

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter Two: Something greater

*The mind is everything. What you think you become- Buddha*

I was going to put this chapter after the discussion on prayer and wishes. It made sense at the time, we should talk about wishing and praying first. Then, in studying different religions and folk stories, I realized that there was a common theme. People use prayer and wishes to contact something greater. The belief in the spiritual seems to drive wishes and prayer.

Again, I was asking the question: maybe if we see wishes as they are it would make sense. The same could be said of prayer. Yet, I keep coming back to who we wish and pray to. People of the past, present, and in different cultures, all seek something greater. That settled it for me. We need to dive into the greater. What or who is that?

It makes sense to talk about who we wish or pray to first. Yet, there is a nagging feeling deep inside me that said no. To that thought, maybe we should pause just for a second. In understanding a wish, we need to think about it. Wishing in the ancient world is different than today. Prayer in the ancient world is similar to today, but somehow different. I then began to think that what we wish or pray to might have changed also. A prayer or a wish might be intended to accomplish different goals than in times past.

There are questions. Did the way ancient people prayed still hold value today? Do wishes mean the same thing today as they did hundreds of years ago? Historical cultures were mostly agrarian in nature. There was little to no technology. To ask for help from something greater made sense. They did not have many of the material things we now take for granted like cell phones and the internet. They relied on weather and seasons far more than we do today. When you have little, something greater might help. A God or Spirit possibly.

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It does not mean they were backwards or less than us. Today, we rely on companies, stock markets, and industry to make our lives livable. To need a God seems distant. We need Apple and Microsoft more than God. Why wish if I can gamble or find it on the internet. Wishing and praying seem like distant beliefs. Yet, I know people strive for something greater. The belief in the mystical and spiritual run deep within us. It's so true because astrology is big business. Tarot card reading is very popular. Even angels and evil things are popular culture. However, we're not becoming the atheists people had projected. We may seem advanced, but our belief in the spiritual and mystical is very much alive.

We laugh at the past and all their silly backward ways. Yet, they would probably be astounded at our reliance on corporations. Through history everything has a shelf life. Cultures and governments fall. We all know that people fail. Religions seem to disappoint. Movements, events, and powerful moments in time wither away as the clock ticks by. I am reading this book about habits. The writer is making reference to the Rosa Parks incident in Montgomery Alabama. Ms. Parks refused to move from her seat on a racially segregated public bus. The authorities arrested her. In that moment, the civil liberties movement began. America has never been the same since.

A young Pastor named Martin Luther King Jr. was asked to help keep the peace and head up the racial plight of the African American. He wondered in that moment how this movement could sustain itself. He believed in peaceful demonstrations and responsible talk. He was right. Peaceful demonstrations are better. Yet, over the long haul that was not what has happened. Since that moment, there have been dozens of peaceful marches and equally dozens of riots. Today, America has racial freedom, yet the strife, discord, and a gulf between racial lines seems like a Grand Canyon. The movement won, but I fear people have forgotten why.

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This brings me back to something greater. Martin Luther King Jr. hoped this movement would become something greater, yet today it's an utter failure in many ways. Violence and racial divide permeate America like a tinder box waiting to explode. The other side is Jesus. That pastor believed that if we acted like Jesus towards our problems, things would work out. It's true that if we believe in the teachings of Jesus there is a chance. However, if we just believe in the ideals of a movement and never act, then all hell could break loose.

*The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry-* Robert Burns

I believe that something greater is the key. Our plans are for peace. Our plans are for a happy life. Great plans are made to help things go well. Then we have mice and men so to speak. People tend to screw things up with pride, overconfidence, anger, and malice. A prayer is nice. A wish is good. Yet, actions speak louder than words. Rosa Parks decided on action. It's interesting that people put trust in a movement. These days we have the #metoo hash tag. Racial divide still exists almost 70 years after that bus ride. How long will *me-too* last? I feel we need something greater.

I can bet that most of us feel that something greater like a God or guardian angel should be companionate, nice, and kind. Something greater than ourselves should act better than us. We hope for that and seek for that in prayer and wishes. Happiness and peace need a wish to come true. On its own, peace and happiness seem to flounder. We pray because life is harsh at times. Relief seems like a miracle when it happens.

Wishing and praying is probably the major avenue we use in seeking help from something greater. This is how we call out in desperation to something greater. There is no doubt that we seek help. Why do gambling, psychics, and prophecy make so much money. People still

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want relief. We somehow believe that life should not be this hard. So, we pray and wish. We humbly get on our knees or drop coins in a well. I see it, yet, I also see us relying on false Gods and spirits to provide. Our vision of who we wish and pray to are different than in centuries past. We have forgotten who the greater is. There is disconnect today, yet the coins and knees keep dropping.

I thought deeply about wishing. I thought deeply about prayer. Then it hit me. Should we attach them to spirits, idols or Gods? Are they just a form of hope? I was reading explanations of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. They all pray. There are no wishes. There is however, deep solitude of reflection in each one. They say that Hindu and Buddhism focus on the inside. I suppose Christianity and Islam do too. The difference seems to be: who are we focusing on? Ourselves or something greater?

It's ironic to me that we pray for things. We rely on a wide spectrum of things from credit cards to the information on the internet. Then I hear the prayers. So, few people really rely on God. I can't imagine that wishing wells have as many coins in them as they used to. I find it ironic because the things we rely on these days have fallen. God is still there in the shadows waiting. We wish and pray but not to him most of the time. It's all seems to be lip service.

We also wish for stuff. In the four major religions, it's not that way at all. Yes, God provides. Yes, we can pray to him. Yet, we are also encouraged to reflect on our own inner being. We are to reject personal gain, and focus on the will of the God. The basic pillars of religion are respect, charity, humbleness, and compassion. It would not take a rocket scientist to see that is not the religion we know today. We look to ideology and the corporate model far more

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than what God really wants. I feel we are far removed from knowing God and knowing ourselves.

I do feel we are disconnected from what a wish and prayer were in history. What the 1<sup>st</sup> century saw in God might look different in the 21<sup>st</sup>. How we approach the spiritual has change over time. That means our view of prayer and wishes may have changed as well. How we see life today is different than in other periods of time. We have become individual people rather than community oriented.

Recently we have become more socially conscious. In the past, people were communal and tribal. It's also clear that different cultures treat life and Gods differently. To pray in Canada looks different than in Indonesia. A wish is probably not as valued in America as it is in Europe. Yet, we do take some time to pray and wish when the need arises. Why? No matter the time period or culture, people believe in something greater than themselves.

I'll admit, as a Christian this topic gives me shivers. It makes me queasy. Am I being deceived? Am I easily manipulated? I believe in God but some parts of our ancient history are odd. People have believed in spirits for a very long time. I agree that old cultures did not have atheists. It was more real back then. Today God is in the shadows. We don't feel the need to pray or wish as we once did. Were they over focused or are we under focused? Between our ancestors and today's culture: who is right?

I can see the argument that we have gods to explain the unknown. In ancient times we prayed to a sun or moon god. There are sea gods and water nymphs. I read a bunch of information on European spirits. Do you think it's odd that cultures all over the world have spirits and Gods? Cultures that never met, have similar looking spirits and similar acting gods.

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How is that possible? Our modern Gods have the resemblance of ancient deities. What is going on?

It would be very easy for intelligent men and women to reject the spiritual. Obviously, sun gods are silly. The sun is a celestial sphere that works a certain way. Duh. The oceans don't have krakens and mermaids. Well, I've never heard of them being discovered. Yet, men of the sea fear the oceans. Fear it because of its unpredictable power. The term "I didn't see that coming" applies to the sea. I think it applies to gods too. Maybe that's why it's called the supernatural. Unknown should not mean it does not exist. It might be more likely: has not been discovered yet.

We wish and it comes true. Is that dumb luck? We pray and it is apparently heard and granted. Just a coincidence? There are many, many people who believe in conspiracies. People who believe in science without a shred of proof. These days we read stories on the net. Many of them are called fake news. People have been enraged by fake news. Yet, they believe it. Why? Is global warming real? That depends on who you talk too. Some of the answers (as proof) are amazing. Throughout history we have tried to find answers to the unexplainable. Some have called them spirits, gods, or something else. It seems today that we mock the spiritual and embrace fake news.

I love the Hindu and Buddhism religions. They search for meaning in this life. yet, they are mindful of the future. What we do now will affect us later. In regeneration, they both differ on how we will regenerate. Reincarnation is real to them. To the Hindu it's a soul of life that moves on. To a Buddhist it's an essence of life that moves on. Something moves on. Christians

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and Islamists believe in the soul. This spiritual essence called the soul moves on to be with God after death. Who is right?

People argue over this ancient war of the spirits. Who is right? This is a hurricane of ideas, theology, and belief. Today we have the same type of war between global warming, science, and weather. Each thing points to and away from the truth. I feel it's the same with the spiritual. Yet, in the eye of these storms is the truth. It seems elusive, invisible, and unattainable. I think the partial truth is found in the concepts of prayer and wishes. Why does every culture throughout history have these two things if it's all in our heads?

Let's take a small look back at the ancient road of history. Possibly our ancestors have planted traditional seeds in us. These seeds have grown into religion. They have also grown into how we approach the unexplainable. Global warming has theories. Religion has theories. It's amazing how strong the opinions are. People have fought wars over these theories. There has been murder and chaos just to make a belief the right one. Such passion can't be fabricated can it? The spiritual is clearly not a fabrication, even in this day and age. From books, movies, and tarot cards: people love the spiritual.

I think that is why we believe it's taboo to pass under a ladder. We believe it. Why do we believe in aliens and dragons? We believe it. How could ancient Greece, Germany, China, and many countries have similar taboo's and Gods? Certainly, if these things are not real, then one culture must have believed in nothing. Oh, I am sure if I dug hard enough, I could find someone who discovered one atheist culture. Yet, almost unequivocally, most cultures fear the wilderness, water, and sin. We, the human race has revered and feared something greater.

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Clean living is attached to prosperity. Why? Because we believe it. What comes around goes around is real. Why? Because we believe it. There is a portion of Greek philosophy that feels we believe in the supernatural distinctly because they exist. Why believe in a god or spirit if they are fake? Why does basically the whole world believe that something spiritual is out there? Like I said, even today, we believe in global warming without real facts. What is really causing global warming? The God's?

I suppose we have the eye test. Clearly our weather has been different. Has social media made weather look different? Clearly pollution and over population are an issue. Clearly solar flares and climate periods (ice age) are an issue. What caused global weather changes millions of years ago? Apparently not the industrial revolution. Yet, the eye does not lie. I think that when it comes to the spiritual, the heart does not lie either.

In ancient times, people prayed when the mysterious or unexplainable happened. People disappeared mysteriously then as they do today. Gosh, we have had several airliners disappear. In this day and age, we can't find them? The ancients believed the spirits did it. Today we say science will answer the why, yet, people and planes are still missing. There is the unexplainable. People have tried to make sense of death and odd events forever. Our history is full of unexplainable things. Something greater (unexplainable) might be just beyond our eyes.

The other day a rocket blasted off in California. Many people called in a UFO sighting. We believe in UFO'S without a shred of proof. I bet even when they found out it was a rocket people still believed it was aliens. They probably said the government is covering it up. Yet, they mock the existence of God. They scoff at the notion of evil spirits. Believing and explaining



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without a shred of proof is the flavor of this era. In ancient times it was called folk lore and fairy tales. It was attached to God's and spirits too.

People were cautious of water in Germanic times. Men of the Nordic were weary of the sea. The forests in Japan are mysterious and dangerous. The same could be said in the African, wilderness, North American Native superstitions, and many others tell of the existence of something greater. Every culture has stories. They all have traditions and folk lore. Are they just the poor and uneducated? If that were so, then why have we believed in this stuff for thousands of years and hundreds of generations? The common theory is that we are getting smarter. Really?

Men threw their armor into the water to appease the water gods. They threw things into the sea to appease the ocean gods. We have sacrifices all over the place to appease something greater. There is salt over the shoulder. Avoiding ladders and wishing on falling stars. I could go on and on about the things we worship, honor, appease, and avoid to make the gods happy.

The reasons are the same all over the world too. We wish for happiness. We pray for safety. Materials were thrown into the well to ask for victory. A gift or sacrifice was given to have abundant journeys and harvests. It's taboo to tell a wish. It's taboo to reveal a prayer. People travel on a spiritual journey in solace to find what they are looking for. Why are we looking? Maybe it's because something unseen is real.

To be fair, the orient is more about the inside than outside. They want to seek inner peace. They believe that it's attainable within us. In Christianity, we have a God who lives beyond us. Yet, he sends an inner spirit to guide us. The Hindu believes we can harness our inner essence. Oddly enough, those Orientals also try and appease that essence. In Islam and the Jewish God, they are asking for guidance, knowledge, and wisdom. Being good is a key. Being

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obedient is a key. These are the traditions of the whole world. Karma seems to exist in many forms. Is that why we pray, wish, and hope to unseen forces. To appease the gods?

It's fascinating that some groups like Alcoholics Anonymous lean on a higher power. Why not God or our inner essence? Because we all identify with something greater than ourselves. The theory that: if we think it's real then it must exist is true. We believed in the stars. Men and women dreamed and pursued the stars. We have telescopes and star charts because it exists to find. There are some that believe we are in a dome called earth. They say outer space is not real. Yet, people have looked beyond that. They have searched for something greater than just theories.

A woman on a ship is a bad luck theory. It's an interesting theory too. I read several theories and stories of why it's bad luck for women to be on ships. They believed that the Gods desired the women. A storm was sent to bring the women down to them. So, men threw the women into the sea to stop a storm. Why? They believed it. We celebrate Christmas. Why, because we believe it. We tell children Santa exists because deep down we want to believe. In time we don't seem to know where the 25<sup>th</sup> of December comes from. Is the Easter bunny a theory or a good story? What we believe is intriguing.

People knock on wood just to be sure. They rub a lucky coin or use a lucky number just to be safe. It's ironic that we usually say *better safe than sorry*. Yet, we say that superstitious stuff is just baloney. However, we use certain numbers, wear lucky shirts, and step past ladders just to be sure. We don't really win much either or there would be a lot richer people. Life is still hard. Probably in a poll, prayer and wishes only come true 1% of the time. Yet, we pray and wish regularly. Why? Because we believe in just in case.

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Ok, so we take all these fairy tales and all this folk lore and wrap them up in tradition. I know people don't really believe that there was a world-wide flood like in the Noah story. Yet, reports of a great flood exist all over the world. Clearly something involving a lot of water happened in ancient times. The Grand Canyon, the Wadi Rum, and other land anomalies exist because of a great movement of water. There are shells in the Rocky Mountains thousands of miles from the sea. It's either the mountains raised up or the water receded. Theories, conjecture, or myth?

My favorite is the nothing factor. Why do we exist? Can anyone explain how we could start from nothing. Oh, Patrick there was the big bang. That's where we came from. Ok, but what made the chemicals that made the big bang. Oh, that's silly Patrick, the big bang did that too. It's odd that people accept something like the big bang but the where, how, why, and when do not matter. So where did the universe come from before the big bang? It all had to start somewhere didn't it?

It's mind busting. We should not exist. Everything has a beginning doesn't it? Yet, we are at a loss to accept that. However, we believe something happened. We believe that a universe was created. God created? Oh, that's crazy. A wish is to who? A higher power? To God? No, that's crazy. Spirits in the woods? No, that's silly. Yet, we throw more coins, pause at shooting stars, throw salt, and knock on wood. Why? Because we believe there is a chance.

So, yes there is a chance the big bang happened. It sort of makes sense. Darwin had a theory that we evolved and its survival of the fittest. Yet, in his last years, scientific discoveries had him disputing his own theories. We see the moon is round but we think the world is flat. We see the sun move but we believe that the earth rotates around it. Scientific? Sure, but some

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believe it and others don't. It's interesting that we expect people to believe us. Yet, some believe in conspiracies, aliens, and flat earths. Others think that's all rubbish. On Sunday I go to church in a mall. On Sunday, folks go to the mall. We both believe in the mall but not in God.

Why pray to a non-existing God? Why wish to a star or pile of rocks? I believe it's because we've decided some part of it is real. Jesus is brilliant. They said "make us believe." Jesus smartly said "*you want a sign but the only one I'm giving is the sign of Jonah.*" That was the one story they refused to believe. Men don't survive being swallowed by a big fish for three days. I call it the impossible story. Yet, they were clamoring for an impossible miracle. Why? Because they had heard the stories and seen Jesus miracles for three years. They saw something greater.

We believe in a lucky rabbit's foot without a shred of proof. A lucky number or lucky sign. *Wish me luck. Hope for the best. Pray I get there.* We have heard them all because people keep saying them. I believe it's because deep down we know this world is deeper than one dimensional. We love Star Wars, demon movies, and Santa because there is something inviting to them. A four-leaf clover and a Blarney Stone. People will search for anything to bring them luck. Deep down why? Because they believe it.

It's time we quit choosing our side. Yes, we believe in things. Yet, our belief is not the only one. Everyone has their own lucky number. Some pray while others wish. It's not holy, Christian, or practical but Tarot Cards, and Psychics have their place. These seers have existed forever. Is it belief in the spiritual, demons, or God? It's not about right and wrong. It's about what do you place your hope in? If you want hope, then place it in something greater than you.

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Let's point people in the spiritual direction. Oh, so they don't believe what you believe. That's blasphemy. Yet, how do most people start. A seed of the spiritual is planted. The atheist has no seeds I suppose. I'd rather have people believe in something greater. Maybe in time they will see what is real. What really works. In the mean time they search and hope for so much more. That s a really good thing.

Because of my own experience I believe in God. I have seen too much to discount something in God. The Bible is too big to just be a coincidence. Four thousand years of one religion is not a hoax. How could we exist if nothing existed first? Seems like a miracle somehow. Yet, I don't pray to get what I want. I pray to have dialogue with God. I pray for others first and then myself. A wish is just for just me usually. My greater than me search led me to the Jewish God of communication and blessings.

I have seen people change for the better in church. I suppose some have become worse. I have witnessed the power of prayer. I have witnessed the lack of prayer too. The spiritual has changed me. I was in distress and a friend gave me a tape from DR. Laura called *Ten stupid things men do to screw up their lives*. She said *you need the spiritual. Come on men you know you do*. She knew that we have many sides: the spiritual and physical. We have a happy, sad, and frustrated side too. What DR. Laura was getting at is that we must play in all parts of our playground. My God works that way.

I believe God wants us to do that. I know people who say they are spiritual. All they do is quote scripture. They serve at church, read the Bible, and reject this world. Yet, many of them fall away because it's not enough. We are multi-faceted people. God made us that way. We lean towards the spiritual because we were meant to. That's the same with why we feel better

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working out. We have a physical side too. To deny ourselves one aspect seems to over sensitize the other. It's just that way.

I believe that this earth was created by God. Within that, I suspect that déjà vu, premonitions, and intuition play a role. I believe those avenues are woven into the created fabric. Why do you get a weird feeling about someone? Why did you know that was a lucky number? How is it that he was the right one? Did you just know? Did you pray or wish first? Something else that we can't see is here on earth. I call it the spiritual realm. You might call it kinetic energy. We are connected by something unseen. Science has never got a handle on that. It drives them nuts. Some stupid Christians say that dinosaurs never existed yet we have strange bones from the past. We can see them, touch them, and smell them. It's real. They boast of the spiritual without a shed of proof. They can't touch, see, or smell God. Yet, they say he exists.

The Bible exists so God exists. The Lord of the Rings books exist so Dwarves exist. Dragons exist. It's plainly stupid to use the Bible argument. God does not exist because of the Bible does. The Bible exists because of God. The universe exists. It's in the how it happened that is debatable. The spiritual does exist. We all know it does. Its debatable how? Something greater just might have some of those unfound answers we are always searching for. We wish for answers. Pray for answers. To whom?

There is a section of religion called apologetics. It's the practice of proving God. Nothing but trouble has come from this practice. How do you prove God exists? We are having enough trouble proving the world is round. It's time to stop trying to win the argument. What it is time for is taking a stand on hope. Do you hope in a wish? Do you hope in a prayer? What do you

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believe in, have faith in, and have hope in? Is it in the prayer or wish you hope in? It should be in something greater that can deliver results.

Something greater than ourselves has been sought after since the beginning of time. This pursuit did not stop just because an atheist said so. If God does not exist then why do atheists argue about the nonexistence of the Spiritual? Atheists are passionate too. Believers in the spiritual are passionate as well. By hoping in something greater than ourselves: we pray. The coin going plop in well water is satisfying. We love that sound. I believe we hope in something greater while dropping that coin in a well.

Something is in the air? This planet and the universe are way to uniformed for random happenings. Open your eyes. Look at this world. Dinosaurs? Platypus? We have amoebas to penguins. People to roses. It's just not that simple. Then we have intuition, gut feelings, and a desire for the unknown. What if we hope because someone put a desire for answers in us. They put the desire for the unknown, spiritual, and mystical within us. Could we really have created all the religions and God's just because? Let's go further in the next chapter. Maybe beyond what we know.

Hebrews 11:1 *“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”*