

HELP-HOPE-PRAYER

I have had a three month break now from coaching basketball. During these three months I have spent some time researching new drills and examining some different plays to introduce. These things are within my control as a coach during the off season. What is beyond my control however is wondering if we would have enough returning players and new ones to form a team this coming season. The team I coached last year was made up of girls in Grade 10. Many of these players were balancing their schoolwork with extracurricular activities, jobs, and competitive basketball.

As the season was coming to an end, I knew some of the players were worried about their school work load going into Grade 11 and were considering not returning this year to our team. Over the summer I received word four players were not planning on playing this year. Suddenly I began to wonder if we would have enough players to form a team. I knew my daughter was beginning to worry about the same thing. I shared with her I had been praying since June for God to provide us with enough players.

I kept making this request part of my daily prayers since then. Last week I was sent a list of players who had signed up to try out for our team. When I looked at the list there were three players from last year who decided not to return. On this same list were the names of three new people who had signed up to try out. Seeing their names was an answer to prayer for me. I could see God had been at work speaking into these player's hearts to direct them toward our team.

Just when I thought my prayer had been fully answered I received news the day before tryouts that another one of my returning players had a change of heart and was not coming back. I received more bad news that two of the three new players had not paid their fee to tryout and could not do so unless the money was received before Tuesday night. There was some good news, however. One new person had been added to the list to tryout.

If I have confused you with all the additions and subtractions, that leaves me with eight players, still two or three short of forming a team. I have been praying since June asking God's help on this matter. I have been holding onto

hope through this time frame that God is at work answering this prayer. This week God has shown me that He indeed has been at work helping me with my problem. He has given me a glimmer of hope. He is also reminding me that I need to remain patient over the next few weeks as He continues to help me with this problem. Prayer has kept me hoping until this point. More prayer will be needed as I remain hopeful and wait upon His timing to fully answer this prayer.

As I began to consider what my message should be about this week it seemed like God kept bringing me back to this prayer request. As I reflected upon this prayer, I was reminded how every prayer has these two aspects to it: HELP AND HOPE. When we pray, we are asking God to help us with the request we are putting forth. Included in this request for God's help is our willingness to put our hope in Him to be the answer to our prayer. As I pondered these two aspects of prayer, I began to see how these words share the consonants H and P in common as well as the vowel E. Once this came to light for me, I sensed God was asking me to explore possible combinations of words that start with these letters that reflect answered prayer. Two combinations that I thought of were:

1. Heaven's Eternal Power
2. Heaven's Power Experienced

I think both of these phrases found in the common letters to the words **HOPE** and **HELP** capture well what prayer does for us. Prayer allows us to tap into **Heaven's Eternal Power** seeking help and when it is answered we are left in awe as a result of Heaven's Power Experienced. We may not have connected these two aspects of prayer before but the psalmists in Scripture certainly did. Here are two examples from the psalms that reveal these two aspects about prayer:

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.
(Psalm 62:5-6)

I look up to the mountains - does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth! *(Psalm 121:1-2)*

These two aspects of prayer are what I am very mindful of right now in my life. I know that if it is His will, my help will come from Him and he will provide enough players to form a team this season. He has provided me with a glimmer of hope by adding two new players to replace the four who are not planning on returning. Just as I have since June, I continue to wait quietly before Him with complete hope and trust. I continue to tap into Heaven's Eternal Power asking for help. I experienced a partial answer to prayer and as a result have been blessed with Heaven's Power Experienced. I have more waiting to do, but I know my hope is well placed and in time I will be blessed with even more of Heaven's Power Experienced.

We all experience needs along the way in life. When we do, may we remember how prayer is us reaching out to God for help, followed by us waiting upon Him with hope in our hearts. Just like I have done, whenever we get a partial answer to our prayers, or have them fully answered, may we share our story of Heaven's Power Experienced! with others. These are stories that need to be shared about the power and blessings of prayer.

KEEP SAFE AND GOD BLESS

PASTOR DEAN