

PRAYING with *Fire*

PRAYER POINTS



Livin' on a Prayer

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Our wildest dreams are possible... if we want them badly enough.

Last month, I realized it had been a while since I'd written a song. Usually my songs are the stuff of dreams; they come to me in the middle of the night while I'm sleeping, and I have to force myself out of bed to get them recorded before I go back to sleep. So, I asked God to send me some great songs -- songs that would inspire me and my audiences, songs that might be marketable, songs that would fill the needs of the projects that I'm working on. And then, like clockwork, the next morning I received a great song. What a feeling! Intro, verse, chorus, bridge, full arrangement and a vague idea of what the lyrics should be... all in that initial inspiration.

That was easy. But the hard part is to finish the song -- to sit down and flesh out the lyrics, work out the piano part, and practice it so that it is ready to perform or record.

Unfortunately, that new song just went into the vast file of my unfinished work, joining melodies in the thousands on my computer hard drive (and formerly on legions of cassette tapes.) A new song is like a great idea; it should open new doors, awaken unconscious yearnings, create possibilities. I had a realization that filing yet another song away was a slap in the face to the Source of all Creativity. Why should God send me any new material if all I do is put it in cold storage?

So, when I prayed the next night for inspiration, I also committed to spending an hour at the piano, pledging not to wait for the spare time to complete it that might never come.

Sure enough, I was given the bounty of a song every day of the week! Completely different tunes -- some with a Jewish flavor, a ballad for a friend who just lost his young wife, a musical theater piece, a kids tune. Each morning I put everything on hold to work on them. I played them for every unwitting victim who happened into my studio. I wanted to make perfectly clear to God that I was grateful and taking responsibility for the inspiration.

Along the way, I learned there are four steps to effective prayer:

- Prayer begins and ends with gratitude, a sense of amazement at God's constant creation. After all, the Hebrew word for Jews is Yehudim which means "those who thank."
- In prayer, we need to ask for something specific -- be it health, wealth, an asset, an idea. Nothing we request is outside of God's ability to deliver.
- Listen to your "messages" over the course of the day, to be aware when the Creator is trying to get your attention. And more importantly, be ready to respond or change in accordance with the message.
- Finally, give thanks and feel a sense of confidence that the prayer will be answered by a loving God who desires our prayer.

Not inspired to pray? Well, as Woody Allen says, "Eighty percent of success is just showing up." If we wait until we are really inspired to work out, we'll become obese. So too with prayer. Rather than holding out for that flash of inspiration, it's important to create a daily sacred space for the Divine connection to flourish.

Yes, our wildest dreams are possible. We just have to want them badly enough. We have to be willing to "march into hell for a heavenly cause," i.e. commit to the sacrifices that might be required. Daily prayer forces us to ask tough questions, to figure out what we really want out of life. It gives us the chance to pump up those muscles of gratitude, to have a regular date with humility. When God sees us acknowledge our gifts, God keeps them coming since each gift serves to build the relationship.

Jews have been fervently praying for millennia, long before Jon Bon Jovi sang about "Livin' on a Prayer." Our prayers have created a world where Jewish ideals have become the yardstick for Western society. We have prayed daily for a return to our homeland and our generation has the unique merit of seeing that dream fulfilled.

So, pray for a song or whatever you may need. The sky is the limit!