

Prayer Changes

Colossians 4:2-6

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:2-6 NIV)

"Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict."

William Ellery Channing

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." **Helen Keller**

We teach our children to pray by having them memorize "Now I lay me down to sleep" or some similar child's prayer. What a thrill when they begin to compose their own prayers. Mike was such a spiritual child; he loved to pray. Or was it that he wanted to put off going to bed? "Thank you for mother, thank you for daddy, thank you for Cheryl, thank you for Cindy, thank you for grandma and grandpa, thank you for my friends, thank you for our church, thank you for the trees, thank you for the frogs ..." How do you tell a child he has prayed long enough, or even too long?

Cindy was two years old when she composed her first prayer. Her usual table prayer was, "Thank you, Jesus, for the food." But this was Easter and she had just received a big chocolate duck. She bowed her head and said, "Dear Lord, I got a duck. Amen."

<http://www.growingstrong.org/christ/prayer.html>

Prayer is a power thing to participate in. Prayer can touch all sorts of lives and circumstances. Prayer can touch places we've never seen, and places we'll never see.

"The modern world lies under a pervasive sense of anguish, of being abandoned, or at least experiencing God as absent. Yet events that seem to turn our lives upside down and inside out are part of God's redemptive plan, not only for us, but also for the world in which we live. God may be preparing a great awakening for the world, if God can find enough people to cooperate in this mysterious plan."

-Thomas Keating

Some of us will never see New Orleans or the other places devastated by Katrina. Most of us here will never see the countries devastated by the Tsunami on December 26, 2004. (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, Bangladesh, India, Srilanka and other countries and islands). Many of us will never see the hardships in the Mid-East--like Iraq, Israel and Afghanistan.

When we see all that is happening in our world, it's easy to feel helpless. After all what on earth can we do? Paul has a pretty good idea about what we can do-- he says **Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful (Col. 4:2).**

The Scriptures talk about the power of prayer. Here's something to consider: Intellectually what I'm saying is true regarding prayer. It's true because the Scriptures talk about it. In a survey given to

6000 Christians, 35% of the respondents claim to spend an hour or more each week in private prayer.
<http://www.teal.org.uk/ep/onour.htm>.

If these stats about prayer are accurate for the typical Christian and we look at this, as a barometer of how much prayer is valued, we'd find that we don't really believe it a lot because we don't really pray a lot. I suppose it's appropriate to say that prayer is essential! It is essential because prayer can change our lives and prayer can change the lives of others no matter where they are or where they find themselves.

Prayers for the Prodigal Son!

[1happysoul](#)

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The day we become parents it's a good thing we can't foresee the future - or we'd run screaming from the job because no one with a lick of sense would tackle it!

Don't get me wrong here - my children have been my greatest joy in life & I love them both unconditionally, fervently, with every ounce of my being!!

They have also been the source of my greatest pain, my greatest challenge, my greatest struggles. My son has gone AWOL from life - running from his own demons of sorrow, guilt & anger. He's dodging me & everyone who loves him like we're a squad of MP's hot on his tail.

I have never felt so helpless in my life - unless it was when my daughter took one of those "wrong turn" trips right out of HS that nearly cost her life (but that's an entirely different story - thankfully w/ a very happy ending).

It's difficult to acknowledge that my 33 yr. old son has a drug addiction - meth-amphetamines.

Something I was arrogantly positive would never afflict one of MY children. Let me tell you - it isn't pride that "goeth before a fall" - it's smugness!!

I'd done all the "right things" a good mother is supposed to do about teaching their children the dangers of drug abuse. I armed myself w/ facts & made sure they understood them. I talked openly w/ them & monitored their friends & social activities carefully. I kept them busy as teenagers w/ recreational activities they loved, supporting their goals, cheering their achievements, comforting their defeats.

I tried to teach them responsibility, a strong work ethic, good values, etc. I tried to nurture the innate qualities they'd each been born with - loving hearts, compassionate natures, joyful spirits, sensitive souls.

Have I failed my son so badly??? - oh how painful that question I ask myself over & over & over again!!

But if I give into that nagging fear & succumb to sorrow & self-pity - it will defeat me, & ultimately him completely!!

NO! NO! NO! I must stand firm in my belief that deep down inside him lay the values I KNOW he learned. I have to trust they will give him the strength & courage to turn his life around & whip this horrible enemy.

I have turned it over to the Lord & pray not only for my son, but for myself. I pray for wisdom, for understanding, for strength, for forgiveness...and most of all - for courage to accept the outcome of my son's struggle, if he loses the battle.

Any & all prayers offered up on his behalf are gratefully accepted, should anyone reading this feel so

inclined. Thank you!

http://seniorfriendfinder.com/blog/116/post_7670.html

Prayer changes perspective. People devoted to prayer find that things begin to change. Prayer draws people closer to Jesus. Prayer is a powerful thing, because it brings people closer to God. The more you pray the more you'll understand the will of God. The more you pray the more you'll be in contact with the person of Jesus Christ. The more you pray the more you open up your heart to what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life. So prayer brings people closer to God.

Prayer changes perspective. It changes perspective by making us more aware of what's going on around us. And there's a lot going on around us-- isn't there? Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about because of the junk going on around you deeply affects your life. And the other side of this coin is that there is stuff going on around you that you are not aware of because it doesn't really directly affect your life.

You'll remember that the apostle Peter told us **the Devil is like a roaring lion walking around seeking whom he may devour**. Paul tells us to be **watchful**. Be watchful for the traps of the enemy. Be watchful for the schemes of the enemy. Be watchful for what the enemy is trying to do to trip you up and to set you back.

You see, prayer changes perspective. So Paul tells us to be watchful!

Prayer changes perspective by also reminding people of their blessings in Christ. Paul says be watchful-- but he also says, be **thankful**. Being thankful in prayer has this amazing affect of opening our eyes to what God has been doing. It's just like the old song says, "**Count your blessings name them one by one. Count your blessings see what God has done. Count your blessings name them one by one. Count your many blessings see what God has done.**"

Being thankful in prayer comes through the awareness of God's blessings. And I suppose that people can be thankful for some pretty obvious things.

- Lord, I'm thankful for my life.
- Some of us can say: Lord, I'm thankful for my health.
- Some of us can say: Lord, I'm thankful that I have two arms and two legs that work.
- Some of us can say: Lord I'm thankful that I can see.
- Some of us can say: Lord I'm thankful for my wife or my husband.
- Some of us can say: Lord I'm thankful for my children and grandchildren

These are some pretty obvious things. (or are they?)

Prayer also changes opportunities.

3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (Colossians 4:3-4 NIV)

Paul is in prison because of the Gospel. And Paul is asking the Christians in Colosse to pray that God might open the doors to this wretched prison and save him from this misery. (Oh, I'm sorry... that's probably what I would have said.) You know, Lord!! Before I can do anything with the gospel you just gotta get me out of this place! But amazingly, this is not what Paul asks these Christians to pray for. Instead he asks them to pray that God would open a door for the gospel-- Prayer can

change opportunities by opening the closed doors that so many of us find ourselves behind, so that we can be about gospel in a way that reaches people. **Prayer can change opportunities.**

Prayer changes motivation

5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6 NIV)

It's easy to misread Paul's words here in Colossians and hear him say something like "our lives need to be such a way (righteously) because others (non-Christians are watching our every move) are critical with every thing we do. So don't mess it up... live a life that is stainless before a lost world and then you will be able to be about gospel in the most effective, godly way.

God saves people one person at a time. And God comes to people in whatever circumstance they find themselves in. So Paul wants us to know that Christians are to make to most of every opportunity. And the way we make the most of every opportunity has a lot to do with how we touch another person in their life circumstance (not with how unstained we are). **Prayer changes motivation.** Prayer changes the why we do what we do in the life of someone else; and prayer changes the how we do what we do in the life of another.

Our words and actions hold a lot of power. Our words and actions have the power to build up or to tear down; they have the power to hurt or to heal. Our words and actions have the power to communicate the message of Jesus in a way that can save.

The message that Jesus died for-- so that people could come to know God and live with him eternally is the most powerful, exciting message-- contained in the person of Jesus-- that this world has ever heard or seen. And yet there are times that we can make it sound like the most boring and uneventful thing.

But Paul's encouragement is that our lives be filled with grace-- to be filled with God and his love. A life that is filled with grace is a life that is filled with God's compassion and his passion for lost people.

This morning I want to do something with this money I have. I do not intend to simply make this a moral lesson; I intend to set ourselves up in a way that God can show us the power of his word and the power of his love.

Give away ten \$20 bills with an assignment-

To be continued next week...

Remember these words today: Prayer can change your life and it can change the lives of others. So pray and keep on praying. God will do the rest if you let him.

Scot Poirier
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