

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you. – Carl Sandburg

What kind of a positive person would end a book on a sour note? Yet, I'm sitting here looking at the lives around me. My mother always talked about doing this and that. She really did neither. She wanted to lose weight but never really got there. Last year she died. I think I'm sadder that she never completed her dreams. All those prayers and wishes left on the table. Why had they never come true?

Well that's why I'm writing this chapter here at the end. We have talked about prayer and wishes. A lot of ground has been covered. I believe both of these tools of hope are a good thing. To relay hope though prayer and wishes is positive. Yet, when we wait for them to come true, it's a growing concern. What happens when people do nothing in the mean time? Life does not wait for answered prayer. Tomorrow is not based on a fulfilled wish. In-between our prayer and wishes are life to be lived. Time to be spent. Be mindful of the time we have to spend.

I love the saying above by Sandburg. We throw coins in a well. People spend money on things that make them happy. A prayer is needed, so time is spent on our knees. We should invest in making our dreams come true. It's our responsibly isn't it? Is it God's? How does effort work its way into the equation? How often have I heard an inspiring wish or prayer and thought "I should do that?" We don't really want to wait while others are fulfilling our dreams for themselves, do we? Spending our coins on themselves.

Conversely, some people don't wait. They trudge on in life hoping for the best outcome. We see people living the dream. Don't we want that too? There probably is a healthy balance between waiting and acting on our prayer and wishes. So, is waiting for answered prayer and

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

wishes good or bad? I would hate to die knowing I could have lived a more abundant life. How horrible would it be to wait for answers that never come? Live the dream; don't wait for the dream.

I'm afraid that she might think of me as Plain ol' Jane, told a story about a man who is too afraid to fly so he never did land- Train

Maybe you have heard this before. There are people who fly at 20,000 feet and those who fly at 50,000. The problem is that one looks down on people while other is looking up thinking it's too high. I just think we spend a ton of time looking at what others accomplish. Sometimes that drives us to wish and pray just a little harder. No matter what height you fly at, its good enough. Sure, there is room to come down or soar to new heights. Yet, should we? It would be far better if we encouraged people to be who they are and not what we want them to be.

Within that, we should tell ourselves the same thing. Yes, we should pray. Yes, we should hope and wish for a great life. I'm just asking you to be careful. Don't hang your happiness on what you don't have. *If I get that stereo then will be happy.* There is more to know, learn, and gain. We are never as smart as we think or dumb as we look. Being content does not mean standing still. What it does mean is be mindful of where you are. Don't long to be somewhere else.

There was a funny comedy act I heard some time ago. The man wondered why we wished to be somewhere else? You are standing where you are. It's impossible to be in another place. If you want to be somewhere else then leave where you are. It's was funny. This reminds me that we wish for silly things sometimes. We can't be another person. We can't be somewhere

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

else. Why not consider that it's ok to be you and where you are. Maybe, pray and wish for responsible things.

Some people fall into success. I know that a person can be discovered in strange ways. Justin Bieber posted videos of himself singing. It worked, somebody noticed! Adele post a song on her *My space*. Somebody noticed! I believe Cornel Sanders launched Kentucky fried chicken at 65 years old. Be who you are and in time someone will notice. It might be a record executive or a spouse. It might even be yourself realizing that you are just fine as you are. It also just might take 65 years!

I called this chapter “careful” for a reason. A prayer is good. They are needed. Time spent in prayer is good for the soul. Sometimes we need help. So, we pray and wait. There are several wishes in our hearts. Then life moves on and there is seemingly silence. Possibly God did not answer yet. Maybe a wish is waiting for the right time. How is your heart towards God if your prayer seems unheard? What happens when wishes turn to dust?

I just bet that Justin Bieber wished and prayed for his music to take off. Yet, he did not wait. He laid a path by posting his work. Give your prayer and wishes room to work. Patience is learned. Yet, persistence pays off sometimes. It's not about impatience and doing it yourself. It's about having hope and belief in the process. Just don't wait too long letting your heart grow weary. Certainly, wish and pray, but live life inspired by the process.

There is a curious story in Exodus of Moses and the Israelites fleeing Egypt. In the mean time Pharaoh had unwillingly let them go. Throughout that whole story it's repeated that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. What's with that? God let Pharaoh's heart do what it wanted. This

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

leader did not want to let Moses go. He wanted his slaves, humility, and pride back. God granted him his wish.

In that moment, fury arose in his heart. I suppose you could say his heart went hard. Pharaoh gathered his army and bolted out into the desert after the Israelites. I'm going to say that God gave Pharaoh his wish. Maybe it's answered prayer. In the end, this man and his army perished into the sea. It's true we should be careful what we wish for. It's also true that unfulfilled wishes and prayer can harden a heart.

Making rash decisions can harden a heart. Being resentful about unanswered prayer and wishes can certainly harden a heart. There is a balance between waiting and acting. Take Abraham in the Bible for instance. He wanted a child. As the years went on, that became seemingly impossible. Even in old age God repeated to Abraham that he would still have a child. Eventually his wife gave up and asked Abraham to sleep with the hand maid. That decision has cause repercussions for generations. What Abraham should have done is lived his life believing in the process. Instead he took matters in his own hands.

I mentioned in the last chapter a friend who is 74. He has lived a really good life. If money was tight then what went wrong? I know retiring on a fixed income can be tough. Yet, they own so much. How could they seem financially broke in their eyes? I think it's related to being careful. Throughout their lives were points of decision. Points that said wish for this and pray for that. In the mean time life was moving. Did they lay a foundation for those prayer and wishes to evolve? Would they survive and be ok if they didn't?

Ok, let me explain further. There is a song by the Christian group Hillsong united that says "*would you believe if I said you don't have to wait for the answer before you step out in*

Prayer and Wishes
Chapter Nine: Careful

faith.” To me this has everything to do with prayer and wishes. I have met so many people who had waited in their home for the perfect mate. These are people who lived stalled lives while waiting. Do they venture out? No, they don’t. They believe in prayer and wishes, but as a concept. Real belief is stepping out in faith and believing that life will find a way. God will find a way. Yet, I’ll stress it again, be ok if things go differently.

Gather up your telegrams, your faded pictures, best laid plans, books and postcards, 45's, every sunset in the sky. Carry with you maps and string, flashlights, friends who make you sing, and stars to help you find your place, music, hope and amazing grace. Maybe what we leave is nothing but a tangled little mystery. Maybe what we take is nothing that has ever had a name. – Mary Chapin Carpenter

Life is meant to be lived first and foremost. Tangled within all this are prayer, wishes, and a whole lot more. Prayer is all about communication with God. God generally will act at the right time. So, we have no choice but to wait. A wish is given. Then we wait. In the beginning of this book I quoted a man who alluded to the fact that prayer and wishes are forged by hope. We are taking steps to make life better. We believe in life. Prayer and wishes are part of the process.

The next steps after that are just as important. Neil Armstrong believed in space. He believed in walking on the moon. Maybe he prayed for the chance. Then he went on a journey of school, training, and admittance to the space program. Years later that wish or prayer came true as he put his famous foot down into the soft moon soil. He lived the path in hope that one day he would indeed step on the moon.

The word *providence* means several things. We could define it as divine care for creation. We could also call it foreseen care of what we have been given. Here are some steps towards providence. See what you want in life and aim towards it. Then pray for guidance. Wish and

Prayer and Wishes
Chapter Nine: Careful

hope for it to come to fruition. Then live life. Yes, it's really that simple. Just don't skip the steps. This is not a magical formula to get what you want. It's just the way forward.

To end up old with regrets is a crime. Who robbed you? It's you. Where are your best laid plans? Did they go awry? In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had all that God provided. Yet, they were asked to tend the garden. There was work to be done. In their spare time they let their minds wander. That wandering lead them out of Eden. I'm positive they could have had it all, yet they appeared to not ask for it. Instead they pursued their own path. Hardened their hearts.

Patrick, did you not just say to make your own path and not rely on prayer? Nope, I did not. I said pray. I said wish. Then I said don't stand still. Begin the process in faith. Faith that life will work it out. Here is an interesting example. In junior high school, I had a friend who went to Jamaica. I had never seen a boy come back so black. What a tan! That was almost 40 years ago. I know in private, I wished to go to Jamaica one day too.

My mom died last year and left me some money. We decide to use that money to go to Jamaica. The time was right. I did not give up on that wish so long ago. My life did not stand still until I went to Jamaica. Here's the thing. I used to pick up a friend who went to Hawaii a lot. Since my childhood I had never been there like he had so many times. I was able to go myself many years later. I wanted to go to university. I went at 41. We all have hopes and dreams. There are prayers and wishes that we make to see those things come true. I believe many of them will come true in time. Yet, there is life in front of us.

One more story for good measure. I read about a guy who prayed for God's will in his life. He wanted to be a missionary. No doors to travel across the world were open to him. In a

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

way he prayed for two things. Secretly he had also wished to be a doctor. Since there seemed to be no missionary avenues open he chose to go to medical school instead. Yet, his heart never left a yearning for mission. Through school he became a paramedic. One day there was an opportunity to be a doctor in the mission field in Africa. Of course, he went joyfully. Sometimes both prayer and wishes come true at the same time, yet he laid a path towards them.

It's not forcing the hand of God or the wish. I know it looks that way. You must walk the walk to talk the talk. You can't just pray or wish. If your wishes and prayer seem fruitless then try it my way. I don't have the magic answer. Yet, my dreams have come true in so many ways. All I do is live life first. Yet, mixed in with that are prayer and wishes.

It's all in the mindset. What I mean is that many prayers think one way. They are used usually in times of struggle. Many wishes believe in a certain answer. We want the impossible. What if we pray and then leave it to God. What if we wish and leave it to life. The mindset is why not try and live too. It's positive, hopeful, and inspiring. Just believe that something will happen. Why? Because, something usually will.

Maybe becoming a doctor would be cool. Maybe traveling as a missionary would be fun. Yet, being a traveling doctor missionary might be more fun. Start to taste the path and let providence show you the best way. Let God show you the way. Let life give you a good path. I just fear the unrealistic expectations. I fear you waiting as life passes by.

I have met far too many people who just waited. My mom said (forever) that she dreamed of being skinny. She never quite got there. Do it! Walk towards your dreams. Try! My goodness, you have to make a life. God does not sit there waiting to bless you upon request. Fate does not sit there waiting for a wish to change its mind. We have two feet and a brain for a reason. Think

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

of it like football. That game is a military strategy. We make a plan to gain ground. Then we fight for that ground. Treat your life the same way. We pray for a good plan. We wish to win. Then we play the game.

I'm just saying to be careful on waiting. It's great to be patient. How patient? It's bad to run a head, yet can't we keep walking. Paths are taken. Paths are walked. Who makes paths to look at. Aren't dreams just paths we make. Don't you want to walk on them? Should we just put them on a shelf to collect dust. One day you might be laying in a bed dying or sick. Maybe you found yourself in an accident. What happens to your dreams then? Are you staring up at them on the shelf? What a horrible thought to see that. It's not pessimistic but a warning.

How many good times will you have? If life allotted you a few good times, is that all you receive? Isn't prayer and wishes a hope that there are more? I have said that God gives us 10% of who we are. The other 90% is asked for and given. Why do certain people go well beyond most of us? Why do some of us seem to be less than we should be? It's because there is more. Our dreams of flying turned into planes. Our wish to see the stars created a space shuttle. A cure for sickness made penicillin. Just because we don't see it right away does not mean it's not there. Prayer and wishes breed hope in a path to see the unseen.

So how should we begin? Just get on our knees and pray? What if you don't believe in God? Should you just find a well or wait for a star to wish upon? What if you don't believe in that stuff? How do we create hope? How do dreams come true. Is fate set? I know so many who believe that. Yet, a special few seem to have broken that mold. Is it that some are blessed more than others? Quite possibly, the seemingly blessed did one thing: they began to step forward in their dreams.

Prayer and Wishes
Chapter Nine: Careful

So many people have dug themselves out of a hole. I know stories of millionaires that lost it all several times over. They think life is a game to be played. In a way I believe they are right. Someone said the other day “use your allotment in time wisely.” I like that. I am living life now. I am also preparing to retire in about 7 years. I am planning a trip to Greece in a few years. It’s a five-year plan. In the mean time I work, pay bills, and dream. Within all that is wishing. I pray all the time. I’m trying to live a full life.

At 33 years old, I was done. Is that all there was in life? Then divorce found me. The end result was a man standing in front of a mirror lost. Who was I? Why had my wishes not come true? Was life over? Then it hit me. Never again! Never again will I spend another year hoping, wishing, and just dreaming. I will do something amazing every year. I started praying for a roller coaster life. It’s what I’ve lived for about 20 years. It’s been nuts.

Life is a race to be run. I feel it’s a race to be won too. I had no life before my divorce. Eat, sleep, work, and repeat are practically all I did. To become single again with the chance of a do-over was a miracle. I have made mistakes moving too fast. Some wondered if I was moving too slow. I want life as much as anybody. Disaster will do that to you. The problem can be trying to grab too much too fast. Run, but pace yourself.

Slow down and put on the brakes. There is a symbiotic relationship between prayer, wishes, and time. Throw fate and God into that mix and it gets even murkier. It’s good to want more. It’s awesome to wish for a great life. yet, brakes are needed. I’m not saying stop, just slow down. Relax man. Grabbing too much life is dangerous. Running head long into the unknown is reckless. Time needs time to happen. I always say give God room to work. He is slow to anger but also slow and patient to act. Why?

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

I want stuff now! I feel time is like a puzzle. There are so many pieces. My wife found a piece she was missing months later. She had already moved on. I have never really heard of having too many pieces. It's slow, methodical, and calculated. How do you approach a puzzle? It takes time. We try and make pieces fit. Just use what is given. My wife can't go back and put the piece in. That puzzle is gone. She can't use it in a new puzzle either. Just use what you have.

Unfortunately, I am my greatest disaster story. My divorce settled and I received some money in the split. There was enough to buy a home, and a little bit left over. I felt we needed a break. So, I took my boys to Disneyland. It was a great time. When we got home and my roommates had moved out behind my back. Ok, I did not see that coming. I guess it was time to live alone for a bit. Living the roller coaster life.

Things started to go my way that year. Being alone was better. The trip was fun. Life was turning around. There was still some money left over. Just enough to take one more trip. A road trip to a Christian festival in America. Me and the boys took to the road again. Then all hell broke loose. My car overheated but I refused to turn back. We got in a terrible accident the next day. Thankfully only the car was totaled. We came out of it fine. Roller-coaster life in fast mode now.

Then my Ex had to come and rescue us. I was humiliated. Back home I was alone and now car-less. This story reminds me of blessings and curses. It was a blessing to have settled the divorce. A blessing to own a home. Yet, I wanted more. I had to beat the Ex and succeed. I suppose my prayer and wishes were used up. I wanted too much too quick. Pride is a killer. So is patience.

Prayer and Wishes
Chapter Nine: Careful

Just because your blessed by a prayer or wish does that mean it's a good thing. Fate and God will give us what we want sometimes to teach us a lesson in humility and patience.

Someone said "don't count your chickens before they hatch." The same could be said of asking for things. Don't expect to win. Don't expect to lose either. Play the game and let's see what happens. Failure is just part of the game. There is always another period or quarter.

Being prepared to win is just as important as preparing to fail. Why would anyone prepare to fail? The greatest test of a Pro athlete is in the preparation for winning and failing. The ultimate mental state is to be not too high or low. Play the game. When we start over thinking the game is where life goes wrong. Back to the best laid plans quote. We will win and we will lose. Within that is life's goals. Those that put too much into winning or failing never recover from things going awry.

How often do we hear stories of ruined success? How about those who disappeared in failure. Yet, we also hear rumors of special people that never give up. Prayer and wishes are essential. They set the goals. We might even envision the end result. Yet, many things will happen along the way. Think about it. When I first experienced Jamaica I was probably 13. I am 52 now and leave in a few days. That's a lot of space to wait. Yet, not once did I believe it would never happen. Prayer and wishes usually take time.

It's important to have practice. When I became single, I decided to live married. Ok, this is weird but it works. I dated myself. I tried new things. I asked myself what I liked, loved, and wanted in life. Aren't those the things you ask in a date? I slept with two pillows. I spent time with many married couples. I did family things. I prayed for a wife. I wished to not be alone forever. Yet, I made a great single life. I never lost sight of the things that mattered.

Prayer and Wishes
Chapter Nine: Careful

I have been married again for 14 years. It's longer than my first wife. I have traveled all over the world. I have a degree. All those things happened after I was divorced. Life goes on. Many of my prayers have been answered. Some wishes have been fulfilled. There is more to wish for. More the pray for. To receive? No, to give hope to a future that will not be boring. In-between the answers I live to the best of my ability. Take life one day at a time.

It's about practice. Pray a lot. Wish a ton. Expect to be blessed by God. Yet, put no timelines on it. Whole heartedly expect wishes to come true. Make paths that will help grow those prayer and wish answers. If you want to be a runner then run. Possibly your dream was to race in a marathon. Then begin running. It is all about positive attitude. Reach for goals. Hopefully God will give it a little help in time. Maybe time is needed to see the full path. Practice! Be patient! Never wish for tomorrow because it's true, tomorrow never comes. Live in the moment.

At work, I am a mailman. We get different volumes of mail each day. So, my day is long or short base on what I get. So many of my co-workers are annoyed when a day is long. They are quiet when it's short. Me, I just mosey along doing what I get. Practice patience. I actually do that by playing video games. They take time. I never (mostly) use cheat websites. I fight with the game until I win. It can take me 6 months. Practice patience. Then when I pray or wish it's automatically put into my back pocket. Give God and time room.

Be careful what you wish for. I know I said that before. Yet, mistakes happen more often when we rush. When we desire too much. I struggled recently with death. My mom died. A good friend died. I went to book this vacation and the travel agent that was a good friend had died. I was stunned. I have been brought back to my basic rules: patience, pray, wish, and live. Take life

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

one day at a time. Plan for the future. Work on things. Yet, take what happens as a game to be played. How will you handle your allotted time? Death recently has reminded me of all this.

Be careful. Some things have no answer. They just don't. I think the worst people are those who have an answer to everything. They drive me crazy because they won't shut up until it's all explained perfectly. Sometimes life sucks. That's why we pray and wish. At times, I have said "*I'm not happy today, but let's see what tomorrow will bring.*" Embracing sadness, tragedy, and failure makes us learn. It makes us stronger. Receiving no answer is a good thing. It gives us motivation to seek, look, and try. However, some things are what they are.

Where did God come from? How can the universe begin from nothing? Surly, the universe didn't always exist? Answers? Why did that spouse really leave? Why did that man kill that child? Why did that tragedy happen to her or him? There are not always answers. Prayer can ask for answers. We can wish for answers. Do we want answers or expect answers? There is a difference. People that expect answers just might be disappointed enough to make up their own.

I feel that prayer and wishes are a way through or around things. Time can take us through the answers we seek. Yet, at times, we just need to get by them. The "why" just might be buried in the past. We will never know. That's why fearing things is so silly. Be single forever? Who says. Fear of a plane crash so you don't fly? Who says? Will you really live life in a box just because of fear or failure. Will you hide and be pessimistic because there is no answer. Life means your living. Don't be the walking dead just existing. Practice living!

I think prayer and wishes let the marbles roll around in our head. It's a way of working it out. I have gone to bed frustrated or confused. I pray and wish for answers. Many times, I wake up and know more than I did the night before. Why? A prayer and wish made a path for God to

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

answer. Sometimes the answer is there but through confusion we just can't grasp it. Prayer and wishes have a way of slowing us down. Maybe they even adjust our focus.

It's about working on our heart. That little critter needs love. It needs to be bold. It needs a healthy diet, exercise, and stress relief. Yet, it needs to exercise the most. Stress or a workout can exercise the heart. Too much of either is not good. Too much food is bad. Too much alcohol. Yet, we can handle a little of it all. As a matter of fact, many things in moderation are great for us. Possibly a little prayer and wishing are good too. Maybe a little hope thrown in.

Sadly, here is this whole book in a nut shell. Something greater than us is clearly out there. There are far too many incidences we can't explain. Many people all around the world in different cultures seek answers from something greater. This all can't be random. Something is there. Within that we wish. We pray. Some will say that I am belittling prayer or God by adding wishes. Yet, we all say that word "wish" more than we know. The point is we use these two tools to point us towards something greater.

I believe with all my heart that a prayer is communication. In a way, a wish is too. We want answers. Wishing is just the way that we work out the questions we have. We roll around ways to seek our dreams and desires. Prayer is the same way. If God already knows what we want then why pray? Why wish? They say it's because we need to hear the question again. *We* need too. Half the time I feel God wants to give us time to work it through.

Belief in God is not related to answered prayer. To believe in wishes is not because of answered wishes. I believe it comes back to hope. I hope in a greater God to listen. I hope my wishes will come true. In the mean time I live a pretty good life. My final thought is to be careful. Live life to the fullest. Add prayers and wishes to strive for more. Yet, don't sit around

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Nine: Careful

waiting. Live! God will take your prayers seriously. He takes other people's prayers seriously too. Never believe your prayer is more important than another's.

Respect yourself. Don't stand still. Always hope and strive for more. Pray more. Wish more. Seek the spiritual with all your heart. Maybe you will see God more clearly like I did? In the mean time let the spiritual change you. An atheist lives just to eat and die. You are so much more than that. Why not be open to the spiritual through how prayer and wishing work. It's about finding hope. Where is your hope found? It should be found in what could answer your prayer and wish. Not in prayer and wishes themselves.

I picked this topic this year because some people have said they believe in a higher power but they won't name it. Why? They believe in tarot cards and the spiritual, yet not in God. It's strange to me. The Spiritual has been related to God and the devil for a very long time. Somehow, we have lost touch with that. We are starting to use prayer and wishes as language without real meaning. It's my hope that maybe I've made you rethink that. That is my prayer and wish for you.