



THE POWER OF PRAYER

PREVIEW

You may think the subject of prayer is a real drag. You may think it's hard or boring. Your understanding of prayer may come from your childhood or from listening to grownups talk to God in thee's and thou's or six-syllable theological words you never heard of. Starting a prayer life can seem a little overwhelming because you're talking to God, the infinite Creator of the universe. What should you say? How should you say it? What if He thinks your prayer is dumb? Talk about pressure! All of these things can stop you from praying. So how should one pray?

PRAISE

A returned missionary told a story about the power of prayer in his sermon. A few weeks after he had arrived at the city God had called him to, he met a man who said, "Some friends and I followed you into the jungle, knowing you would camp overnight. We planned to kill you and take your money, but just as we were about to move into your camp, we saw you were surrounded by twenty-six armed guards."

The missionary laughed at this and said, "No, I really was all alone out in that jungle campsite." The young man pressed the point, however, and said, "No sir, I wasn't the only person who saw the guards. My five friends also saw them and we all counted them. It was because of those twenty-six guards that we were afraid and left you alone."

At this point in the missionary's sermon, a man in the congregation jumped to his feet, interrupted the missionary, and asked him the exact date this event had happened. The missionary told the congregation the date, and the man who had interrupted told this story:

"On the night you were camping alone in Africa, it was morning here in the States and I was preparing to go play golf. I was about to putt when I felt the urge to pray for you. In fact, the urging of the Lord was so strong, I called men in this church to meet with me in the sanctuary to pray for you. Would all of those men who met with me on that day please stand?" The men who had gathered to pray that day stood up. The missionary wasn't concerned with the identity of those men; he was too busy counting them. There were twenty-six.

PARABLE

You'll never make right choices without prayer. Regular prayer. Real prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God about your thoughts, feelings, and concerns. God understands modern English (even the bizarre language spoken by your brother or sister). You can be confident that God hears you when you pray. In fact, God eagerly waits for you to come to Him in prayer. You are His child, and He values every minute you spend with Him!

PRESENT

Why is prayer so great?

1. Prayer helps you focus on God. It helps you get to know Him better. The psalmist said, "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always" (Psalm 105:4, NIV). When you pray, you "unplug" your mind from the television and CD player and "plug in" to God.
2. Prayer is intimacy with God. When you pray, you discover what it means to be intimate with God. The Bible says that when Moses entered the Tabernacle, "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exodus 33:11, NIV). That is what happens in prayer: you become friends with God. He becomes an intimate, personal friend who loves you unconditionally.
3. Prayer is a vital weapon in making right choices. If you want to stop lying, pray; it will add God's power to your desire. If you want to be more loving toward your brother, pray; it will add God's help to your good intentions. If you need more patience, more compassion, or more self-control, pray; it will add God's energy to your efforts.

PRACTICE

Knowing who God is will help you when you pray. Think of it this way: until you know someone well, you can't have an in-depth conversation with them. Think of a good friend you can easily talk to for hours about anything. This is possible because you really know them. The same is true in knowing God. Once you get to know Him it's easy to talk to Him. Once you know who He is and what He has done for you, it becomes easier to pray.

When we pray, God takes action. So pray! Pray for yourself. Pray for your family. Pray for your friends. And watch God work.

PRAY

Jesus, we surrender our hearts to You today and give You honor and praise. God, we are asking that You will strengthen our prayer life. Help us to pray more. Nudge us to pray when we are doing mindless tasks. Help us to truly know who we are in You, to understand that You always hear us. Help us to know Your Word so we can pray it. Remind us to write down our own needs and the needs of others so we can write down the answers to prayer when they come.

Thank You that You really do know us. In the mighty name of Jesus, amen.



PLUS

Make a list of four or five kinds of right choices you need to make more often or more consistently (like honesty, compassion, faithfulness, fairness, and so on). Pray for at least one item every day, asking God to help you develop that virtue.

