confess our faith in him (Romans 10:9-10), we will be saved (see Romans 10:13). Friend, without salvation in Jesus Christ alone, we can't experience a restored relationship with God. That means salvation is essential to an actual prayer relationship with God.\*

So not only did God create us, but he also sent his Son to

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\*We just mall-walked through a quick telling of the gospel, known as the Romans Road. If you're not a Christian and want to know more, ask a friend or pastor to share with you. It is the most important decision you will ever make.

die so that the relationship our sin broke could be restored. Can we take a second to reflect on that? We'll talk more about God's love for us later, but if this doesn't reveal the heart of God for us, I don't know what does. I want a relationship with this guy. I'm honestly amazed it's even available to me, and I never again want to see him as just a genie who grants wishes.

## 2. God Hears Us

The God of the universe, creator of all things, longs to sit in the quiet moments with you and me. And because he's God, he can do that for every single one of his kids. We'll never get a busy signal or an "out to lunch" sign. He is always ready to spend time with us when we choose to.

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### God hears

*Take a gander at several biblical examples of God hearing people's prayers and responding. His kindness is overwhelming, no? We get to pray to the same God—the one who hears.*

Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

**GENESIS 25:21**

Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. And the LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained.

**EXODUS 8:30-31**

As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

**EXODUS 19:19**



**pray confidently & consistently**

David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering.

**1 CHRONICLES 21:26**

So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

**1 SAMUEL 7:9**

[David said,] In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears. . . . He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

**2 SAMUEL 22:7, 20**

[The Lord says,] “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

**JEREMIAH 29:12-13**

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, “I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.”

**JONAH 2:1-2**

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Psalm 34:15 says, “The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.” (Good news, friend: *Righteous* does not mean perfect but, rather, those who are seeking God.) As you search Scripture, make a note each time you see wording such as “God hears” or “God listened” or a reference to God’s “ears.” Noticing these as I study the Bible has shown me just how much God is inviting us into conversation.

This is both heartwarming and heartbreaking because I

know my devotion to God isn't nearly as . . . well, devoted as his is to me. If you're reading this book, I bet you feel the same. Hold tight. Our next point brings lots of freedom.

### **3. God Loves Us Unconditionally**

We get to pray to a God to whom we cannot say anything so audacious that he'll take his ball and go home. I have two little girls—Vivi, seven, and Vana, four—and at bedtime when I say goodnight, I tell them, “You'll never lose my love.” We've gotten silly with it and started to say, “You'll never lose my lllll . . . unch” or “my . . . socks” just to be funny, but it never fails to put them at ease to know they can never mess up so badly that I won't love them. One day, they will mess up royally, and I don't want them to be tempted to try to handle it on their own because they're afraid it will change my love. Instead, my hope is that they will have grown up knowing no mistake will drive me away and that they will always remember it's safe to return to me.

Even more than we need to know a parent's love is unconditional, we need to know that God's love is. Have you ever felt that you can't go to God until you clean yourself up, or that it's been such a long time since you prayed that you'd feel embarrassed coming to him now? Or maybe you feel like you hate to come to him only when you're in a crisis, so you try to face the hard stuff alone.

If that's you right now, stop here. Don't read another sentence before you close your eyes and ask God to draw you near. Your Father's love was never built on your performance in the first place. What great news! Dive into Scripture and get to know how deep and wide the Father's love is for us. Ephesians 3:14-19 is a great place to start.

## 4. God Is All Knowing

I like to think I'm pretty discerning and can come up with some top-notch plans. I make assumptions about what needs to happen in my life and then bring requests based on a thought-out blueprint that I'm sure will impress the pants off God. (That was highly inappropriate, but it reveals just how cavalier I can be sometimes with God.)

This controlling nature leads me to get upset when the answer to my prayers is no. *Surely* if God had all the facts, he'd see things differently. I'd never say this out loud, of course, but subconsciously, I must assume it if I question an all-knowing God's plans, right?

The reality is that not a moment of our lives is hidden from God. He's witness to it all.

You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and the light about me be night,”  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.

For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.

PSALM 139:5-16

That passage is long, but soak it in. We are known by God. We're living in a time when people are desperate to be known and longing to be seen. It's why social media apps have "like" buttons and hearts. And it's why we incessantly check to see how people are responding to what we share. Are people seeing me? How many people are seeing me? What do they think when they see me? That desire is part of our human nature. Unfortunately, we look for it in all the wrong places and accept a shallow version of being known because we forget that we are already so intimately known by our almighty God.

### 5. God Is Capable

When we pray, we aren't just talking to a nice guy who cares about us and knows us well. We're praying to an almighty God who has the power to drop hailstones from heaven. You weren't expecting *that* for my example, were you? In the book

**You aren't praying to a statue or a lifeless, mythical God. You're praying to a God who acts throughout Scripture on his people's behalf.**

of Joshua, the Israelites were starting to move into the land God had promised them, and some of the Canaanite nations banded together to attack them. The Israelites defeated them, and Joshua 10:11 says, "As [the enemy armies] fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword."

The passage goes on:

At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, 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 the midst of heaven and did not hurry to

set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, *when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel.*

JOSHUA 10:12-14, EMPHASIS ADDED

God follows up the first miracle by having the sun stand still until the battle is over. Can you even imagine? How many visuals do we need to convince us that God is capable of coming to our aid? But here's the kicker: This was a response to prayer. The Lord heeded Joshua and fought for Israel.

You aren't praying to a statue or a lifeless, mythical God. You're praying to a God who acts throughout Scripture on his people's behalf. In those moments when you can't help but feel you're praying to the ceiling or talking to yourself, draw close to this image of a God who fought for Israel. I know he's fighting for us, too.

## 6. God Is Unchangeable

The God who healed your momma's best friend, Monica; Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus; and Moses' sister, Miriam, is the same God you lift your requests to. This is just one more reason it's important to study the Word—so we know the stories of God's work in the past and remember that God is still with us.

He's never changing. He is the solid rock on which we stand. As I write this book during the COVID-19 shelter-at-home orders, I cannot tell you how many times I've broken into the old hymn

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
all other ground is sinking sand,  
all other ground is sinking sand.<sup>1</sup>*

## Let's pause

*There will be many moments throughout this book when I'll invite us to pause, and they aren't for dramatic effect. I know the place we will truly learn to pray is in prayer, and so I want us to wrestle with these truths in God's presence.*

One day I was looking through a set of flashcards I'd bought to teach my girls Greek and Hebrew. (That probably sounds more impressive than it is. The Tiny Theologians company makes this easy to do!) One card said that "Selah," which is a Hebrew word referenced in the Psalms, is a command meaning *to pause and reflect or pause and consider*.<sup>2</sup> It is used at important places in the Psalms where readers should stop and think about what they are reading. When I read the Psalms after learning this, I started noticing "Selah" everywhere. (Depending on your Bible translation, you might also see the word "Interlude.") I imagined what David and the other psalmists were thinking as they jotted down that word and the thoughts that followed.

Psalms 32:7 says, "You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*." Did David need a moment to really let that sink in? In this psalm of forgiveness, maybe he spoke words he knew were true but still needed to let his heart catch up to what his mind knew.

So as you're reading these chapters, if you see "Selah," that's your cue to pause, reflect, and even pray about what's being shared.

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When so much has shifted, bringing changes I never knew were even possible (like ending a school year two months early and becoming a teacher overnight), I am finding my foothold on the unchangeable Rock.

People, even faithful believers, will fail us. And maybe we give God a bad rap because we've experienced hard things in community with his kids, but God is our solid Rock. We can trust him. And that alters not only our prayers but also our response to the results of our prayers. "No" answers don't have to make us doubt his existence. We don't have to question whether the God who redeemed us has suddenly decided to put some conditions on his great love. He hasn't. He's the same.

And, friend, this is who we get to pray to.

He invites us to commune with him on a constant, daily basis. He encourages us to pray at all times and without ceasing (see 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).

Can we just take another minute to relish that and thank him profusely for it?

Selah.

What a mighty God we get to pray to.

Back when I was thirteen and treated him like a genie, he was compassionate to listen to my prayer, no matter how ridiculous, and was unconditional in his love. He knew vastly more than I did. He is still the same God I read about in the Bible, and the fact that he is capable of causing the sun to stand still yet *still* didn't give me that car lets me know it wasn't that he couldn't do it. It just wasn't part of his plan. I now understand better why.

Remembering these truths about God will radically shift our prayers. There will be no room for pride and accusations



**pray confidently & consistently**

when we don't get the result we want. No reason to hold back. No fear of uncertainty. And no wimpy prayers.

Even the demons believe in God (see James 2:19). But us? We don't just believe in him. We know who he is. We trust that he is worthy of our prayers and know that we're pretty blessed to even have the opportunity to talk to him!

The genie whose lamp I rubbed, believing I'd get a Saturn, turns out to not be a genie at all. He's an all-knowing, all-loving, fully capable, unchanging God. When we throw off the weight of our inaccurate assumptions about God, we'll know without a doubt that he's worthy of all our prayers.

**reflect** \_\_\_\_\_

*Which quality of God has gone unnoticed in your life? How has that affected your prayers?*

*When have you prayed for something and gotten a "no"?*

*How do the following characteristics of God help remove the weight of expectations?*

- *God is the Creator and Savior*
- *God hears us*
- *God loves us unconditionally*
- *God is all-knowing*
- *God is capable*
- *God is unchangeable*

**read** \_\_\_\_\_

- Psalm 147:5
- Zephaniah 3:17
- Romans 5:8

- Romans 8:1-17
- 1 John 3:20