

The Power of Prayer

in Completing the Task

My wife and I have served for 23 years with Wycliffe Bible Translators, an organization dedicated to making Scripture accessible to every language group that needs it. You can imagine over the course of all those years the number of prayers we have prayed and the number of ways we have seen the Lord answer those prayers. Here are a couple examples from early on.

When I wanted to become a missionary pilot with JAARS, a Wycliffe partner organization that supports Bible translation, I needed to log an additional 170 hours of flight time. My prayers asking for God's provision led to me crossing paths with a gentleman who let me use his 1946 Taylorcraft airplane for a year. Instead of paying \$70 per hour, I paid \$5 per hour!

Only four months into our first assignment in Papua New Guinea, our one and a half year old daughter Emily spiked a 104 degree fever in a village half a day away from the nearest clinic. She was not responding to the malaria treatment, there were no cell phones and no 911 emergency response team. That's when we had our first encounter with a "jungle" doctor. Our daughter did not drink the special river water that he

prescribed to force the evil spirits out of her body. Instead my wife and I, and a half dozen elders of the local church anointed her with oil and prayed the prayer of faith. Emily was up and running and bouncing off the walls—back to her normal self—the next morning.

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I have never claimed to be a theologian, but in my thinking there has always been a separate category of promises that I refer to as "unlimited." These are the ones reserved for the

Abrahams, Davids and Pauls of Scripture. These are the promises that nudge my faith to an entirely different level. I believe this is the Holy Spirit's intent. I believe that John 15:7 ought to arrest our imagination when it says, "But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted."



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Doug and his wife, Jo, joined Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1995. Their first assignment was Papua New Guinea (1997 to 2000) where Doug served as a missionary pilot. Doug and Jo moved to Wycliffe's headquarters in Orlando in 2001 where Doug currently serves as the senior director of Strategic Prayer and Partnerships. Doug and Jo have two daughters, Ashley (25) and Emily (22).

The same goes for Ephesians 3:20, “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”

God’s unlimited promises were never intended to be glossed over or pulled down to our common sense level and emptied of their power. They were meant to lift our faith and lead us to a level of experience that is filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God. If there is a promise we have not experienced yet, we ought not rest until we have!

In 2007, I experienced a series of events that the Lord would use to help forever change my perspective on His unlimited promises and the way I pray.

In September of that year, I rode a bicycle 2,650 miles across the United States in 35 days, raising \$51,000 for a Bible translation project with Wycliffe USA. The fundraiser had far exceeded my expectations, and the coolest part was that I had the privilege of choosing the project. I felt like the richest man in the world.

About a year earlier, I had heard a presentation about the impact of audio Scripture and the ministry of Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH), an organization Wycliffe USA has partnered with regularly in the past. At that time, Wycliffe and FCBH were co-funding projects among language communities that had a high priority need for audio Scripture listening groups. I couldn’t think of a more dynamic partnership or a more exciting project to sponsor, bringing Bible translation and dramatized audio recordings together.

When I saw the Kekchi of Guatemala on the list of potential projects to fund, I was reminded of an Assemblies of God (AG) missionary sent out by our home church in Orlando, and I got even more excited. Damien had been working among the Kekchi for some time, a group of over 700,000 speakers of Mayan descent located throughout central Guatemala. They had the printed New Testament, but there was minimal engagement because the Kekchi typically share and receive important information through oral stories.

I emailed Damien, telling him about the ride, the available funds, and asked if the audio players and the training would benefit the work he was doing among the Kekchi. He acknowledged the need, how easy it would be to launch the listening groups within the local Kekchi churches and what a tremendous blessing it would be to the pastors. I began to dream of the possibility of bringing the pieces together to create synergy and to multiply the engagement

and impact of the Kekchi Scripture. My dreams became desperate prayers, and my desperate prayers became steps toward doing whatever it would take to make it all happen.

I reached out to FCBH sharing my desire to fund the launch of the Kekchi listening groups and to do it in partnership with the Guatemalan Assemblies of God—and working in partnership with the National Church was FCBH’s preferred strategy! I asked Damien if he would reach out to the Guatemalan AG leadership, and he agreed. Meetings were scheduled, plane tickets were purchased and I was off on my first trip to Latin America.

In April 2008, half way into my five-day trip to Guatemala, I found myself in a large conference room with representatives from Faith Comes By Hearing, SIL, the Guatemalan Bible Society, the General Superintendent and all the department heads of the Guatemalan Assemblies of God church. The two people I knew in the room, I had met just two days before. Except for me sharing the first few minutes about the bicycle ride, there was not another word of English. One hour later, what was to be a 30-minute meeting concluded with smiles, handshakes, formalities and one *gringo* with a deer-in-the-headlights expression on his face.

On the way to the car, the Americas Area director for FCBH apologized for not having time to interpret and gave me a one sentence summary. “That,” he said, “was a very good meeting!” It so happened that very good meeting was the answer to every prayer I had been praying for nearly a year. I was right in the middle of it, and I didn’t even know it!



The meeting at the Guatemalan Assemblies of God headquarters catalyzed an ad hoc five-way partnership that over the course of the following months led to the launch of over 900 audio Scripture listening groups in the Assemblies of God churches throughout the Kekchi

speaking region. Audio players (called Proclaimers) and the training for facilitating listening groups was provided for several hundred AG pastors and lay leaders.

This connection with Guatemala became a benchmark experience in my faith journey. I had never prayed for something as intently or as long that involved as many people, churches and organizations with as much potential to touch a people group. (His Word will not return void!) Many times I have read, and sung, Psalm 2:8, “only ask, and I will give you the nations” with a very real cry in my heart wondering what it could mean for me personally. My experience in Guatemala, the bike ride, the funds raised, the partnership, the more than 900 listening groups launched (each with the potential of becoming a church), all my answered prayers for a “nation”—the Kekchi—changed my perspective. I went from simply believing in the power of God’s unlimited promises, to actually experiencing it.

The invitation is open to us all.

“Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen, and you will find life.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you.

I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David.

See how I used him to display my power among the peoples.

I made him a leader among the nations.

You also will command nations you do not know, and peoples unknown to you will come running to obey, because I, the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious.”

— Isaiah 55:3-5

This experience gave me a taste of the Lord’s mighty power that is at work within us. So much more is accomplished when we start where God starts! His eyes search the whole earth looking to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him, those who would believe and pray His unlimited promises into existence. Yes, the bike ride to help fund the Kekchi listening groups was incredibly fulfilling in itself; but looking to the horizon, longing and praying for the nations and for unity in the church brought about a multiplied blessing not just for me or the Kekchi, but for FCBH, for Damien and for the church in Guatemala.

Discovering the power of prayer for completing the task begins by simply taking God at His Word and longing to know Him the way He longs to be known. 



Kekchi village in Guatemala



Kekchi speakers



Kekchi receiving Proclaimer

