

Prayer and Wishes  
Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

*We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope- Martin Luther King, Jr*

Ultimately, standing there naked in front of the mirror, where is your hope found? I say naked because there can't be clothes to admire. There can't be expensive jewelry or a debonair hat to ogle over. No, that would not be fair. It has to be just you, naked, in all your marvel and dysfunction. As you gaze at your reflection, where is your hope found? I love the line in the *Lord of the rings* where the warrior says "*do not trust in hope, it has forsaken this land.*" To have hope, there needs to be belief in something.

If we believe in something, does it need to be in a God? Should I dig for a coin to toss in a well? What do you believe in? Whom or what motivates your day? Is it the person in the mirror or something else? I watched a lacrosse player for years tap the net in a certain fashion before each game. Was it for luck? People cross themselves or point to the sky after scoring a touchdown. It seems people play for or to something greater than themselves.

I was watching a show the other night about a killer on the loose. One of the people hiding in peril said "isn't this the moment when the police arrive." When we are at the end of our rope; where is that kind of help found? A victim cries "save me, I'm living in fear of another." The bills just keep mounting. When will the Calvary arrive? Some people are waiting for their ship to come in. In relief we say "were safe now the dawn is rising." Who saves you when all is lost? When hope seems hopeless?

I have learned a thing or two about hope. In order to pray you need hope. To make a wish seems silly without hope. We are looking for something to believe in? A person, place or thing that will rescue you? Thousands of years ago, the Bible stated that a savior (Christ) would return

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

God's creation to the way they were meant to be. Generation after generation questioned the signs of the times. Is this the year of our salvation? Is this man (the Christ) the one we were promised? History has been looking for hope for a long time.

I have been doing a study on *who is Jesus*. There were so many people in the Bible who were asking who this (Christ) man was. Some said a carpenter while others alluded to a prophet or teacher. During Jesus trial, they kept asking him if he was the Christ. If I claimed to be the president, who would believe me? Not many since I'm Canadian and not American. If I was put on trial they would not ask me if I was the president. No, they would ask me who I really was. That's not what happened to Jesus. They wanted to know if he was this Christ.

The people questioning Jesus always asked if he was this Christ first. Why? In those days things were bad. They were under Roman rule. There were many poor villagers. People of all kinds were looking for the savior. A person of hope, because hope had forsaken those lands. They were looking for this Christ. Yet, in the end, that hope was not found in Jesus. Their idea of a savior did not speak peace. They wanted war to rid the land of the enemy. Their hope was not nailed on a cross. They were looking for a victorious general. Jesus didn't fit their savior perception. They hoped for something else.

I mention Jesus because he is where many have sought out hope. Some have found salvation in him while others have been left disillusioned by the whole religious experience. Our expectations of what should save us will be our greatest hope or worst nightmare. Is hope found on a cross. Ultimately yes, but on earth right now, the answer might be not yet. A Jesus in heaven is not paying my bills, or giving me the girl I desire. He hasn't given any of us the leaders

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

to save the world. No, that is left to hope. It's like the Israelites before us searching and waiting.

So, we pray, hope or wish for relief in the here and now.

Is there a God? Wow, imaginative question? I suppose you could read several thousand other books asking the same question. What does any God have to do with prayer and wishes? In my studies for this book I found several interesting themes. One of those themes comes in the form of a shooting star. The Greek astronomer Ptolemy wrote that the gods hold the stars in their hands. Sometimes a star or two will slip between their fingers and fall to earth. They say it's good luck to see a falling star. In ancient times it was believed that those stars came from a caring God who holds the heavens in their hands. From time to time the God's would let some fall. So, people were encouraged to make a wish to a loving God. To some, wishing and Gods are connected.

There are several wells around Jerusalem. These wells have been said to have healing powers. At certain times of the year they claim that the spirits are stirring the waters. If you see that happening and jump in, you will be healed. There could be a spiritual component to a wishing well. Snow white sang a beautiful song to the well in the town square. The song was called "I'm wishing." Geppetto in Pinocchio wished for a real son. An angel or spirit granted his request. The same could be said of Cinderella and her fairy God mother. Wishing and spirits go hand in hand.

A genie of a lamp could grant you three wishes. People have prayed for help from a God. I personally can relate to that. I was asked one day to write down 10 things I wanted in a woman. A friend of mine prayed with me on each one of them to help me get a wife. I even joked about

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

putting a bra on my bedpost and praying that God would fill it. It's true that a week later I met my wife. She fit all those ten things too. Did God hear my prayers?

Is that silly, dumb luck, or smart? No, I did not really have a bra on my bedpost, but it was an interesting idea. Pray to who? A God? Depending where you came from, what God? Should I pray to Allah, the Jewish God Yahweh, or the force in Star Wars? In any sense they all are the unseen. At times they seemed inactive too. These Gods don't speak back. There is no email or notice of assessment of our prayer? Sometimes there seems to be silence. Is it granted, ignored, or laughed at. We hope not.

Many fine people say they believe in a God. Jewish people say they only have one God. Christians say they believe in that one true Jewish God. Isn't that interesting. They follow another religions God. That God says things like in Jerimiah 29:13 *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* If we pray to this God he says we will be heard and we will be answered. It's the same with the Muslim God Allah. They seek him and pray to him. He too, answers prayers. Other God's seek a sacrifice or an offering before they will answer. What do you pray too?

Throughout history God's have existed in the minds of people. Who has the cornerstone on the right God? Yet, many people pray or offer something to a God so that they are helped and heard. This is my favorite verse when it comes to the Jewish Gods interaction with us.

Malachi 3:10 *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."*

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

I feel this verse tells us a lot about praying and wishing to unseen gods. Churches have used this verse to promote giving. If we give then we will be blessed. It's like this, be nice and a Santa like God will give you everything you desire. I feel people have missed the point of this verse. I love that verse because of its intent. The God of the Bible says he is loving. He is not asking for a sacrifice. He wants the storehouse full to feed the less fortunate. He says that if we will help fill the storehouse then he will be over joyed with love for us. It's not an *I will do (if) you do* thing. I feel it's more a win/win thing.

For a prayer or wish to be meaningful it must be given it up to someone, right? I mean talking to a nonexistent God might be deemed crazy. Having a heart felt conversation with an idol would seem foolish. How about throwing hard earned money into water at a well. Give me a good reason to do that? Maybe, just maybe something is up. Something out of the ordinary exists. What if God was real? That could be a game changer. The problem is in our belief.

Romans 10:9 *"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Many people feel that we must give to get. I think that is fundamental to life. We give effort and win. We are lazy and starve. I give a present and you give a present. I am nice so you be nice. It's the Santa Clause. Santa is good to us if were good. So be good to a God and hopefully he or she will be nice back. The Roman Gods have a history of being prideful and vindictive. A spirit like a Succubus is a beautiful woman who will give you sex, yet she kills you after. That's not nice. Genies will trick you in your wishes. We need to be careful who were praying too and what we ask for.

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

Is it because a God is vengeful? Some people believe that. Yet, rarely, if ever, does God do that in the Bible. He is always saying *if you chose to be my people, I will be your God*. Having a God to pray to is ok. Would you prefer nobody? Every culture seems to have an unseen God. People desperately want to believe in something stronger, wiser, and safer. There was a moment when King David was left with a choice. He had committed adultery and God gave him two punishment options. One: let man punish him. Two: let pestilence punish him. David was gutsy and chose a third option: God. He said he would rather be punished by the one he trusted. Isn't that interesting.

I feel we pray or wish because we trust a God or the well more than our human counterparts. We know humans. God's can be favorable at times. They let stars slip through their fingers from time to time for us to wish upon. They bring miracles. They are a wealth of unforeseen knowledge. It's smart to pray to something above us. It's better than praying to something equal or beneath us. Who prays to a slug or your sister?

So, we chose a God. We are finite like Martin Luther King Jr. said in that quote at the beginning of this chapter. We pray or wish to the infinite. What do you believe in? Who is your God? I know people who say they are their own God. That's sad really. When they die I'd assume their God dies too? What is the legacy? Who do you point your children to have hope in? Themselves? We make mistakes, have misunderstandings, and screw things up. Sometimes we get it right. Yet, hopefully, the God we pray to is better than that. We can trust to hope that God has not forsaken us. They are worth praying to. Don't Gods get it right more often than us?

Throughout history we have chosen places to worship. Some people pick a church while others find peace at a well. There are enchanted forests and magical beaches. Many have found

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

their solace on a mountain top or in a convent. Where do you go to find peace? Is it found in a place to believe in? A place of rescue or comfort. Where is solace, hope, and salvation found for you?

There are places that we get water from. It's interesting that people believe that lakes, wells, and rivers have spirits. Isn't some alcohol called spirits? I see commercials all the time saying alcohol was brewed in mountain streams. We seem to have a connection between the spiritual and water. We baptize with water as a spiritual act. I know sailors call the sea a "She." As if the ocean is a person. It can provide and take away just like people do. What about the ocean God Poseidon? There is more to water than meets the eye. Water seems to have a spiritual god like connection.

One thought is that coins are a way to sacrifice something valuable to the God's in the water. Spiritual water might be found in a well. Possibly a well is found in the wilderness more than in a city. In ancient times the wilderness is where the spirits dwelt. I often wonder if that is why we go on a pilgrimage or trek in the wilderness to find ourselves. Are we praying to unseen forces in those places? Do we find God's or spirits in a well or wilderness outside of town? I believe more often we do. People seem willing to travel far for answers.

A well symbolizes life. We need water to survive. I also read that certain coins of silver or copper might purify the water. Either way, we do throw money in a wishing well. Call it tradition if you like. Rome's Trevi Fountain is said to gather about 3 million pounds a year from well-wishers. Don't tell me people are not superstitious. I think it's more likely that they are looking for hope. I can't imagine traveling to Rome just to throw in a coin. The curator hopes you do. It's a blessing to him.

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

I imagine there are rumors that wishing wells work. Is it spirits or dumb luck? I remember a man telling me that he rubs his lucky coin before he buys a lottery ticket. Why? As far as I know, he is still not rich. There is a lucky rabbit's foot. Doesn't seem so lucky for the rabbit. Then we come all the way back to the well. My daughter and I wanted to go to the volcanoes in Hawaii. On our Big Island tour, she stopped to throw something in the heat vent to the God Pele. I asked her if there were another God's besides the Jewish one. She said no but she was just making sure to honor Pele just in case she was real. We do believe in these sacred places for some reason. Maybe it comes down to these three letters J.I.C. It means *just in case*.

People just want to be sure. A little luck would help. Have you ever noticed there are 7 days in the week? James bond is 007. Harvest is cut into 7 years. There are 7 voyages of Sinbad. 7 colors in the rainbow. How about the 7 wonders of the world. I read an article that said more often than not (in surveys) people choose the number 7. The lampstand in God's temple has 7 candles. What is it with the number 7? Why do we think there are lucky numbers? At bingo I used to hear the caller say "lucky for some, under the B "7"." I know people always pick 7 on the roulette board. How about 7 seas and the seventh sign. A 7 can't always be that lucky can it?

Then there is the unlucky number 13. What's up with that? Wow, this is cool. How about 13 people in the upper room at the last Super with Jesus. Is it Jesus or Judas that is number 13? Some say Satan was the thirteenth unwelcome guest in that room. Others point out Jesus may have been crucified on the 13<sup>th</sup>. In Fortworth, Texas there were 13 steps to the gallows: 12 up and one down. Yeesh! Well I know this is weird but women menstruate about 13 times a year. That is unlucky for men, trust me on that.

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

Yet, the number is strange. Why is the number 4 bad luck in Asia? In North America we avoid making a 13<sup>th</sup> floor. By the way. The fourteen floor is still the thirteenth. Just saying. I will admit I like the number 17. Why? I have always worn it on my jersey. My wife likes 77. Yes, it's on several of her favorite players jerseys. She says she likes the lucky 7 in the number. I guess I do too. However, we chose, many of us believe in numbers good and bad. Believing in Gods, spirits, wells, wishes, numbers and prayers are part of our lives. Most of this world believes in something.

I mention all this because we believe in things. There are God's, coins, wells, and numbers. What about guardian angels? In the Bible we don't have guardian angels. There are angels that speak to us, but they are used to declare something. We don't have angels reigning down fire and brimstone on us. At Sodom and Gomorrah, they met Angels that led Lot and his family away, but these creatures are not shown causing the calamity. Yet, they are depicted that way in our minds. We believe angels protect us and destroy things.

Some say we have a loved one that turned into an angel upon their death. After they die, these family members protect us and guide us. Matthew 18:10 seems to suggest as much **“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”** People in the Bible are met by angels. These angels are not worshiped. They speak for God. For people to pray or worship angels is not Biblical. Yet, we do believe in guardian angels. People do pray to them.

My Dad says he prays to the saints as a Catholic Christian. “Isn't it nice to have someone to talk to God for us” he says. I was told we can talk to God directly. I know the Bible says that Jesus intercedes on our behalf to God. Ephesians 2:18-19 says *“for through him both of us have*

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

*access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.*” Christians are called saints but we do not worship or pray to saints. However, the catholic religion encourages it.

Let's be clear. Jesus is in heaven. If we talk to Jesus, then he could talk to the Father. I suppose we could ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for us. I also suppose that the saints are in heaven. Angels are too. Without being knit picky we could ask them to talk to God for us. That could be why we pray to them. Yet, that is not regularly the way things work. We now have access to God through the Holy Spirit. We can talk to God in the name (authority) of his Son Jesus.

We could talk to a saint. We could pray to an idol like a statue. We could even seek a medium or tarot card reader. Yet, we don't have to. We can talk to God ourselves. Time after time that is not what we do. We say we believe in God, but many people equally say they believe in astrology or psychics. We desperately want to believe in something. So much so, that anything will do. People rub a coin, wear a cross, or toss coins in a well. Who is answering your prayers and wishes?

It would be a sad day to believe in fate. To think that a stray bullet could kill you just because you were destined to die seems random, odd, and unlucky. That a person had to get mad, get drunk, and had to kill you. Is it destiny, fate or something else? Seems a bit disheartening too. What do you believe in? Does fate mean I was going to be divorced? My mom was going to die May 30, 2017? I believe we pray so that fate is yet undetermined. I believe we wish because we want a different outcome. Is fate real?

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

To hope, is to believe that things can have a different outcome. Those who believe in what they call a higher power are hanging on a thread. That power is a who or what? I suppose they could be the Roman unknown God. Is that God friendly or tyrannical? Those who find themselves in places like rehab are offered this higher power. Is it really in themselves? Well that worked so far didn't it. Will praying to the higher power bring faith? People want something to believe in. They also need something to hope for and hold onto. Usually that is not found in ourselves.

You see, I have faith in the Jewish God because I know his character. I have read it in the Bible and seen it in my life. I could pray to an idol made of wood or metal. Obviously that object is empowered by something. What? Is that thing friendly, kind, compassionate? During 9/11 the US congress went to the steps of the legislature and prayed to God. They all unequivocally said they sent their prayers out for the victims. I know for a fact that some of them were atheists and believers in a higher power. So, who did they send those prayers too?

If there is nothing then were screwed. If coins fall in a well and a curator cleans it out once a year, then were screwed. If the stars fall because they fall then we are certainly screwed. If God does not exist then were screwed. What happens if prayer is more about looking holy? What if a wish is a nice thing to do for someone? Is a prayer something tangible? Do these things exist or is it the tradition of offering them up in condolences. Why do we wish and pray?

People are afraid of a black hole. Why? Because we assume it's bad, yet in reality, it's an unknown object. An idol could be a cross, rosary, or bottle of whiskey: what do you believe in? Why not worship a black hole? They say that all light disappears into this space anomaly. In reality, scientists know almost nothing about a black hole. They speculate. They theorize and

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

post conjecture. Yet, we know virtually nothing about them. That thing (whatever it is) is too far away. I suppose that a scientist could say consistencies in chemicals, light, and matter tell us what a black hole is. There are consistencies in science that we rely on. Didn't the *flat earth people* say that? Didn't those shouting that *we cannot break the sound barrier* say that too? Not everything is obvious.

This thing called a black hole clearly exists. It's thousands of light years from us, I have seen pictures that scientists say is a discovered black hole. I think their real. A black hole appears to destroy life. This dark area in space is surrounded by celestial bodies. Apparently, a black hole turns them into nothingness. Some scientists boldly say that God does not exist. They claim it's all in our heads. They also hold press conferences decrying that black holes are the greatest discovery ever. They would spend billions analyzing a thing that destroys. They would equally claim that religion destroys. Scientists are curious creatures loving to discuss what destroys more than what lives.

It's like they worship it. They worship conjecture, hypotheses, and theory. I love this definition of theory:

*Theory- a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained.*

Wow, they explain or describe something independent of that very thing they are describing. Basically, they don't really know. It's a good story. However, the God story is not just good conjecture. They have theories about God too. Independent of the real answers I bet. I know scientists that believe in science and the physical. I believe in those too. There are many who believe in the unseen to the naked eye like gravity or a black hole. There appears to be

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

something beyond our eyes that exists. Sometimes we feel compelled to pray or wish to it. Why do we do that?

What do we believe in? Who do we worship? To pray to something means there must be hope of a response. To wish to something means you hope for a wish to be granted. Surely an atheist can't wish or offer up prayers. It's hollow, nothing, or a black hole gesture of compassion. Only a nut would offer a person in need a box with nothing in it. Only a nut would pray to nothing for something. I like science because it hopes, wishes, and even prays for the unknown to appear. They want answers too.

All over this earth are cultures that have prayer and wish traditions. History has told us that. People believe in fate. They believe in the spiritual. To believe in nothing means they reject something. It's not like the idea of Gods, nymphs in wells, or magic lamps don't cross our minds. Why is that? I think it comes back to the French philosopher Descartes. He had heard the arguments for a God. He had heard all the theorizing about the soul and our existence. I bet he lay awake many nights wondering what the hell is going on. Then he came up with a statement "*Cogito ergo sum. (I think; therefore I am.)*."

That's it. If we had no telescope then a black hole does not exist. If we had no electron microscope then DNA might be just a theory. What we see seems so real. What we have experienced seems tangible somehow. I think about all kinds of things like flying and running. I can only do one of them. I can believe I could fly all I want. Yet, I cannot without help. Take away invention and all you have is me naked in the mirror.

I am. I am here. It's all we have. Then we add stuff like clothes, ideas, and PlayStation. Weird things happen like déjà vu. Murphy's law makes sense. What usually could happen will

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

happen. We envision stuff and prophesize. Sometimes it comes true. Ask Nostradamus. We meet a person and get a vibe. A black cat crossing our path pricks the hair on our skin. Why? It's because we all believe in something. Something outside of our sight does exist. The absence of a telescope does not mean a black hole is non-existent. Just because there is no color in wind does not mean that wind is not there.

To believe in something means we have experienced something. Sometimes it's history that teaches us to avoid ladders, look before we cross the road, and toss coins into a well. We don't pray or wish by accident. I bet we did not discover black holes by accident either. None of those things negates the existence of God, spirits, or the supernatural. In fact, it enhances them in my way of thinking. There is always more to know. More to learn, discover, and theorize on. Let's not stop hoping and wondering about where we are. It should be reversed: I am therefore I think.

We could worship a black hole. Why not, it's in heaven. It's deep like a well. It seems to be powerful. Yet, a black hole also seems to be a void. I feel a void lacks compassion, character, and a heart. Doesn't a God have those things? Doesn't a spirit in a well have those things? The original force in Star Wars was elusive. In the recent movies they made this force into a living entity. They had to. We can't rely on powerful, unseen, and lifeless objects. We tend to pray to things that are somewhat human.

Let's take a fun journey this year. I want to explore prayer. I want to explore wishes. I think prayer is more powerful. Yet, a wish is a direction towards hope and desire. We all own those two things: hope and desire. That is why idols, wells, and roseries exist. To say wishing is nonsense is ludicrous. To say prayer is stupid is sad. We need to express hope. I feel it's found in

## Prayer and Wishes

### Chapter 1 (What we believe in)

prayer and wishes. We all have a desire for something more. Something beyond ourselves. It's

time to explore that world of the unknown.