

Prayer and Wishes

Chapter Eight: Sane vs Insane

*"The statistics on sanity are that one out of every four people is suffering from a mental illness. Look at your 3 best friends. If they're ok, then it's you."* - Rita Mae Brown

I have a friend who prays with a cloth draped over her head. In the New Testament, a woman is to cover their head before God. My friend believed in it. She accepted the word of God. I suppose she took it literally. The other people in the church figured she was weird. It's Biblical, so how can it be odd or weird? If you knew her, then you knew my friend was off just a bit. I suspect she had about three friends within the church. If they were ok, then she was the insane one.

All the ladies in the prayer group were off just a bit. The fact that I was the only man meant that I too was different too. It's not a man thing to pray at church apparently. If it was, then where were they? They, were calling me odd. So odd, that one pastor sent me to counseling. A pastor dedicated to the life with an unseen God sent the praying guy for mental issues. That's funny, because as a non-Christian, years earlier, I felt all Christians were nuts praying to an unseen God. Now that nut pile was reduced to a group of weird prayer warriors.

Is prayer required in church? Yes, you will hear that from any pastor that prayer is the pillar of a church. Yet, getting pastors to hold prayer meetings or at least participate in them is like pulling teeth. Who wants to look nuts? Ok, Christians are the creepy ones. They think people can rise from the dead. They pray to an invisible God. Of course, he is invisible. makes it easier. I have invisible friends. Yes, nutty people say those things too.

Church is really a microcosm of the world around us. Those nuts are trying to look and act sane. They have corporate boards. The services are calculated and controlled. It's very polished. Why? So, we don't look nuts. If occasionally a nut rolls on the floor, they hide them.

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We were asked to pray. That's what good churches do. Then the complaints on uncomfortableness floated in. That seems to make sane pastors nervous. We can't have that. The prayer team is taken from the sanctuary and given seats in a closet. Out of sight and unfortunately out of mind.

It's true. We were put in a closet. Now it's Biblical. Jesus said we should pray in private. Paul said woman should cover their heads. The total prayer package works in a closet. Oh, but what happens when we come out of the closet? Prayer in Christian circles belongs on their check list. It's like a road trip. We got the map, check. We got the tank full, check. In church it's we got the prayer, sermon, nice soft music, and coffee afterwards, check. Just keep those prayer people in check, ok?

I illustrate this because we all say we will pray for a loved one. Even non-believing people will offer prayer. If a person is hurting or in trouble, we have a check list. Did we offer help, prayer, and (gulp) money? It's not the follow-through that is necessary, it's the intent. We checked the list of nice things we say to those in need. It's not that the three friends don't pray. It's not that they are ok. The game says just look ok. The one who does not hide is the nutty one.

Who is really insane?

*"The Edge... There is no honest way to explain it because the only people who really know where it is are the ones who have gone over."* - Hunter S Thompson.

I only know prayer of the insane. I only know prayer from those who want to look lofty, holy, and important. In Christian circles, to not pray before dinner is sacrilege. Why? Because it's what they do. To pray in church in a church closet is done by the weird. Why? It's what weird people do. I only say weird out of respect for us that do it. Only the different feel called to be prayer warriors. I don't know why, but I know it's true. The others that say they have a prayer

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life would not touch a prayer meeting with a twenty-foot pole. I know, a prayer meeting is always sparse of the one thing they need: people.

Is it insane to pray? No, of course not. We should pray far more often than we do. It's a shame that most prayer happens when people are in trouble. Prayer during the good times can be an awesome experience. It's full of praise, thanksgiving, and joy. Troubled prayer has helplessness, crying, and pleading. Who wants that. Imagine ordering food without a clue how to order. There would be pauses, a lot of "ah's", and awkward moments. The server would be annoyed. Then there are Tim's coffee people. No hesitation, I want a large double, double said at the speed of sound. The server is already making it before your finished ordering.

Would it be nice to offer that type of prayer to God? They say he already knows what you want. So, it's probably done before you ask. There is a story of Jesus being asked to heal a child. Later on, the father realized that the child was healed at the same time he asked. That's it with prayer! Be good at it and there is no confusion. I know that God does not say yes, all the time. Yet, I wonder if our lack of prayer leads to awkwardness. That leads to miscommunication. It leads to halfhearted prayer. A prayer warrior is not insane, just smart. They practice.

Years ago, I made a huge mistake. I wanted to help out some children at school. They gave me a questionnaire form to fill out. They wanted to rule out the insane ones. Don't insane people do a great job of faking normal? Anyways, they asked if I hear voices in my head. At that time, I was on fire for God like never before. I prayed, talked, and laughed with God all the time. No, I did not really talk to him or hear him, but it seemed so close and real at the time. I said yes, I talk to God. They said no, you can't be near children. I get it.

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The insane are those who tell the truth about their private lives. They try wearing a cloth on their head while praying. I feel that mental illness is a gift. These people are more honest than most. They see the world different than most. They treat prayer and wishes with respect. The insane just don't know when to shut up. They can't stop being themselves. The supposedly sane people hide insanity very well.

*"One person's craziness is another person's reality."* - Tim Burton

We go to the movies and live inside the film makers mind for two hours. Lord of the Rings (three hours). These artists and film makers are borderline insane. I say that because they take us to the places we think about but will not say publicly. I know my wife likes horror movies. Yet, she says she hates them. It would be insane to sit for two hours scared. Would it be insane to pray in public knowing people think it's weird? Who ever says it's weird to make a wish. Half the time people ask if you did when the star fell.

So often prayer is offered by people that are half sincere. It's lip service. It's a nice thing to say. Yet, do they really believe it? I heard the story once of a group of Christians praying that a bar would close down. It was only weeks later that it burned to the ground. The bar owner took the Christians to court. He argued that they caused it to burn. The Christians argued that they just prayed. There was nothing to suggest that they caused it to burn down. The judge looked over the bench at them both. He came to the conclusion that the bar owner believed in God more than the Christians did. The bar owner sincerely believed in their prayer more than the Christians had.

It's funny and sad all rolled into one. It's insane to believe a prayer burned down a bar. I told you the story in a previous chapter that we prayed for a bar to close at the center of town. It got mowed down six months later. I believe in prayer more today than I did when we originally

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prayed that prayer. The outcome probably seemed nuts. How could that happen? Yet, God asks us to pray. It's not insane. I wonder if half the time were asked to pray just to help our minds work it out. Life sometimes seems crazy. In prayer, it's like meditation. Just roll life around in our heads until it makes sense, or to give God time to burn it all down.

They say that God wants us to see it his way. We tend to pray for what we want and how we want it. That is usually not reality. God needs us to see reality. Prayer and meditation give God room to show us reality. What seems insane and impossible has a way of turning into sane and possible solutions. I feel prayer looks around corners and under rocks. Solutions are either right in front of us, or just out of reach. Reality takes the time to see what can't be seen.

So, when we wish, it's the same thing. I did say that a prayer is to someone. A wish is a thought or projection of desire. Yet, we wish for impossible things like that beautiful girl serving at Tim Hortons. We desire that guy on the baseball team. How do we get them to notice us? Usually were too shy or don't believe it's possible. A wish hopes there is a way we cannot see. Maybe we hope their eyes are open. We want fate to see us clearly. Isn't wishing fate would help us the beginnings of insanity?

Is it insane to desire things we cannot have? I doubt it. I feel it's the human past time. We all do it. We wish to win. We wish to have that car or stereo. People wish all the time. That well in Europe is full of three million pounds. Three million!!! Don't tell me we think wishing is insane. I think throwing hard earned money in a well is insane. The guy who collects it thinks it's nuts too, but he'll take it.

If you ask people who they wish too, the answers are all over the board. I have been reading about wishes and it seems the most common answer is good karma. We do it for good

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intent to shine upon us. We pray and hope God will look kindly upon us. I said in chapter 3 that a professor believed that hope is positively spurred on by wishing. Wishing is a positive thing. I know praying is too. Yet, praying has been labeled insane by some. However, who labels wishing as insane. Nobody!

*“I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity.” “Don't worry. You're just as sane as I am.” “Sanity is a madness put to good uses.” - Edgar Allen Poe*

I feel that people who try and live sane lives are the crazy ones. Life is full of plot twists and turns. It's insanity to control that. Life is a tiger. I have met so many people who live their lives holding that tiger by the tail. I know someone who made a successful life to 74 years old. They own a big house, land, and a business. The inside of their home is rich enough. Yet, they are struggling to live on less while heading towards retirement. Something is wrong with that.

I feel it's trying to hold on to life too tight. The Bible in Ecclesiastics says there is a time for everything. Surely there is a time to retire. Nobody says you have to. Is your body telling you it's time? At some point it's time for everything. Yet, if we try and hold on too long, the tiger gets loose. We can't hold on forever. To me, it's insane to be shackled to fate, work, or even life itself. Sometimes we need to embrace what life brings.

How could my friend be struggling financially? Maybe they lived too high and did not prepare for the too low. I think the sane trying to hold on to the perfect life is insane. Life will change. As I get older I can see it. My body, circumstances, and life as I knew it are changing. It would be insanity to hold one to the past life as I age. Like it or not life will go on without considering you. Just don't make it a tiger or hold on too tight.

I met a lady who was very pretty. She had a chip on her shoulder. Way too serious. She was divorced and aggressive. She realized I was a Christian. I have never heard someone call out

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so quickly, confidently, and arrogantly that they were an atheist. Be what you want to be, I'm cool with that. Yet, I left feeling uneasy. Does she have room to grow? Room to wonder, explore, or believe in anything. Where is her hope, desires, and dreams? She seemed so sure there was nothing to believe in. I just feel it's hollow to believe in nothing. The way life is, that seems crazy.

There certainly people who think religious people are nuts. Why are they so angry at those who believe? Is it really all that bad to hope in a heaven? To dream of living forever? If were wrong then who cares. If the atheist is wrong then hell better be a good option. It just seems insane to me to reject what you don't see or know. Didn't we evolve as humans from a horse to a rocket ship? I'm sure the guy on the horse thought that was impossible or nuts back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century to fly. Yet, that person more than likely believed in an unseen God. Today we have rocket shuttles. The unseen God thing seems nuts.

Our sanity is relative to our beliefs. I know some people think the world is flat. Really? Are we back there again? That seems nuts. They think that round world believers are crazy. Certainly, we tossed up an apple in the middle ages and it fell to the ground. Today we believe it's gravity. I have a hard time with gamblers. They see possibility at the blackjack table. I think it's a waste. I love playing video games. Is it a waste of time? Who are the sane?

*What we don't know disturbs what we do know- J.V. McGee*

I love that saying because we need to think about it. People tend to be bothered about things they want to dismiss. Usually they know nothing about those things. Yet, they have an opinion. My opinion of Christianity was one of disdain and mockery. Did I know Christianity? No, but I had an opinion. It bugged me to death. Yet, once I gain knowledge, what I used to

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believe seemed crazy. I became less bothered by what I did not know. The most interesting part is that I am more open today than in years past. The unknown does not disturb me as it once did.

Somehow, I believe the fabric of our existence is based on prayer and wishing. A positive outlook is essential. We need to hope. Life is full of tragedy and misfortune. Why go to movies at all? They take us out of reality and into someone else's dreams. Call it the escape clause. We chose nice words to call a weekend away *a retreat*. Is it a vacation from life? We pray for a better life. We wish for a better life. Isn't that the sane thing to do? Is it that crazy?

Then there are those trying to tame the tiger. They try and mold life to be a certain way. At 74 yrs. old you are at the mercy of time. I had a friend who died of cancer. It was the worst year of his life. I bet he had hopes and plans. Death had other ideas. His daughter came to his aid. After he died she went back home to a bad marriage. I bet she prayed and wished for a better year. Is that so silly?

It astounds me to think there are people who angrily reject prayer and wishes. It's all bunk. That nonsense is a waste of time. Yet, aren't they the tight ones? The angry and unforgiving? There is no room for what's beyond them. Yet, they stringently believe in life beyond the stars. People love things that are predicted but unseen, unproven. They love to hope and dream of the far away. Are they the sane ones?

Many people would like a little outlet for hope. A place to wish and pray for help. To me it's not crazy but smart. Heaven seems far away. Sometimes hope feels that way too. What if prayer and wishes brought them a little closer. If you threw a penny into a well is it stupid. It's a penny. What's the harm? Oh, they say the harm is false hope. Ok, fine, what is true hope then?

*"We all suffer from dreams."* — Bernard Cornwell, *Death of Kings*

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I keep coming back to Thomas Edison. He dreamt of light. He believed there was a way. I am sure others doubted him. Yet, his quote of a thousand wrong ways to invent a light bulb rings true with hope. Maybe he wished. Maybe he prayed. It's quite possible he tried and failed until he tried and succeeded. Either way he held hope. Those who mock prayer and wishes have no hope. They just live. When things go wrong and the tiger is loose, they crumble.

Robert Burns wrote of mice and men "*the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.*" Isn't failure part of winning? What seems insane can become sane in time. I did not believe in God years ago. Praying seemed insane. My marriage failed and I began to pray. Go figure. So many people pray to gain something. I prayed to get back my marriage. Yet, we all know that sometimes prayers and wishes don't come true.

It might be better to pray and wish for an outcome. To see what could be rather than what is not. Michelangelo did not see the block of marble. He saw the stature of David inside. To believe in nothing holds no hope. It sees nothing to mold, invent, and create. That type of life just exists. Prayer and wishes point towards something else beyond ourselves. Beyond what we know and see.

Is it so crazy to chip away at this life to find something beautiful? Those who call people insane just refuse to see anything below the stone. My daughter is slightly autistic. Yet, she sees life better than I do. Funny enough, I awkwardly enter her world to see what she sees. I fumble through that experience. I cannot see her mind. Yet I believe her. I can't imagine what she thinks but it's real to her.

So here I sit looking at her. I listen. I suppose I snicker at her understanding of life. yet, the key to admiration and love is understanding, isn't it? Maybe, I can't understand her mind but

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I want to. Possibly, she will let me peer into her world. It's about sharing. We share, hope, and pass on knowledge. In a movie we share ideas and a story. In books we gain knowledge and adventure. It's all about sharing in others without a shred of understanding. Yet, we hope to. We want to.

Who has life's answers. An atheist says nobody does but science. A religious person says God does through the unknown. Isn't science unknown until proven? Yet, the men and women in science dream of answers. They long for what they hope for and believe in. What happens when science disproves a theory? Science can't Dis-prove God? How do you Dis-prove the unseen? Can you dis-prove a prayer or a wish? It's insane to try. What a waste of time.

To wish is to dream of answers. The same could be said of prayer. Is it that insane to seek answers? I feel the world of the religious is not that different than the atheist or science guy. We all want understanding and answers. How we get there is mute. Who cares how? I'm sure several of the ways to not invent a light bulb were crazy. Yet, they pointed to a same answer eventually. Sure, you wished until it happened. We prayed until it worked. We experimented until it worked too. To make the unfound a reality.

The mind of the insane is faithful to wonder. The sane inventor spends a crazy amount of time searching. The Bible says the Spirit of God searches the depths of God. The Spirit digs deep to answer our prayer. The sane and insane alike are searching. The seemingly insane just express it more. The supposedly sane are more reserved. Both are seeking the same truths. How do we move forward? How do we turn hope into a beautiful thing. I believe the Spirit is willing to take the time to find a way through God. The Spirit has hope that Gods will and our wishes and prayers can be answered together in some insane fashion.

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They say more than 350,000 confederate white soldiers lost their lives for a cause that was mainly not theirs. The wishes and prayers of the African slave community became their cause. These confederates were not African but they believed in freedom. They believed in equality. Did they know they would win? No, but they hoped in the battle for what is right. Sometimes we fight for things we cannot see. It's the same with prayer and wishes. Sometimes we need to fight for the unseen through prayer and wishes.

It's not sane to discount prayer and wishes. It's not insane to believe in prayer and wishes. Through the centuries prayer and wishes have worked. Sometimes the outcome was different than they hoped. Yet, something clearly happened to move the unjust to just. The impossible to possible. Just because we can't find it does not mean it's missing. Those who spent a lifetime searching for a missing link to a theory just might have had tunnel vision. Possibly the real answer passed them by as they looked the other way.

Is it possible to be looking for the wrong answer? There is a crazy story of a man named Jim Elliot who refused to marry his first wife until God said yes. He waited and waited. Time was clearly passing by. Finally, he felt he received an answer and they married. Soon afterwards, he was killed trying to minister to cannibals in Ecuador. All the time spent waiting tossed aside time with his future wife in my eyes.

The crazy part is providence. I feel that what will happen tends to happen. Not all the time but most of the time. Jim could have been married and ministered to indigenous people. I suppose she might have been killed too. Elizabeth Elliot eventually traveled to this same area and offered those cannibals God. He waited and hoped to marry. She hoped for a life with him. I just feel his answer was staring him in the face with a dress on and he missed it. I could be wrong.

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Maybe God planned it this way. The prayer for marriage was answered. Yet, the outcome was different than imagined.

Another woman named Marie Ens went with her husband to Cambodia to set up mission work. He died. Marie soon after began to question her future. She thought she knew. Where her prayer and wishes met or dashed? God opened her eyes to a new plan. A place of rescue for Cambodia orphans. I am sure she and her husband prayed for success. Success found a strange way of presenting itself. I just believe it's insane to hang all hope on answered wishes and prayer. Providence, fate, and the will of God trumps your plan.

It's not insane to hope and pray. Who knows how it works out? It's not silly to wish. Creating a positive outlook by wishing is a very good thing. It's important to look beyond what we don't know. To see past the unseen. Those who say *eat and drink, because tomorrow we die* are the insane ones. Maybe there is more out there. They might argue there isn't more. Don't we all suffer from dreams? Some people have just forgotten that. Sometimes we forge blinders to the real plan and answers.

Back to my friend who is 74. Don't hang your world on a prayer. Don't rely on wishes to come true. Oh, but did you not just say to hope? Yes, but life will come. I believe many paths will present themselves. Which one? That is where praying and wishing come in. Do you desire to see clearly? I fear my friend worked with no end in sight. Maybe the fear of living differently scared him. I think Edison saw the light bulb inside his mistakes just like Michelangelo saw David in the marble. I think it's insane not to dream and plan for the outcome like retiring. It does not need to be a shock.

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It's insane not to look forward to different periods in our lives. I have had two different wives. I have had the same job for 30 years. I travel now because I wish to see more. I don't want to leave this world without turning a few stones. Which stones? I am planning to retire from my job, yet not from life. I think the coolest part of dreaming is dreaming up new stuff. I need to do new things to keep me young. My hope for more still has wishes and prayers in it. I think it's the sane thing to do.

I just wrote 13 pages building a case for one thing: be open to change. I could have saved us a lot of reading. It's insane to close yourself off to the impossible. Thank God Edison never did. I think the reason Einstein believed in God is because he hoped for more beyond himself. Just don't call what seems weird or impossible insanity. In time it might become the sane truth. We hope, wish, and pray for more in life. That is exactly how we got planes, trains, and electricity. I was closed off, yet once I went beyond my own understanding, I have opened up. That my friend was a miracle.

So, I chose to pray. I have wished. My heart sings for what I cannot see. Who knows what is really out there. I say let's go find out. I will pray for paths to explore. I wish for adventure and understanding. God is mysterious to me. That seems saner than just dying an atheist's death. I would like to end this book on a semi sour note. Why? Because I want you to be afraid of getting stuck. Be fearful that prayers and wishes will not go your way. Don't bank on life being your best friend. Make life better by praying for more. Wishing for more. Let's turn to *being careful* in our last look at prayer and wishes.