

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

Glen A. Coon

Chapter 3

YOUTH'S ADVENTURES IN PRAYER

I ARRIVED on The Mountain School campus at midnight. A guest room was waiting for me at the "Big House".

Because I was very weary, I requested the privilege of sleeping in the next morning, which of course was graciously granted.

However, as daylight dawned, something impelled me to get up and go to the cafeteria. There I witnessed a fellowship between faculty and students which was unique. In just a few minutes I felt a part of a big, loving family.

While most of the faculty members eat in their own homes, one or two of them eat with the students on a rotation basis. That particular morning the faculty member present had volunteered to make the pancakes. It seemed that one of the students had done a poor job of making pancakes the morning before, and now the faculty member was going to show them how it was done"!

What a time we had that morning! Someone had cleverly mixed some cheesecloth in with the batter, and when the pancakes were served it was evident that the cook had not been too successful! There was much good humor evident that morning, and all enjoyed a good meal as well. I found the meals to be very tasty although many of the frills were omitted. The students looked healthy and seemed to enjoy their meals. There was a good spirit prevailing in every department of the school. No holier-than-thou attitude was to be seen anywhere.

After breakfast I went back to the "Big House" and soon realized that something of special interest was absorbing the attention of the students. I saw them busily talking to each other and after observing for a while, I asked what the trouble was.

I was told that Eddy, one of their fellow students, was told by his parents that he was going to have to leave the school that morning. They told me how Eddy had begun to love The Mountain School, and how that after much prayer and Bible study, he was preparing to be baptized at the next baptismal service.

Now his parents had decided that Eddy was getting too much religion and it was time for him to come home. They did not want their boy uniting with this "queer" church.

The students were looking for a promise that they might claim to either change the parents' minds, or else to help Eddy, if taken back home, to witness to his new-found faith.

When Eddy's parents arrived, he pleaded with them to let him stay. He tried to tell them what a wonderful school this was and how much it had done for him. In his attempt he was so emotionally involved that a few tears came to his eyes. But all his pleas fell on deaf ears. In fact, it made his parents only the more determined to remove their boy from a place that was having such an influence upon him.

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The parents were determined, and it was not long until Eddy's things were packed in the car and the last goodbyes were said. Again, faculty and students pressed their petitions to God, asking Him to intervene. They asked God to impress these parents and allow Eddy to return, if that was His will. If it was not, then they asked that Eddy be given words to speak and power to live so that the parents would be converted by their son's life and example.

Before the week was over, Eddy wrote to his friends at the school. He told how he was enjoying his newfound faith and that the Lord was giving him courage to remain true to his convictions. The preacher is coming over tonight and my parents think that he will prove me to be wrong. But I know what the Bible says, and I'm determined to live by it", wrote Eddy.

A week later Eddy wrote again. He said, "Claim promises for me, and it may be that God will use me to convert the minister who is coming over again this evening to see me to try to persuade me to give up my newfound faith".

Prominent, and leading out valiantly as a prayer band leader was Bob—this once trigger-happy, knife-wielding youth who just a few weeks earlier had been taken away by the sheriff. He was now a Bible-carrying, promise-claiming firebrand. He knew what it was to have prayers answered. He knew, too, what Jesus in the heart can do to one's outlook on life. His life was infecting the lives of many other students.

The entire student body reflected an awareness of the presence of heavenly angels on the campus. Even their singing was fired with enthusiasm. As I sat and listened to them sing, I contrasted the music I heard with that of many other teenagers in other places I had held meetings. What a difference!

When I began to speak, the moment I announced my text, pencils and notebooks came out. I shall not soon forget the earnestness and zeal these students exhibited in an attempt to memorize and practice the truths they learned.

Soon it was time to ask for decisions for baptism. I had previously talked with Principal Hollister about the possibilities. "I think there may be two or three who will want to be baptized", he told me. You can imagine our surprise when fifteen young people indicated their desire to prepare for baptism when the invitation was extended. There were several more who indicated a desire to attend the classes but they were not sure that they wanted to be baptized at this time. Still others, who had already been baptized, wanted to attend just to refresh the truths in their minds. All were welcomed.

As the week drew to a close, I invited any students who would like to, to write out their experience of the past week and give it to me as a souvenir of our time together.

One young man wrote:

"When we were told that it was time for the Week of Prayer, I could hardly bear the thought of having to sit through another long week of sermons and testimonies and prayers. But this has been a good week. A few things have changed in my life. I have had my first real experience in prayer. I've seen prayer answered. I'm interested in the Bible now. In fact, I might be a preacher myself some day".

I shared some of these experiences with the faculty. "This is worth a year's pay", said one teacher. Incidentally, the teachers at The Mountain School have been giving their services free, except for board, room and utilities. Maybe this accounts in part for the unselfish, unstinted love and service these teachers render to their students. I think it is the ninth wonder of the world!

For the most part, these are all highly-qualified teachers. Talk about people dying for a cause!—these teachers are living and giving for a cause!

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The students are taught that God lives and loves, and that He is interested in the little things of life as well as the large.

They have experienced that God will answer prayer even in life's minor matters. I think of Linda, a young sixteen-year-old student. She wrote me a letter in which she shared an experience that illustrates this point:

"I had studied hard for a Bible test we were to have. When we were ready to write the test, the teacher asked us to write four memory verses we were supposed to have learned. I had memorized them and began to write. I wrote the first two out without hesitation. Then my mind went blank. I could not remember a word of the other two. I decided to claim the promise of James 1:5 for wisdom.

As soon as I opened my eyes, I started writing and didn't stop until I had written all four memory verses. When I received my paper back, I noticed that the first two memory verses had several mistakes in them but the last two were word perfect. God is good! He answers the prayers of those who ask".

Another student had a similar experience. This young lady was having trouble diagramming sentences for her English II assignment.

"I sat and looked at the sentences for the longest time. I finally decided that this was just wasting time, so I asked the Lord for wisdom and claimed James 1:5. Once again I read the directions and looked at the first sentence. It was as if a curtain was pulled back. I began to see exactly what had to be done, and finished the assignment without any further problem. Prayer really works".

God was answering all kinds of prayers for those students who came to Him in simple faith. One student had suffered severely with a bad back. One of the teachers was able to give him some relief by massaging it and twisting it, snapping into place.

"One day", this student wrote, "I was suffering unusually bad. I went to have the teacher give me some help, but found that he had gone off campus and would not be back all day. It hurt to sit; it hurt to lie down; it hurt to walk and stand. I was miserable. Suddenly I remembered the power that was awaiting my use through the medium of Prayer. I remembered, too, that I could claim the promises of the Bible.

"Not knowing which one to claim, I decided to turn to Matthew 7:7, 'Ask and it shall be given you: . . ." I put my finger on the promise and prayed, asking God to take away the hurt. When I finished praying I got up, but my back still hurt. Then I remembered that I had not thanked God for healing my back. I prayed again and thanked God for having heard my request and for having answered me. I got up from my knees and opened my books and began to study. It hurt just a little, but my heart was filled with thanksgiving. In a half hour I had to leave the room to take care of an errand, and only then did I realize that I was completely free of pain. My heart overflowed with thankfulness."

The miracles of God's love were not confined to the campus. One of the students, a sixteen year old freshman, had had a burden for her father. He had been brought up in the Adventist faith, but for a number of reasons had become careless and indifferent. This had caused some friction in the home and Mother and Father had grown cool toward each other. The home was deteriorating.

"I began to claim 1 John 5:16, 'if any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.' I asked my roommate to join with me in claiming this promise for my father. Then I wrote to my mother and asked her to join us in pressing this petition to heaven for my father.

"It seemed it was only a short time later that I received a letter from Mother stating that Father had surrendered his heart to the Lord afresh, and that all was so much happier at home. Mother was thrilled. I was thrilled. And best of all, Daddy is now a vibrant Christian once again", she wrote.

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Tom Larson, the young man who had been such an inspiration to Bob while he was going through his Gethsemane, had an outstanding experience. It was simple and involved an item not worth more than one dollar. He had an answer to prayer that involved the crown, or winding wheel of his watch. Just as the sun was setting one Friday evening, he noticed that the crown was gone. It had been loose for some time, but he has always been able to screw it back on and keep his watch wound. Suddenly he realized it was gone.

He didn't know where to begin looking because he didn't know when it came off. He had worked all day on the boys' new dormitory. It could have come off then, or it might have fallen off just a moment before when he was crossing the campus, jumping over some of the mud puddles that had formed after the rain. He did not have any extra money with which to buy a new one. The Lord knew this. The Lord knew too, that he needed the watch to be on time for his many appointments, etc.

"So I prayed", Tom wrote, "and I claimed the promise of Matthew 7:7, 8: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth . . . '

"I asked God to help me find the crown. I told Him I believed He would, and then thanked Him that He had found it and asked Him to direct me to it. I went back to the new dormitory and began looking through the sawdust and sand on the floor. As I was looking my roommate came to join me. Together we looked. I told my roommate that God had answered my prayer, but I was just having to exercise faith in His promise. As I made my way to the corner of the building I saw something shiny lying in the corner. I went over to it and picked up my tiny crown!

"I knew God would answer my prayer", Tom said, "but even so I actually jumped for joy, I was so grateful. God is so good! He extends His grace, when we least deserve it."

And speaking of God's wonderful grace, let us share the following experience with you. It is that of a young man before he had given his heart without reservation to Jesus.

"During August of 1966 my brothers and I went to the beach. It was a bit chilly and no one wanted to get wet. But since we had come to swim, I decided to be brave and jump in. I swam out past the breakers and soon found myself in calm water. I was having a good time out there in the Pacific all by myself.

"Soon the waters became rough and I decided to go back in. But try as I might, I was being taken further out all the time. My strength was being exhausted and I knew I needed help. By this time I was so far out my brothers couldn't hear my shouts for help.

"I knew I wasn't ready to die. I had lived a life of sin, but I knew, too, that God loved me. So I prayed and promised God that if He would save me, I would serve Him.

"Somehow I remembered having heard my father read in the Psalms, 'Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive. . . ' Psalms 33:18, 19. I prayed again.

"The waves were getting bigger, and my strength was getting weaker. God had saved others out of times of trouble. I was now asking Him to help me. Promises of the Bible somehow came to my mind. I remembered Psalms 34:6, 7: 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. '!

"I knew the Lord could save me. I prayed again and swam with all my might toward the shore. It seemed a couple of waves were now helping me. Presently I found I was able to touch ground. Then I rested for a moment.

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“By this time my brothers could see I was in trouble, and they spurred me on, encouraging me not to give up even though they knew they could not physically help me. With one more mighty try I was able to make it to shore and fell exhausted on the ground.

"I thanked God for what He had done for me, and have tried, to the best of my ability, to keep my end of the bargain. I love the Lord and am daily thankful to Him for His goodness to me. Now I feel as did David when he said, 'I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, . . . set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.' Psalms 40:1-3."

It was thrilling to see how the faculty members put into practice what was being taught on the prayer of reception. Often folk who have matured find it difficult to learn something entirely new and put it into practice. But not so at The Mountain School.

On more than one occasion I heard men and women—some with their Masters degrees—praying in childlike faith and simplicity. Along with the students they asked, believed, claimed and returned thanks to God for hearing and answering their prayers.

One such prayer involved the school water-pump, it was obvious that something would have to be done to provide enough drinking and cooking water for the students and the faculty. “We wanted to put in a new pump on a certain day, but the funds were not available” wrote one of the faculty members.

"We decided to make this a matter of prayer. Even as we prayed, a further disaster frustrated our situation. The well caved in. We continued to pray, and before the week was over enough money came in to pay for the fixing and re-casing of the well, as well as being able to install a new pump! The well-digger said that if the pump had been installed earlier we would have lost it when the well caved in. Now we have a good well and a good pump. God knew our needs before we did, and He supplied them in His good time.

"We are so thankful that we can serve such a God", the teacher concluded.

One of the teachers had a dramatic experience in which she prayed for healing and God answered. She wrote the following account.

“For three years I had been having problems with high blood pressure. The work here at The Mountain School is a real mental and emotional strain, so this did not help my problem any—it only aggravated it. After learning the A, B, C’s of prayer, I started praying for healing from high blood pressure. This problem had kept me upset for some time.

"I claimed III John 2, 'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.' and Isaiah 26:3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.'

"I prayed earnestly several times a day, using the A, B, and C’s of prayer. In two weeks I went back to the doctor for a checkup. My blood pressure was normal for the first time in more than three years, and I have not had any trouble since. I truly believe the Lord has completely healed me and He has given me peace of mind as He has promised."

Truly the Lord is good to those who in childlike faith claim the vast resource of power and help that He has promised.

I was eager to learn the reaction of the young people to a possible disappointment such as could have come to Tom had he not found the tiny winding crown to his watch.

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"We know", one of their teachers assured me, that there are times when God must teach us a lesson in carefulness. Hence we pray a prayer of reception in the spirit of commitment. We also understand that God must teach us patience. Hence we do not become bitter when God chooses to answer our prayers in a way, or at a time, which we do not expect".

We can always know that He who spared not His own Son, but delivered up Christ on the cross for us (Romans 8:32), will freely give us all things that are for our best good.