

The Purpose and Power of Prayer

Understanding the Power of Prayer

Prayer can cause good things to happen that would otherwise not happen, and it can prevent bad things from happening that otherwise would happen (James 4:2; Exodus 32:7-14; 2 Kings 20:1-7)

I'm not just talking about small things, the Scriptures repeatedly emphasize that we can come to God in prayer for very significant things and expect His power (Mark 11:22-24; James 5:17; Acts 9:40)

What God Wants to Give Us Through Prayer

The Scriptures talk about specific blessings that God wants to give us, but He wants to give them to us in response to prayer, not apart from prayer:

- Wisdom (James 1:5)
- Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
- Deliverance (Mark 9:28-29)
- Victory over sin (Matthew 26:41)
- Healing (James 5:15)
- Mercy on entire nations (2 Chronicles 7:14)

This is just a small list of the gifts that God has for us, but that it wants to give to us in response to prayer. It would be near impossible to make a comprehensive list.

Why Does God Want Us to Pray?

- God already knows all our needs so why does He want us to pray? (Matthew 6:7-8)
- How does God doing good in response to prayer cause Him to be more glorified than if He did the same thing apart from prayer?

Prayer Honors God and Helps Us to Stay Humble

- Prayer Honors God
 - Asking someone to do something on your behalf can be honoring to them (Daniel 6:6-9)
 - When we pray for God to act, we honor Him as powerful and capable
 - When we pray for wisdom and direction, we honor Him as wise and knowledgeable
 - When we pray that God give us anything, we honor Him as gracious and generous
 - When we ask Him to do what we can't, we honor Him as superior
- Prayer helps us to stay humble
 - When God does grant us what we're praying for, having prayed for it helps us to see His hand in it, and to remember that it comes from Him (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)
 - When we pray for something and then receive it, we are often more thankful than we would be if He had just done it apart from us praying for it
- Staying Humble Helps Us to Glorify God; pride distracts us from God and from His glory

Prayer Helps us Image-Forth the Glory of God

- God made us in His image so that we could reflect and display His glory
 - Creation display's the beauty of God (Psalms 19:1; Romans 1:20)
 - So, if creation display's God's beauty, and humans are made in God's image, then humans must have a special role in showing God's beauty.
- God wants us to reflect the glory of Christ and He is conforming us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)
- One of the glories of Christ is His loving intercession on behalf of others as the Great High Priest
 - Romans 8:34
 - Hebrews 7:25
- One of the ways God designed for us to reflect the image of Christ is that He made it so that we should be a kingdom of priests, who reflect His loving intercession by praying for others (Revelation 1:6)

God is Not Unloving By Requiring that We Pray

- The fact that God has certain gifts for us that He will only give us if we pray for them does not make Him unloving or less loving than if He just gave them to us apart from prayer.
 - Having to pray is good for us because it helps us to stay humble and being humble is good for us
 - Pride is destructive (Proverbs 16:18; 2 Corinthians 12:7)
 - God's glory is always connected to our well-being
- The fact that God requires prayer for some things does not mean that the good He does in response to prayer isn't by His own initiative
 - When Moses prayed that God wouldn't destroy Israel, Moses prayed it, but God sovereignly ordained that Moses would pray it.
 - Kelly Lester's testimony: youtu.be/C5gjhBoAHs0

Prayer is Our Responsibility as Christians

God Commands Us to Pray

- 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Romans 12:12

What it Means to Pray in Jesus Name (John 14:13-14; John 16:24)

Doing something in someone else's name, can mean by their authority or for their sake, but it almost always means both at the same time. Typically someone will give you authority to do something in their name because there is an expectation that you will use that authority to do things on their behalf or in their interest. Praying in Jesus Name means praying by the authority of Jesus, but I think it's also meant to include praying for things that are in Jesus interests. Praying for things that Jesus wants done, but that He wants to do through prayer and not just apart from prayer.

Authority to do something in someone else's name is almost always only ever given to people who hold an office or a position of *responsibility* to represent that person. That's how it is for Christians too. The Bible calls us a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9; Revelation 1:6, 5:10) So we need to understand that prayer is officially part of our role and responsibility as Christians. It's part of our office as priests. God wants the gospel to advance by the means of prayer and He has charged ALL Christians with the responsibility to take part in that effort.

Kingdom Prayer is Kingdom Labor

- Colossians 4:12-13
- We will be rewarded for it (Matthew 6:1-5, 16-21)

Setting Aside Time for Prayer

- Have a daily time of prayer
- Have a weekly time for fasting
 - Fasting is part of Christian life (Matthew 6:18)
- Try to host or attend a worship and prayer meeting at least once a week

Conclusion

- God has plenty of great blessings He wants to give us, but He has ordained to give them to us in response to prayer instead of apart from prayer
 - God wants the advance of the Gospel to show His power, not the power of human effort, therefore God designed it so that the spread of the gospel requires the power of prayer
- We are responsible to pray in Jesus Name, for the things that He wants to accomplish through prayer