

The Power of Prayer

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I got married when I was just nineteen years old, and, despite my attempts to be a good wife, my marriage failed shortly before the birth of my second child—Karl. I was distressed, but determined to be the best single parent that I could.

To support my children, I got a job and tried with all of my heart to balance parenting and work. At first, my son Karl seemed unaffected by the divorce, but as his father started coming by less often to see him, I could see Karl withdrawing into himself.

When Karl was twelve years old, his father died. I tried to comfort him, but he just got angry and barricaded himself in his bedroom. “I don’t care,” he said. But I could hear him crying on the other side of the door.

When Karl was fourteen, he entered high school. I prayed that he would do well and go on to college. Unfortunately, it became apparent right away that Karl was having difficulty adjusting. When his first report card came, it indicated that he was failing all of his classes because of poor attendance.

I talked to Karl about this. I went to endless parent-teacher meetings at the high school. I sent him to counseling. I went to counseling with him. I tried punishing him—even begging. Nothing worked. Everyday, I dropped him off at the high school entrance, on my way to work, and after I drove away he crossed the street and hung out in the park with the other dropouts.

The low point for me came the day I received both Karl's report card and a letter from the school's "Talented and Gifted Program." The report card indicated that Karl had been absent 30 times and gotten six failing grades. As a result, he was now a full year behind his classmates. The letter said, "Your son was given an IQ test and it indicates that he has above-average intelligence. Please call our office to discuss his future. We are convinced that he will do well in our college-bound program. He is exceptionally bright."

This was the last straw for me. I couldn't get Karl to go to school, much less to a program that asked for extra effort. I was powerless, so I just started crying. Then, after what seemed like hours, I dried my tears and began to pray. I asked God to take my son into his arms and dry his tears. I asked God to be the father that Karl never had. I asked God to inspire Karl to live up to his full potential.

When I finished praying for Karl, I was rewarded with a sense of peace that I had not known in years. I slept like a baby that night, fully convinced that everything was going to be all right. And, from this point on, I stopped all efforts to make my son go to school. I turned the whole situation over to God—and I waited.

A few weeks later, I was sitting at my desk at work. Suddenly, the phone rang and a man with a deep voice asked for Karl's mother. "That's me I replied. What can I do for you?" "I am Karl's school counselor," the man said. "I want to talk to you about your son's absences." "Oh," I said. "I am glad to hear from you, but I want you to know that I have already tried everything to get Karl to go to school. Now, it is up to the Lord." With these words I began crying and pouring out my heart to this stranger on the phone. "I love my son," I said. "I only want what is best for him. But I can't make him do something he refuses to do. God knows I have tried. So, I am going to pray for him and love him no matter what he decides to do with his life. That is all I can do for now."

When I was finished, there was silence on the other end of the line. Then, solemnly, the man said “Thank you for your time, Mrs Peabody. I will stay in touch.”

Karl’s next report card showed a marked improvement in his attendance and grades. I was ecstatic. The following semester Karl was on the honor roll. I couldn’t believe the change, and yet I had prayed for it.

For the next two years, Karl continued to work hard. He went to summer school and evening classes at the local adult school to make up the classes he had failed. He was determined to graduate with his class even though I told him that it was all right with me if he graduated a year late.

Halfway through Karl’s last semester in high school, he asked me to go to Parents Night. I agreed and he squired me around from classroom to classroom introducing me to his teachers. They were all very happy about Karl’s improvement.

Before we went home that night, Karl escorted me to a patio adjacent to the school gym. It was a beautiful night. The moon was full and the stars glistened. Karl and I sat down on a wooden bench just enjoying the moment.

We were both silent for awhile, and then Karl turned to me with a smile on his face. For a second he hesitated; then softly he said, “Mom you have never asked me why I went back to school. Don’t you want to know?” “Yes,” I replied. “I guess I was so happy that I didn’t want to question it.” “Well,” he said, “I would like to tell you. Awhile back, I decided to play a joke on you. So I called you at work and pretended to be a school counselor. For some reason, you didn’t recognize my voice and so you shared with me your inner most feelings about the problems I was having. What you said saddened me and made me ashamed. Then, suddenly, I knew deep in my heart that I had to do something to make things right. From that moment on, I resolved to do better—for myself and for you.”

I couldn't speak. I was amazed. Then, I gave Karl a hug and, silently, I thanked the Lord for making my dream come true. Never again, would I underestimate the power of prayer.