

“Your Prayers Have Power”

By Chris Rowlett

Excerpts from Max Lucado’s book Unshakeable Hope

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There are times in our life that we feel powerless and that our words don’t carry any weight. As I was reading the story of Elijah and how his prayers were held in high regard with God, I remembered a recent time in my life that I did not feel that my words held any power. It was Courtney’s eighth grade year at Memorial Park Middle School, and we had entered her into the school lottery to get her into New Tech Academy at Wayne High School. We waited patiently to hear the news if she made it in or not. Courtney wanted to attend New Tech because her sister and both of her cousins went there. Unfortunately, her sister had already graduated though so she had no sibling in the school. We received the news that she was on a waiting list. She was very disappointed and so were Elaine and I. Elaine and I started to tap into the connections that we had within the Fort Wayne Community Schools. We spoke to the Director at New Tech which we knew, and the principal at Wayne High School which we also knew. He actually was our Senior English teacher in high school. We also spoke to others in administration downtown. No matter what we did or what words we used like family legacy, relatives in the school, nothing worked and unfortunately, she did not get into New Tech her Freshman year. I felt powerless and that my words did not carry any clout.

As I read the fifth chapter of Unshakeable Hope Max talked about a recent visit that his wife and him took to Office Max, he was so excited as they entered the store and he was telling his wife welcome to my store Office *Max*. She rolled her eyes as he continued to talk about his store and what his store had to offer. When they finally arrived at the checkout he was joking with the cashier as well and brought her in on the fun. Finally, he told her that she had done enough for the day and that she could go home and call it a day, and to tell anyone who asked that Max told her it was ok. She proceeded to tell him that his words held no clout. She was right as Max Lucado holds no ownership in OfficeMax. The same cannot be said about us, if we have taken on the name of Christ, we have clout with the most-high God. When you and I speak God listens, when we pray heaven takes note. In Matthew 18:19 it says this: “When two of you get together at anything at all on Earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action” (The Message) Your and my prayers impact the actions of God. Let that set in for a few moments.

We heard the story of Elijah read a few moments ago. Elijah lived eight centuries prior to the birth of Jesus in Israel. There were twenty kings in the northern area of Israel in which Elijah resided and all of the kings were evil some more than others. But by far, the vilest, of them all was king Ahab. Listen to these words, “There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.”(1 Kings 21:25-26) This was the darkest time in Israel’s history we are told in the bible that the leaders were corrupt and the hearts of the people were cold. In the midst of all the evil a bright star appeared named Elijah. The name Elijah in Hebrew means “My God is Jehovah”, and Elijah lived up to his name. Elijah gave king Ahab a report that there would be no rain unless he prayed and gave word to God to do so. 1 Kings 17:1 “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve,

there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” Elijah used a very calculated attack. You see Baal was the fertility God of the Pagans and they counted on Baal for rain and the fertility of the fields for their crops. Elijah was setting up for a high noon showdown between the false God Baal and the true God of Israel. How was Elijah so confident? It was because he had prayed. Elijah’s prayers held off the rain for three and a half years. Elijah then prayed again, and the rain came down and the land produced crops again. Elijah told king Ahab to summon the people and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel. When they all arrived at Mount Carmel Elijah asked the people: “How long will you waiver between two opinions? If the Lord is God follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” (1 Kings 18:21) The Hebrew word for waiver means dance, how long will the dance between God and Baal? The people fell silent and did not answer Elijah.

Elijah then challenged king Ahab and the prophets. He asked them to get two bulls to be prepared as an offering. He had the prophets of Baal prepare one Bull to be offered to their God, Baal and told them to prepare the offering but not light it on fire. He said that each of them would pray and call out to their God and the one who’s God lit the Altar is the one true God of Israel; King Ahab and the prophets agreed; and Elijah would select the other Bull to be offered to God. They both prepared the Bulls and then Elijah told the four hundred and fifty prophets to go first. They prayed and danced around the altar from dawn until noon and nothing happened. At noon Elijah taunted them “Shout louder! He said, surely, he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” They began to shout louder and even cut themselves and still nothing happened. Elijah then told them to come to him. He repaired the altar which had been tore down and asked the people to fill large jars with water and had them refill and dump the water from the jars over the offering and altar three times. Elijah then stepped forward and prayed, “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” Then something amazing happened, fire fell from the Lord onto the altar and not only burnt the offering; but it also incinerated the stones that the altar was built from and burnt the earth below the altar and evaporated the water from the trench around the altar. The people then fell to their knees and cried the Lord he is God. Just like Elijah when we call on the Lord, he enters our world. God hears our prayers. He delights in hearing our prayers.

I know what you are thinking but we are not great like Elijah. But if you read from James, he tells us that Elijah is just like you and me. Listen to his words, “Elijah was a human being just like us. He prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years! Then Elijah prayed again, and the rain came down from the sky, and the land produced crops again.” Elijah was nothing special he was human just like you and me; but God heard his prayers because he prayed them earnestly. Our prayers just like Elijah’s matter to God because we are all children of God. When we pray to him, he hears our prayers because they come from one of his children. I want you to be honest, how many of you pray daily. I mean earnestly pray, daily? We need to arm ourselves with prayer now more than ever. If you think about how you would ask your mom or dad for something you really want to happen, God wants us to cry out to him in that same way.

I find it interesting that Max refers to us as getting ready to take over the family business. Just take a moment to think about that, God is preparing us to assist with the family business. He wants us to reign with him in heaven. As we talked about a week or so ago, we are all heirs to the throne. We have an equal share to Jesus as he is our brother. We have an equal share to Jesus, and we are being prepared to reign with our brother Jesus in heaven. Those words and thoughts are amazing! It goes without saying that then when we, as heirs to the throne and future leaders of the family business cry out in prayer, our voice is heard by God. As I said he delights in hearing from us, and he puts our words into action when we pray earnestly.

Our country and world have been through some extremely difficult times, the one we are currently in goes without saying. I saw this past week that thousands upon thousands of Christians marched to pray in Washington. Our God wants us to reach out to him in prayer so that he can show that he is our Lord and God, just like he did with Elijah. Isn't it time that we started to pray daily and have earnest conversations with our Heavenly Father? My challenge to us all, is to start a daily conversation that His will would be done in our lives, and in our country, so that all will see that he is indeed Lord of all.

I will leave you with this, in regard to Courtney's education, many prayed including Elaine and I, that God's will would be done. Courtney went to Wayne High School as a freshman and we connected with the principal there in great ways, and she made some really good friends in Wayne. And in his time as she became a Sophomore, she was accepted into New Tech Academy. God entered our world and answered the prayers that had been lifted.

You see your and my prayers matter to God because we are his children! No one can take prayer away from you or me. If we do one thing, always remember to hold onto the promise of prayer! Amen.