

REAL MEN PRAY

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Foreword

Hmm . . . *Real Men Pray*. I don't know if I have time to be a real man. Honestly, with responsibilities to my family, my work, my church, my community, and a home that is always in need of some maintenance or repair, I am not sure I have time to be a "real man."

But wait, the very responsibilities I listed demand more from me than I am able, within my own abilities, to give. I need God's help. I need to pray.

Bruce McDonald, in *Real Men Pray*, encourages real men with real lives and real responsibilities to pray. He draws this encouragement from a very real man, Daniel, whose commitment to prayer is summarized in Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

Daniel was a real man. Daniel prayed.

Bruce illustrates the lessons on prayer from Daniel's life with stories drawn from his ministry to pro athletes. The occasional sports "watcher" as well as the more serious sports fan will easily understand these illustrations from the world of sports.

Real Men Pray presents prayer as the chosen and regular activity of any man humble enough to acknowledge his need for help from God. Such men place themselves squarely in the path of God's wisdom and blessing.

As you study these lessons on your own or with a group of men, you will learn how prayer can be a meaningful and worthwhile activity for which you will gladly make time.

Do Real Men Pray?

A real man lives a life of prayer.

P **rayer or Praying**

In America today, does any word or topic generate such contrasting thoughts and reactions as “prayer” or “praying”? On the one hand, Americans are told not to pray in educational or governmental institutions. On the other hand, they’re told to pray for their schools’ students (witness Columbine High School) and for their government and leaders (witness the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks).

Looking for a Few Good Men

What about prayer makes it, at the same time, both offensive and desirous? This paradox can be illustrated in a meeting I had in Washington, D.C., at the United States Marine Headquarters. I was asked to speak to the marines on the National Day of Prayer. I opened my talk by reminding my listeners of an event from the previous day: A group of students from a college in Maryland was traveling with their professor on an island in the

Pacific Ocean. While there (the day before my talk), their bus was hijacked and taken to a remote area. The female students were taken off the bus and raped. The professor was held at gunpoint the whole time. Later that day, after they had been released, he made this statement: "I'm not a praying man and really don't believe in prayer. But I tell you, I was praying while the gun was held to my head!"

I asked the marines, "Why?" Why was he praying if he didn't believe in prayer? It's a question for all of us to consider. Do we pray, and if so, why do we pray?

1. Do you pray?
 - a. never
 - b. occasionally
 - c. regularly
2. Why do you pray?

I went on to say to the marines, "God is looking for a few good men!" If I can paraphrase my statement to those marines: "God is looking for real men who pray!"

Do Real Men Pray?

Perhaps the two most telling areas for men are the areas of purity and prayer. If you want to insert a conversation stopper into a group of men, mention one of these two topics.

This observation is not a knock on, or criticism of, us men; but we tend to be "prayer challenged"! When I say "prayer challenged," I'm not talking about prayers before meals or in response to a personal or family crisis. I'm talking about a lifestyle of prayer.

For many years God has had me work with professional athletes. Basketball, football, and hockey players have looked to my wife and me for spiritual guidance. I have often been asked by non-athletes, "What it's like being around So and So?" Well, I'll

tell you this, the athletes who gain my greatest attention are the ones with a heart for God and the ones who *can really talk with God*.

On one occasion I was conducting chapel for the Seattle Sea Hawks of the National Football League. After I had finished the chapel service, the players (about fifteen) asked me if I could stay and join them in prayer. I agreed, and we all formed a circle and held hands to pray. (Yes, even tough football players.) As those men began to pray, I felt like Heaven was coming down upon us—and, no, they weren't praying for victory that day. I'm telling you, "Real men pray!"

3. Have you ever felt that your prayers made a difference?

4. At what time and in what way did this effective praying take place?

Anything on Earth More Powerful Than Prayer?

Books have been written testifying to the life-changing power of prayer. For example, the stories of men such as George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, and George Whitefield are thrilling. As we read, our hearts are enlarged to believe that God may choose to use our prayers to change our world. Many great books have also been written about prayer and other men of prayer. Please see the recommended list in the back of this book. Some people say, "Men don't read"; well, "real men do!" But even if you don't have a library of books on prayer, you have a Book that is a library on prayer!

The Bible has much to say on prayer, and many incidents record what happens when people pray.

5. What happened when these people prayed?
 - a. Elijah (James 5:17, 18)
 - b. Elisha (2 Kings 6:16, 17)
 - c. Peter (Acts 9:36–41)
 - d. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1–6)
 - e. Jonah (Jonah 2:1, 10)
6. What promises are found in these prayer passages?
 - a. Jeremiah 33:3
 - b. Romans 10:13
 - c. Matthew 7:7, 8
 - d. John 14:13, 14
 - e. John 15:16
 - f. 1 John 5:14, 15

Michael Jordan's Knees?

Several years ago my two sons were jokingly complaining about the knees I gave them (one son has had three surgeries; the other, two). They said, “Dad, we wish you could have given us Michael Jordan’s knees instead!”

Well, I can't give them Michael Jordan's knees, but I'd like to give them Daniel's knees! You ask, "Who does he play for?" Well, the Daniel I speak of is the Old Testament prophet Daniel, found in the book with his name. Daniel was no professional basketball player, but he was a superstar in the truest sense. No less an authority than God Himself testified to Daniel's elevated position.

7. What three Bible men are listed in Ezekiel 14:14 and 20?

8. What does God say about these three men?

Daniel is mentioned not only in Ezekiel, but also in the New Testament book of Hebrews.

9. According to Hebrews 11:33, what did Daniel's prayers accomplish?

Daniel displayed many godly character qualities, as recorded in the book of Daniel; but I want to highlight his extraordinary prayer life. As mentioned in the Hebrews passage, his prayers "stopped the mouths of lions." But this result was far from an isolated event. It was merely an illustration of a man's life given to prayer.

Daniel was unique in the sense that God gave him an exalted position in government for a seventy-year period under three

kings. The Bible reveals much about Daniel and his prophetic utterances. But Daniel was not unique in regard to God's honoring a man of prayer. God is looking for those who will believe what He has said about prayer and who will live a life of prayer.

What We Hope to Accomplish

In all my years of working with athletes, I've never seen a ballplayer so greatly impact society—even overseas—as Michael Jordan. A commercial jingle started like this: "I want to be like Mike." This desire proved truer than the marketing people could have imagined.

Here are but a few ways people became like Mike:

- Basketball players started shaving their heads because Mike did.
- Players' shorts went from being "short" to long and baggy—like Michael's.
- Nike sales exploded, because people wanted shoes like Michael's.
- And then, of course, thousands sought (not very successfully) to emulate Michael's basketball moves.

Well, we don't need to be like Mike, but we *need* to be like Daniel. He is worth emulating! Daniel was like his counterpart in the New Testament, the apostle Paul, another great man of prayer. I believe Daniel would echo Paul's words, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

We will look at Daniel and see a man who was consistent, courageous, and committed in prayer.

Prayer is the pulse of life; by it the Doctor can tell what is the condition of the heart. The sin of prayerlessness is a proof for the ordinary Christian or minister that the life of God in the soul is in deadly sickness and weakness. (Andrew Murray, *The Prayer Life* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1979], 17)

A Verse to Memorize

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).