

PRAYING WITH AUDACITY

By Steven Furtick

("Copied from PrayerConnect Magazine issue 2. Used with Permission")

A few years ago, I started realizing that I prayed some pretty dumb prayers. Not that I think God needs me to be eloquent or profound when I talk to Him. It's just that a lot of stuff I was praying was rather pointless and obtuse.

See if you can relate to this one: *God, just be with me today.*

Now, before you go getting all insulted (because I know you've prayed this one yourself), let me say that I understand the heart behind this prayer. What we *mean* is that we want to experience His presence and power in our lives. God fills heaven and earth. Every inch on this planet belongs to Him. And if we're believers in Jesus, God lives in us in the form of the Holy Spirit. Do we really need to make sure He's going to *be with us*?

Or, how about this one? I used to prequalify my big prayers with the introduction: *God, if it be Thy will . . .* So, does God need an opt-out clause before He's willing to sign on the line and cut a deal with Steven Furtick? Again, we don't mean any harm. On the surface, this whole idea seems very humble. Over time, though, I realized I wasn't buffering my prayers with this condition because I was humble. I was doing it because I was scared. What I was really praying was, *God, I'm asking You to do this, but I'm not really expecting that You will.* *So, just in case you don't, let me acknowledge up front, You might not.*

A Sun Stand Still Prayer

When it comes to prayer, a lot of us have the standard stuff down. But learning to pray with audacious faith takes us into a new, unfamiliar, often intimidating territory. Consider Joshua, who summoned up his courage and delivered one of the most gloriously unorthodox prayers in the entire Bible:

On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar.

The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a man. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel! (Joshua 10:12-14)

A Sun Stand Still prayer is wrapped with urgency. It's filled with possibility. For most of us, it's a whole new way to pray. I call it praying like a juggernaut. A juggernaut is defined as "a massive inexorable force, campaign, movement, or object that crushes whatever is in its path." It's often used to describe an unstoppable movement. I like that image.

Joshua's Sun Stand Still prayer shows us a bold way to address God that we can emulate. And this is true of all the great prayers of the Bible. They're recorded in Scripture to set an all-time prayer standard for us. To force us out of our defensive prayer posture. To inspire us to rise up and begin to pray—like juggernauts.

Juggernauts like Moses, who stood in God's way and prayed that God wouldn't kill the Israelites after they worshiped the golden calf.

Juggernauts like the apostles, who asked for and expected miracles, and who spoke out boldly in the face of persecution so that the name of Jesus could be lifted high.

Juggernauts like Elijah, whose prayer both caused and ended a three-and-a-half-year drought.

You may push back on this, but I suggest that the prayers of these people are not abnormal. They are not the exception. At least they were never meant to be. The tragedy of our time is that we have taken what was meant to be ordinary and made it to be exceptional. We've put audacity on the highest shelf, out of reach, and declared it off limits. James 5:17 makes this eye-opening statement:

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

It's too bad that we focus on the second part of this verse. We're stunned by the superior power of Elijah's prayer life. We'd love to have an ounce of that power flowing in our prayer lives. But we don't have to wish. That's the whole point of this passage. We *are* just like Elijah. We *are* just like Joshua.

Prayers Worthy of God

Think about it. Elijah had access to an all-powerful God who could stop the rain. Joshua had access to an all-powerful God who could make the sun stand still. We have access to an all-powerful God who can stop the rain and make the sun stand still. The only difference is that Elijah and Joshua had the audacity to pray prayers that lived up to God's character, God's heart, God's resources, God's will, and God's abilities.

That's what it means to pray like a juggernaut; to pray prayers worthy of the God we're praying to. After all, we're praying to a God whose capability always exceeds our audacity. You don't have to worry about ever putting God in an awkward or embarrassing position. You won't ever challenge Him to do something beyond His aptitude.

Prayer is the arena where our faith meets God's abilities. Is it really worthy of our God to ask Him for a *good day*? Or to ask Him to make our job more tolerable? You and I are called to pray *beyond* that. Not just that God would give us a good day, but that He would show us His greatness throughout the day. Not just that we will find the strength to tolerate our work, but that we will find a purpose that can drive us to excel in our jobs for His glory.

Sunset on the Loading Dock

One of the most discouraging days of my pastoral career was in 2008 when our church was scheduled to sign a contract to occupy a 42,000-square foot facility in a local shopping center. We had big plans to retrofit the space and turn it into a worship center and ministry headquarters. But at the last minute, one of the other tenants chose to exercise a clause in its lease to deny us occupancy. We pleaded. The tenant wouldn't budge. So we prayed. Not like beggars. Like juggernauts. We went to the facility that very night. We got down on our knees on the oil-stained loading docks behind the building and asked God to give us the property—in Jesus' name. For a solid year, nothing happened. Still, almost every day, when I drove by that building, I just couldn't let it go. I sensed that this space was supposed to be ours. So I prayed. Every time I passed it. Out loud. I must have stretched my hand toward that warehouse 300 times. And each time, I spoke these words of faith: "Father, I thank You that our church *will* have worship services in that warehouse and we *will* reach thousands of people for Jesus Christ, according to Your perfect plan, in Your perfect timing."

By September 2009, we were conducting worship services with thousands of people in that building. Not only that, but we also had the opportunity to baptize a couple hundred people on the very oil-stained loading docks where we had lifted our voices in bold prayer 18 months earlier. God had come through for us against all odds. When it comes to standing on God's purposes and promises, why shouldn't we push the limits and aggressively pursue new territory? It's the approach taken by the great juggernauts of prayer in the amazing events recorded in the Bible. And it's the same approach that can enable you to become a juggernaut of prayer in our day.

Reconcile Your Dreams with God's Desires

First John 5:14-15 is a classic juggernaut prayer passage: This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. Notice that it doesn't say "if we ask anything we desire" or "if we

ask anything audaciously," but "if we ask anything *according to his will.*" In other words, God wants our agenda to align with His agenda.

Our audacity must be in sync with God's purposes. Joshua prayed that the sun would stand still because God had promised the Israelites to fight for them and defeat their enemies. Joshua's bold request was based on a promise that God had made to him. He wanted to see God's purposes accomplished. **Sun Stand Still** prayers are about changing your heart, activating your faith, and developing your confidence in God's Word and character. As this happens, the audacity of your prayers will increase because you will repeatedly encounter a God who has acted audaciously in the past and longs to do so today. He still longs to make the sun stand still. In the past, it was a juggernaut named Joshua who acted on that promise.

Now it's your turn.