

BROWNELL LANDRUM

FIVE  
**REASONS**  
**RWHY**  
BAD THINGS  
HAPPEN

How To Turn Tragedies  
Into Triumph

***Five Reasons Why Bad Things Happen:  
How to Turn Tragedies into Triumph***

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## CHAPTER 17: PRAYER

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As established earlier, prayer is talking to the Divine (or your Higher Power) and meditation is listening to God. Both are critical in our communication with the Divine and we have previously discussed ways to meditate or listen. But what about the prayer side of the discussion?

### **What is Prayer?**

The following quote from Betty J. Eadie's book, *Embraced by the Light*, is a beautiful description of what she learned about prayer during a Near Death Experience,:

"I saw the sphere of earth rotating in space. I saw many lights shooting up from the earth like beacons. Some were very broad and charged into heaven like broad laser beams. Others resembled the illumination of small pen lights, and some were mere sparks. I was surprised, as I was told that these beacons of power were the prayers of people on earth.

"I saw angels rushing to answer the prayers. They were organized to give as much help as possible...I was distinctly told that all prayers of desire are heard and answered. When we have great need, or when we're praying for other people, the beams project straight from us and are immediately visible....Our prayers for others have great strength, but can only be answered as far as they don't infringe on the others' free will..."

### **Prayer is Infinitely More Powerful Through Integrated Alignment**

As discussed in the chapter on Subconscious Sabotage, human thought has awesome power, and conscious, directed, loving thought (prayer), through Integrated Alignment, has even more power. Larry Dossey, M.D. in his book, *Healing Words – The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, said, "We will never be able to take full advantage of the power of the mind to shape our health – including the mind's use of prayer – until we broaden our concept of "consciousness." This means including the unconscious."

*The unconscious mind can initiate or cooperate  
with prayer and even mediate the effects.  
- Larry Dossey*

### **Directed Prayer vs. Non-Directed Prayer**

Directed Prayer is used to request and manifest something we want in our lives – health, money and material objects, success, acceptance, etc.

*“Bart, with \$10,000, we'd be millionaires! We could buy all kinds of useful things like... love!” ☺*  
– Homer Simpson, The Simpsons

Non-Directed Prayer is more open-ended, asking more for guidance and positive feelings than for specific items or outcomes. Research has shown that, although both types are effective, non-directed prayer is twice as effective as directed prayer.<sup>1</sup> This isn't surprising when you consider two things. First, Non-Directed Prayer is a request for feelings, which all stem from love – which is in infinite supply from the Divine. Second, Non-Directed Prayer is detached and surrenders the specific outcome – a key to successful prayer.

### **Are All Prayers Answered?**

What is the answer to the quintessential question: Are all prayers answered? I remember going to a spiritual talk as a high-schooler where the priest said that all prayers are answered in one of three ways: “Yes” (and you get what you ask for), “Wait” or “I'll give you something better.” I've thought about that talk ever since, and would like to amend it with my own viewpoint.

Not to sound trite, but it depends on the request – not only whether it's a directed prayer vs. a non-directed prayer, but it also depends on the requestor as well as who is being prayed “to.” Assuming that all prayers are to a benevolent, loving, Divine Higher Power, some prayers are always answered “Yes”, some are answered “No,” some are “Wait” and some are “I'll give you something better.”

- If we ask for love, the answer is always “Yes.” But we need to remember to keep asking!
- If we ask to experience inside of us, or express to others, any of the following feelings that are expressions of love, the answer is always “Yes”:

Awe, Acceptance, Admiration, Allegiance, Appreciation, Assertiveness, Beauty, Bliss, Brilliance, Caring, Cleanliness, Commitment, Compassion, Confidence, Consideration, Contentment, Cooperation, Courage, Courtesy, [Creativity](#), Delight, Dependability, [Detachment](#), [Determination](#), Devotion, [Diligence](#), Discernment, Ease, Enjoyment, [Enthusiasm](#), Esteem,

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<sup>1</sup> Research from Spendthrift, cited by Dossey in his book *Healing Words*..

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[Excellence](#), Faith, Faithfulness, Flexibility, Forgiveness, Friendliness, Generosity, Gentleness, Grace, Gratitude, Happiness, Harmony, Heaven, Helpfulness, Honesty, Honor, Humility, Idealism, Integrity, Joy, Joyfulness, Justice, Kindness, Love, Loyalty, Magnificence, Marvel, Mercy, Moderation, Modesty, Obedience, Order, Orderliness, Patience, Peace, Peacefulness, Perseverance, Pleasure, Prayerfulness, Purity, Purposefulness, Quality, Reliability, Respect, Responsibility, Reverence, Righteousness, Sacrifice, Satisfaction, Self-Discipline, Serenity, Service, Steadfastness, Tact, Thankfulness, Tolerance, Tranquility, Trust, Trustworthiness, Truthfulness, Understanding, Unity, Value, Wisdom, Wonder, Zeal

- If we ask for peace within, the answer is always “Yes.” But, as with love and other loving feelings, we can get distracted and need to keep asking.
- If we ask for learning, the teaching is provided, but the learning is up to us.
- If we ask for guidance, the direction is provided, but it’s up to us to follow the path.
- If we ask for alignment with Divine will, it will be provided, but we need to trust that what we receive *is* in accordance with Divine will.
- If we ask to exhibit selflessness, it’s up to us to fulfill that prayer (and we’ll be shown how to do it).
- If we ask for material things, the answer can vary, depending on what we’re asking for, whether we’re too attached to the outcome, and whether providing it’s for the best and highest good of all concerned. To ensure success, we need to dig deeper to the “why” of the thing we want – what internal feelings we want to generate instead of the external “stuff.” If the feelings are genuine and come from love, and generate a true expression of appreciation, we’re more likely to get what we pray for.
- If we ask for help with relationships, it depends on what we are asking for. If we ask for more love and acceptance, then we’re guaranteed to get it. If we pray for someone to do something, we’re infringing on the other person’s free will. Not only is this outside of the domain of the Divine, getting it may actually cause harm in the situation (to ourselves or the other person). If we ask to be released from attachment and to allow the relationship to unfold according to Divine Will, our wish will be granted.

### **Are You Listening?**

As discussed earlier, prayer is talking to God, but we need to meditate in order to listen. Simply put, it means we need to get centered, be quiet, and pay attention. We can do this through the types of meditation discussed earlier (Sitting, Guided, Mind-Clearing), or through other avenues, like when exercising, dreaming, mowing the lawn, etc.

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Even if we're listening, sometimes we have a problem recognizing the answer to our prayers. This could be for several reasons. It could be that we're too attached to the outcome and we can't recognize the open window because we're pounding too hard on a door to open. It could be because we're limited in our view and have blinders on. The solution to both of these problems is to keep an open mind and be open to solutions that give you the feelings you asked for, not the "stuff."

Another reason we could have a problem recognizing the answer may be that we really don't trust our Higher Power to bring what is best for us. This could be a challenge of faith, which is an opportunity to dig deeper to connect your three Selves and the Divine.

### **Suggestions from Philosophers and Theologians**

- "The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays." - Soren Kierkegaard
- "The wise man in the storm prays to God, not for safety from danger, but deliverance from fear." - Ralph Waldo Emerson
- "Being mortal, never pray for an untroubled life; But ask the gods to give you an enduring heart" - Menander of Athens
- "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." - Matthew 5:44
- "Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." - Saint Augustine
- "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you." - I Thessalonians 5: 16-18
- "Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else forgiving another" - Jean Paul Richter

### **Detachment and Surrender**

In an interview with NBC's Ann Curry, Oprah Winfrey described the power of detachment and surrender to a Higher Power when she had auditioned for a role in "The Color Purple." She desperately wanted and prayed for the role because, she said, "I remember sitting home and I think it took my breath away literally. I remember closing the book and weeping, because my God, this is my story."

Although she had heard they were looking for an experienced actress to play the part, she was crushed, even hating herself, blaming herself for not getting the part because she was overweight. She entered a fat farm, trying to "lose 50 pounds in 2 weeks."

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She “realized at that time that my obsession had gotten the best of me. I'd never wanted anything more than I wanted to be in “The Color Purple.” Never. And it was life changing for me, because I decided I had to let it go. So I go out on the track by myself. It's cold. It's raining. I'm alone, running around the track. And I start asking ‘God, dear God, just like Celie. Please help me to let it go so that I can move on with my life.’ And I start singing, ‘I surrender all. I surrender all.’”

Miraculously, just at that moment she received a call from the movie's director, Steven Spielberg, offering her the part, with one condition, “If you lose a pound, you will possibly lose this part.”

This story shows how important it is for prayer to include surrender and detachment to Divine will for the outcome. It also demonstrates a great example of how we need to love and accept ourselves the way we are – because we may already be perfect for our destiny!

### **Wouldn't It Be Nice?**

Two key factors of asking for Divine assistance are no attachment to the outcome, and that you'd be appreciative if you received your request.

“Wouldn't it be nice?” is the perfect way to ask Spirit for what you'd like to see in your life. First, it demonstrates that you're making a simple request, not a demand, with no expectation or attachment to the outcome. And second, it shows your Higher Power that you think “it would be nice” if the request came through, indicating that you'd appreciate it!

*When we pray for a specific outcome in a particular situation,  
we are presuming to know how the world should proceed.  
– Larry Dossey*

### **Prayer Guidelines**

The following are some guidelines for prayer to connect with your Higher Power:

#### **Integration**

Before beginning any prayer, engage all three of your Selves in the process. Make sure your Inner Self is cleared of all negative emotions and fears, and is aligned with the intent of the prayer.

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## **Gratitude**

Be sure to give thanks to your Higher Power.<sup>2</sup> for:

- The gifts you have in your life
- Infinite Divine Love

If the purpose of your prayer is to manifest something in your life, it's helpful to indicate your appreciation of the gift – as though you already have it.

## **Praise**

Show reverence and love for your Higher Power. This means that you recognize that you're calling upon an energy greater than yourself.

## **Love and/or Peace**

Ask for love: To feel love, to find love, to express love, to act in love. Love is the most powerful energy in the universe, and it's available to all of us, at all times. Peace is also a very powerful expression of love.

*Experiments in prayer suggest that  
love is one of the most important factors  
influencing its effectiveness.  
- Larry Dossey*

## **Alignment**

Ask for Alignment with Divine Will. A few famous prayers requesting alignment include, "Let thy will and mine be one" and "Let me delight in thy will and walk in thy ways." And, of course, the simple alignment prayer provided in the chapter on resolving your Reason Why: "Let Divine Will Fill My Heart and Guide My Actions."

## **Guidance**

Ask for Divine Guidance. How you can:

- Do the best you can with in every situation you encounter.
- Help others, either directly or indirectly by serving as a model of love.

## **Awareness**

Ask for help to see the signs from Spirit, including asking:

- To see the potential silver lining or Blessing in Disguise.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: if you pray to the Universe, remember that The Universe" is a big place and not necessarily Divine. Instead of a deity, please be sure that you ask for the highest level guidance available.



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### **Selflessness**

When asking for something, ask “if it’s for the highest good of all concerned.” It is important to never infringe on the rights of others, especially through prayer.

### **Commitment/Loyalty**

Demonstrate that you’re committed to following through and are loyal to the Divine by doing so.

### **Release**

Release the message from yourself up to your Higher Power, to bring you what is best for you. This also includes detachment from the results, if you’re using the prayer to ask for something.

### **What Prayer Should *Not* Do:**

- Infringe on another’s rights or free will.
- Restrict or limit the Divine from providing what’s best.
- Nag. Don’t nag when you pray! Your Higher Power knows what you want; you don’t have to nag Him. The more you pester and nag for what you want, the more you’ll find it to be elusive, because you’re showing that you’re too attached to the outcome (an important Lesson!)

### **Be Careful What You Pray For**

In addition to the Lessons discussed earlier from Larry Dossey’s book, *Be Careful What You Pray For*, about the potentially harmful effects of prayer, we should also pay close attention to the things we think we want in our lives, including success, health, abundance, etc. If we’re not integrated and aligned, we may receive exactly what we ask for – but find that we’re either not satisfied with the result, or perhaps are even deeply troubled by it.

Affluenza is a term that describes the stress associated with money and financial success. Many of us know that financial adversity can cause anxiety, but having a lot of money can create problems as well. Research has shown that the larger the square footage in a home, the greater the likelihood for divorce. And the more possessions you have, the more problems you can have. We may dream of having a vacation home, for example, but not realize it would mean twice the bills and upkeep.

This doesn’t mean that it’s wrong to ask for external possessions – as long as we realize that not only doesn’t it produce functional (internal) happiness, but there can also be a downside to every request.

### **Having Someone Pray for You**

If someone asked if they could pray for you, what would you say? Would it matter if you knew them or not? What if you were facing surgery and your physician asked if he/she could pray? What if you found out that someone prayed for you without your permission? Would it bother you, or would you be grateful? Would it matter what their belief system is? Would it matter how they prayed – what they said – and to whom?

As we know, there's amazing power in thought. Having others pray for us can be extremely helpful. But it can also be uncomfortable – or perhaps even counter-productive – if it isn't delivered and received with the highest energy and intent.

There can be problems with having other people pray for you:

- They could be trying to influence your belief system. For example, they could pray that you go to a particular church, a place that isn't comfortable to you.
- They could have a hidden wish or agenda in the outcome of your experience. For example, they could hope that you keep your job so that you can help them find a position with the same company – while the best thing for you could be to move onto another career.
- They could misunderstand what you'd like, yet want something different for you. For example, you could say you want a particular relationship to work out, and you pray that you stay married. However, the outcome of their prayer could be that you do, indeed stay married, but are still unhappy.
- Even if their wishes are aligned with yours, they could be troublesome. For example, say you want to be healed from a serious illness. They could pray for your healing as well, and it works – your illness is gone. But if you didn't figure out the Reason Why, you may have to face a bigger problem in the future.

These interferences could come from the best intentions, or they could include Subconscious Sabotage from the other person. It can be very complicated! However, the guidelines provided below offer the best advice for praying for others and having others pray for you.

### **Praying for Others and Why the Prayer Study Didn't Work**

Praying for others is just as complicated. In 2005 a study was done to measure the effect of prayer. As reported By Rob Stein of the Washington Post, "Praying for sick strangers does not improve their prospects of recovering, according to a large, carefully designed study that casts doubt on the widely held belief that being prayed for can help a person heal. The study of more than 700 heart patients, one of the most ambitious attempts to test the medicinal power of prayer, showed that those who had people

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praying for them from a distance, and without their knowledge, were no less likely to suffer a major complication, end up back in the hospital or die.”

Although this study was widely debated by scientists and theologians, the “Reason Why” the study didn’t work was crystal clear to me: *Because no one should interfere with the rights of others.* Each of these patients had their own Reason Why they got cancer.

For some, Subconscious Sabotage was the cause. Their own negative thinking produced the disease. For these people, praying for the removal of the disease would only have been a temporary “cure.”

For others, developing cancer might have been a Karmic payback to something they had done. Unless the Karmic debt was paid, the disease would continue. Conversely, perhaps the disease offered a chance to earn some positive Karma by helping others.

Some of the patients may have been learning a valuable lesson through their disease, which could have been thwarted if the outsider’s prayers for their healing had worked.

The cancer could have also been a test, to see if the patient would react to the disease with anger or with faith.

And, finally, perhaps the cancer held a Reward for the patient. If the study was effective, the people praying could have robbed the patients of the blessings often found through disease.

However, if the study had followed the guidelines listed below, I believe it would have been significantly more effective.

### **Guidelines for Praying for Others and Having Others Pray for Us**

Both praying for others and having others pray for us are safest and most effective when the following suggestions are applied.

Ask for:

- Divine love, guidance and support
- Help to learn any Lessons involved
- Strength to handle anything that comes with grace and dignity
- Faith to keep believing and find meaning
- Compassion to and from others
- Awareness to look for signs and find guidance
- Connection to their 3 selves and the Divine
- Alignment with Divine Will
- Help to face, feel and free any fears or harmful emotions.

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- Forgiveness toward a perpetrator

And the simplest thing is also the most influential:

- Send love and ask for love.

### **Great Times to Pray**

When you:

- Wake up
- Go to sleep
- Eat
- Pay bills
- Are trying something new or embarking on an adventure
- Are in a potentially risky situation
- Are trying to connect with people (especially challenging people)
- Are grateful
- Are happy!

*Old Man: "It goes like this. Let's see now: 'Protect me from knowing what I don't need to know. Protect me from even knowing that there are things to know that I don't know. Protect me from knowing that I decided not to know about the things that I decided not to know about. Amen.' That's it. It's what you pray silently inside yourself anyway, so you may as well have it out in the open."*

*Arthur: "Hmmm, Well, thank you - "*

*Old Man: "There's another prayer that goes with it that's very important, so you'd better jot this down, too."*

*Arthur: "OK."*

*Old Man: "It goes, 'Lord, lord, lord...' It's best to put that bit in, just in case. You can never be too sure. 'Lord, lord, lord.*

*Protect me from the consequences of the above prayer. Amen...' And that's it. Most of the trouble people get into in life comes from missing out that last part.'" ☺*

*- Old Man Oracle's prayer given to Arthur Dent in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

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