

# Sample excerpts taken from "PARTNERS IN PRAYER"

*By John Maxwell*

[The following is a nice sample of a superb book about effective prayer and prayer-partnering written by John C. Maxwell.]

## UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF PRAYER

***Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.***

Psalm 25:4-5

I grew up in a Christian household where prayer was important. And as a pastor, I spent time in prayer every day. But it wasn't until God brought me a prayer partner that my life and ministry exploded with power, and the results began to multiply in an incredible way.

It all started in 1981 when I became the senior pastor at Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego, California. My wife, Margaret, and I moved to San Diego with our children, Elizabeth and Joel Porter, after I spent two years as the executive director of evangelism at Wesleyan World Headquarters in Indiana. Before that I spent eleven years as the pastor to two churches in Indiana and Ohio.

I was excited about being a pastor again, and especially about coming to Skyline. I was eager to get to know the staff, evaluate the church's ministries, assess the leadership, and identify the key leaders who were going to help me accomplish the church's mission. I was trying to accomplish as much as I could as quickly as I could, which was making me maintain a very heavy schedule.

On a Tuesday morning after I'd been at Skyline for about six weeks, I was reviewing the day's schedule when I saw an appointment scheduled for a person whose name I didn't recognize.

"Who's Bill Klassen?" I asked.

"He's your ten o'clock appointment," replied Barbara, my assistant.

"I see that, but who is he? Is he in leadership?" I asked. I had spent the last few weeks focusing much of my attention on getting to know the leaders in the congregation.

"No, he's not in leadership," said Barbara. "As a matter of fact, he doesn't even go to church at Skyline." Barbara could see that I wasn't happy. "He said he had to see you. He was very persistent," she added emphatically.

"Well," I said, "give me about fifteen minutes with him, and if we're not done, interrupt us." My plan was to figure out what his agenda was, fix whatever problem he had, kindly but quickly, and get on with the work I had to get done that day.

## **ONE LAYPERSON CALLED TO PRAY**

Bill turned out to be a gentleman of about sixty with hair white as snow. His face was gentle, almost radiant...He began telling me about himself, how he had worked in construction in Canada and sold sailboats in Washington and southern California, and how he had worked for the Navigators ministry as a discipler.

"John," Bill said. "I believe God has called me--a layman--to disciple, encourage, and pray for pastors. And the reason I came here today was so that I could pray for you."

*He wanted to pray for me?* I thought. *In all my years as a pastor, I've never had a layman pray for me.* My own agenda began to melt away. I felt the spirit of God crushing me, saying, "John, My agenda is more important than yours. Your life is not like a one-way street where you just minister to other people. There are people who want to minister to you. I am sending this layman to pray for you."...

## **THE POWER OF PARTNERING IN PRAYER**

Neither of our lives has ever been the same since that meeting. Bill became my personal prayer and accountability partner after that, and he went on to help me organize a prayer partner ministry at Skyline, a group of people who prayed for me every day during my fourteen years there and who met in small groups in a tiny room at church every Sunday to cover the services with prayer. It started with thirty-one laymen and eventually expanded to include 120. During those fourteen years, the congregation tripled in size from a little over 1,000 to nearly 3,500. The church's annual income jumped from \$750,000 to more than \$5,000,000. Ministry at Skyline flourished, with lay involvement increasing from 112 to over 1,800.

But the really awesome power of those prayers has been in individual lives: Thousands of people received Christ during those years. My prayer

partners grew in their walk with God and became active participants in the miraculous power of prayer in their daily lives. Bill and Marianne Klassen started their own ministry to teach other churches how to start their own prayer partners. And during those years, God led me down an incredible road. In addition to all the wonderful things happening in the church, I began working more and more with other pastors, teaching them leadership and church growth. I formed INJOY, a nondenominational Christian organization dedicated to helping leaders reach their potential, in the church, business, and family. I've even had the privilege of speaking at several Promise Keepers conferences around the country.

Without prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, I believe none of these things would have happened. The glory and the honor belong to God. But the credit for releasing that power and keeping me protected day after day belongs to those prayer partners.

## **PRAYER PARTNERS IN HISTORY**

Laypeople partnering in prayer with godly leaders is not a new concept. It goes all the way back to the Old Testament in the book of Exodus when Moses prayed on a hilltop for Joshua to defeat the Amalekites...It continued in the New Testament, particularly in the first days of the developing first-century church, as recounted in the book of Acts. You probably remember how the 120 disciples prayed during the days between Jesus' ascension and the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). On the day when the Holy Spirit arrived, a simple fisherman named Peter gave his testimony, and 3,000 were converted.