

“Prayer Works”  
Sunday, June 14, 2009  
By Pastor Peter F. Paine

Prayer really matters, and it really works. Sometimes we think that it doesn't make a huge difference when we pray or if we pray at all, but it does. It makes a big difference.

There are several schools of thought about how someone should pray. Some think that we need to kneel and bow our heads, others that we should lift our eyes to the sky in reverence of the Almighty God.

Pastor Paine urged us to remember that no matter where or how our body is, we should be honest with God. He doesn't need us to sugar coat our feelings when we go to Him. He already knows our thoughts and hurts, so when we pray, it's totally alright to just be plain and honest. Fancy words and memorized prayers won't impress God. He wants us to approach him just the way we are.

To make this point, Pastor Paine told a story of a trip to see his father in which honest prayer made all the difference:

*I went home to see Dad, and I was really looking forward to spending some time with him. I cleared my schedule for two days and made the trip back to Pittsburg. Dad was getting up in years, and I knew that it was especially important to spend some quality time together.*

*As soon as I walked in the front door, he handed me a list of things that needed to be done around the house. It was a full two day list of things to accomplish, and what's worse is that these were all things he could have easily paid a handyman to do! It became clear that we weren't going to get any quality time together on this trip. I was going to be doing chores the whole visit.*

*On one of my trips back and forth to the hardware store, I cried out to God. 'God, I'm frustrated! I wanted to come spend time with Dad, and all I'm doing is working! Why couldn't he have had someone else do this so we could be together? I don't have that much time with him in the first place!'*

*Then, I got quiet and waited for God to answer. When He did, I didn't particularly like his answer, but it was the one I needed. 'Pete, is he asking you to do so anything that's unreasonable? You're being selfish. Help your father'.*

*From that point on the visit changed dramatically. I was no longer frustrated that I had to do these things for Dad. Instead, I was thankful that I got to do something that*

*he needed help with. That prayer changed my whole perspective and made that a wonderful and very special trip for both me and my dad.*

Even when we don't immediately receive an answer (or get an answer we don't like), we cannot stop praying or just pretend God didn't answer us. Pastor Paine reminded us that God will either meet the need or change your mind. Prayer is not designed for us to get our way with God. Instead, it opens the door for us to communicate with Him, and communication is two way. We have to be sensitive to listen to God when he speaks to us as we pray. Sometimes that means we just have to be quiet and let him speak.

Prayer is part of how we live. By praying, we can take the load off ourselves and ask God for his guidance. It's always better when He handles things. Prayer is how we deal with life.

#### Acts 2:42

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The early church prayed *together*.

#### Acts 4:13–22

13. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16. Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them [is] manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny [it].

17. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all [men] glorified God for that which was done.

Prayer is a personal thing. God used Peter and John in the passage above because he knew them. Part of what made these things amazing to the people that were in the city is that Peter and John weren't well educated (and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled;). Just like Peter and John, our Christianity is based on the

fact that we have a relationship with God and we are supposed to be doing something for him. We can understand that relationship through prayer.

### **I Timothy 2:1**

1. I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men;

In I Timothy, we learn that the first thing we need do is humble ourselves and go to God in prayer. Often we act and then ask God to bless what we have already done. Instead we need to reverse the order of those two acts. We have to go to God for direction and then act on what he tells us. God is not a short order cook. He is the maker of the universe. We cannot expect to tell him what we plan to do, and then ask him to bless. Instead we need to ask him what he would like us to do, then ask him to bless.

### **II Chronicles 7:14**

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Prayer starts with humility. Sometimes we fall into the trap of praying like God is a vending machine. “God, I’d like one of these and two of these, and one of those.” We have to be humble and realize we are going to God to ask what he wants. He’s not coming to us asking what we want.

### **Jeremiah 29:13**

And ye shall seek me, and find [me], when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

We have to go to God without reservation.

### **Mark 11:24**

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive [them], and ye shall have [them].

We have to go to God with expectation.

### **Matthew 6:33**

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

We have to go to God asking to see things his way. When we’re having trouble with this, Pastor Paine gave us this tool. Pray like this: “God, I want your will. Not mine. God, make me happy about your will. I want to yield to You” When we start to see things from God’s perspective and become happy to do his will, our circumstances will not seem so bad. We just have to have God’s perspective on it.

Back to the story of Peter and John from earlier, we return to the fact that they overcame their circumstances through honest prayer and then listening to God as he directed them.

#### Acts 4:23–31

23. And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou [art] God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25. Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30. By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

As soon as Peter and John got a chance to be alone with their people, they started to pray. They acknowledged who God was right off the bat (verse 24) and then talked to Him about what was going on. They knew that this wasn't a new battle. David dealt with people "raging", Jesus was wanted dead right at the very beginning of his life until the crucifixion, and now Peter and John were being seriously threatened. But notice what they ask for in verse 29. They ask for boldness! They've already been pretty bold, but they realize their natural tendency would be to run from this instead of stand up for Christ. In verse 31, God answers. They were filled with the Holy Ghost and they went out to speak and preach with boldness.

Their circumstances didn't change. Their perspective changed. That's the power of prayer. If we will be honest and open with God about our hurts, needs, fears, and situations, he can speak to us and give us exactly what we need to get through anything, because prayer works.