

ONE WAY PRAYERS GET ANSWERED

I have just started a new job this week. Now do not get worried, because I am still keeping my job as your pastor. Perhaps, you may be more worried that I am still keeping my job as your pastor. The new job that I have started this week is coaching my daughter's basketball team made up of 15-year-olds starting Grade 10 this year. I served as an assistant coach two years ago for my daughter's team and I have coached her individually for probably four years now.

At times I taught Coral a few things, and other times she pointed out to me I was teaching some things wrong. This will be new territory for me stepping into a head coaching position. There were a lot of people surprised by my decision to do this. First of all, my mother was shocked and surprised when I told her about it. I think some of her shock was thinking when I would have the time for this, but also whether I had the knowledge to do so. Thankfully, I heard Coral say to her, "Dad will do a good job as he has been doing a lot of studying and preparation." I did not even have to pay her to say that.

Other people's surprise when they learned about my decision had more to do with the responsibilities, commitments, and headaches that come from coaching. I really see my decision as an answer to prayer. I have been praying since March about which team and organization would be best for Coral to play in this coming season. Even though she had been training with an organization during COVID, it was not turning out to be a good fit for her. One of the options God kept putting on my heart was to step up as head coach of Coral's former team. We knew the previous head coach would not be returning as his family moved back to Slovakia during the summer. Coral and I talked about other options for her too, but we kept coming back to her returning to her former team with me as coach. We made the decision together in mid-July.

After making the decision, I kept asking God in prayer that if this was indeed His will that He would open the doors in order to make it happen. I first contacted the organization to see if they would be willing to support me stepping up as head coach. They said yes as long as I could guarantee a

certain number of Coral's former teammates would be willing to return. I began reaching out to some of them to see if they were interested in returning. To be honest, I was not sure what the response would be from them knowing some players and parents might be hesitant to return as a result of COVID. Six of them committed to returning and when I shared this with the organization, they agreed to support me putting together a team this year. I saw this decision as an answer to my prayers for Coral.

Something I quickly realized was that by stepping up and doing this I was also being a means for God to answer some other parents' prayers. So many of the parents I reached out to said their daughters had given up hope on playing basketball again this year when the previous coach announced he was leaving. With no team to return to, many of these girls were grieving and disappointed. When they learned that I would be coaching the team this year several of the parents shared with me how much their girls smiled at the chance to be able to play again. I truly believe how God opened the door for me to coach was an answer to my own prayer, as well as the prayers of several parents.

When we pray, usually our focus is on **how God will answer that prayer**. We do not think too often in these situations that God may use us to be an answer to the very prayer request we have just made. Sometimes this is the case. One instance when we saw this occur in the Bible was when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was agonizing as the hour drew nearer for His death on the cross. He made the following request to His Father in prayer:

"Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

Jesus not only made this request in prayer once, but three times that night. After the third time, it became evident to Jesus that He was the answer to the prayer request He was making. He stepped up and became the answer to that prayer and in so doing blessed us with forgiveness for our sins, and the hope of eternal life. If Jesus had not stepped up to be the answer to that prayer our lives and our eternal security would be very different right now.

I imagine you have prayed many a prayer during these past sixteen months during COVID-19. Maybe some of your prayer requests have been for God to remove some form of suffering you were experiencing. Perhaps God answered this prayer for you by having somebody reach out and bless you as His answer. That person stepped up and made a sacrifice to be an answer to prayer for you. I wonder if the best way we can say thank you to God is by stepping up as we feel led by Him and be an answer to somebody else's prayer. They will be blessed as a result, and we will feel uplifted as well as seeing God's amazing love at work. This is what this world needs. If more and more people realize that **they might be the answer to their own prayer and somebody else's**, we will see a lot more happiness and a lot less sorrow.

This week as I step on the court in my new job as a coach, I will do so knowing it is a result of how God answered not only my prayer and but also the prayers of many of my players. Can I ask you for a favour? Will you pray for me? I struggle with one fifteen-year-old girl at home sometimes. Now I will have nine others to contend with.

God Bless and Keep Safe

Pastor Dean