



One of the characteristics of the early church was ongoing commitment to prayer. (Acts 2:42) As you read through Luke's account of the infant years of the church's existence, you find an ongoing record of times when the church gathered to pray for special needs. (Peter's imprisonment in 12:5; Elders in 6:4; sending of first missionaries in 13:3; appointing elders in planted churches 14:23; Paul & Silas at midnight in prison in 16:25, etc.) One gets the impression that the Holy Spirit led Luke to make it explicitly clear that the early believers recognized and understood that they could nothing apart from Christ (John 15:5) and prayer was a critical expression of their reliance upon God.

In recognition of our reliance upon God, I and the Elders of our church are issuing a special call to prayer during the month of February. Along with the Psalmist, we are asking God: "Will you not Yourself revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalm 85:6) Let's join together—as a church family and as individuals and families—to humbly and earnestly seek the Lord. To encourage our prayer for each other, we provided to each member a Prayer Directory. Let me encourage you to pray for 3 members each day. Over one month you will pray for all of our church members. Imagine the blessing of knowing that other members are praying for you and you are lifting up your brothers and sisters to God. According to James, the effective, fervent prayer of righteous people has great power and wonderful results. (James 5:16)

Pastor Mark Musser.

The Problem with Prayer

For many, there appears to be a problem with prayer. "It's a one-way conversation." "It doesn't seem to work." "God takes too long to answer." "God does what He wants anyway."

Crushed between the mortar and pestle of life, it's easy to think there's a serious problem with prayer: God. When God doesn't answer according to our will, we can get frustrated. We can feel like our prayers are just floating around the galaxy, too insignificant to catch the Creator's attention. In the midst of this disappointment, we're often too slow to accept that the problem with prayer is not God, but us.

The Problem of Misunderstanding Prayer

I used to think that life would be a lot easier if God answered a few more strategic prayers—just a couple key petitions to remind us that He's listening. I was convinced that a profound healing here and there would add spice to the life of the church.

Then God healed Karen.

Our Sunday school class gathered for desperate prayer the night before the surgery to remove a tumor from Karen's brain. The surgery would probably render her unable to speak for a long time. Leading the prayer, I asked God to comfort her husband, daughter, and family at this time of crisis, to help the surgeons, to speed her recovery, and—if He willed—to miraculously heal her.

Of course, that last part was just for show. Although I believed God could heal Karen, I was certain He would use less glorious means. As we drove home, I even told my wife, "Karen will probably never be the same again."

The next morning the tumor had disappeared.

Memory Verse for February 2014

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

I assumed Karen's response would be just as profound as God's answer to prayer. After all, when a person experiences the awesome intervention of the Almighty God, we should expect an explosive revival, right?

Less than a year later, Karen left the church and divorced her husband.

I had always thought answers to prayer would strengthen faith and ignite thanksgiving. Disappointed in Karen's response, I was reminded that even the Israelites grumbled and rebelled in the midst of powerful answers to their requests (Numbers 11:1-4).

You see, the problem with prayer is not God, but us.

Correcting the Problem with Prayer

After a dozen years in Bible college, seminary, and Ph.D. studies, I'd hoped to finally have a handle on prayer. I don't. In fact, the more I pray, the less I understand its profound mysteries. However, I've come to several conclusions that might help correct our perceived problems with prayer.

First, we need to understand that the purpose of prayer is not for God to please us, but for God to change us. If a father constantly gives in to a little child's whiny demands, we'd take him for a lousy parent. Why, then, do some think God's a stubborn God when He doesn't give us everything we want? We need to trust that God is wise and powerful enough to answer rightly—and right on time. First John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

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Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7



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That is, God won't jump at every loose-lipped confession. Prayer offered up in true faith submits to His will—our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). God's will is to change us, not please us.

Second, we need to accept that the power of prayer is perceived in even the smallest response. I'm convinced that humans don't fully comprehend how little we deserve God's love and grace. Consider that what we regard as "crumbs" of answered prayer may really be bountiful feasts once we realize that God owes us nothing (Genesis 32:9-10; Luke 7:6-9). When we adjust our attitude about our own unworthiness to receive God's favor, we'll never regard "small" answers to prayer as insignificant.

Finally, we need to acknowledge that the process of prayer is not as important as the attitude of prayer. When God chose in His sovereignty to heal Karen, He did so even though none of us expected it. Our feeble

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prayer was a simple act of faith—turning our worries over to God's care (Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 5:6-7). Christians can get hung up on method, worried that they haven't said the right words, haven't prayed hard or often enough, or haven't believed deeply enough. That's hocus-pocus, not prayer (Matthew 6:5-8). If you're concerned about not praying with the right words or for the right things, memorize Romans 8:26—God's Spirit even helped Paul pray!

Of course these reminders are easy to read, but they're not easy to live. To our finite human minds, we'll always perceive "problems" with prayer. Are you struggling with your prayer life, not seeing results, wondering if God is listening? It might be time for an attitude change. It might be time to finally accept that the problem with prayer is not God, but us.

Annual Prayer Emphasis Week

Feb. 9-15th. Please see the website for full details and a daily schedule of events and requests.

Keep on Praying Until You Get It!

(Excerpted from a sermon by Pastor R.A. Torrey (1856–1928))

The central lesson in this parable [Luke 11:5-10] of our Lord is: When we pray, if we do not obtain the thing the first time, pray again; and if we do not obtain it the second time, pray a third time; and if we do not obtain it the hundredth time, go on praying until we do get it.

We should do much thinking before we ask anything of God and be clear that we ask according to His will. We should not rush heedlessly into God's presence and ask for the first thing that comes to mind without giving proper thought to the question of whether it is really what we ought to have. But when we have decided that we should pray for something, we should keep on praying until we get it.

The word translated importunity in verse 8 is a deeply significant word. Its primary meaning is "shamelessness"—that is, it sets forth the persistent determination in prayer to God that will not be put to shame by any apparent refusal on His part to grant the thing that we ask.

This is a very startling way that our Lord employs to set forth the necessity of "importunity" and persistence in prayer. It is as if the Lord would have us understand that God would have us draw nigh to Him with a resolute determination to obtain the things that we seek, a determination that will not

be put to shame by any seeming refusal or delay on God's part.

The Syrophenician Woman

Our Heavenly Father delights in the holy boldness that will not take no for an answer. The reason why He delights in it is that it is an expression of great faith, and nothing pleases God more than faith.

We have an illustration of this holy boldness in the woman of Syrophenicia in Matthew 15:21–28. She came to Jesus Christ for the healing of her daughter. She cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

But our Lord seemed to pay no attention to her: "He answered her not a word." His disciples besought Him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us."

In spite of His apparent deafness to her appeal, she kept on crying. Then He turned to her with an apparently more positive rebuff: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and she was not of the house of Israel.

Then she worshipped Him and kept on calling to Him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Then came what almost appears to be a cruel rebuff: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."

You can be omnipotent (all powerful) if you know how to pray, omnipotent in all things which glorify God. – Charles Spurgeon

Coming up in March – 5th Sunday Soup and Salad Church fellowship on March 30th after the morning service.

Quotes About Prayer

Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan. ~ John Bunyan

The fewer the words the better prayer. ~ Martin Luther

Prayer is an effort of will. ~ Oswald Chambers

Our prayer and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well; while one ascends, the other descends. ~ Arthur Hopkins

If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for. ~ Charles H. Spurgeon

It is because of the hasty and superficial conversation with God that the sense of sin is so weak and that no motives have power to help you to hate and flee from sin as you should. ~ A.W. Tozer

Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue. God's voice in response to mine is its most essential part. ~ Andrew Murray

Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees. ~ Corrie Ten Boom

Prayer is the acid test of devotion. ~ Samuel Chadwick

Prayer – secret, fervent, believing prayer – lies at the root of all personal godliness. ~ Williams Carey

FEBRUARY 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Men In The Morning
2 Sunday School @ 9:45 A.M Worship Service @ 11 A.M	3	4 Fusion Youth Group	5 Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	6	7 Ignite Youth Group	8
9 Sunday School @ 9:45 A.M Worship Service @ 11 A.M Prayer Emphasis Week	10 Prayer Emphasis Week	11 Fusion Youth Group Prayer Emphasis Week	12 Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer Prayer Emphasis Week @ 7.00 P.M	13 Prayer Emphasis Week	14 Ignite Youth Group Prayer Emphasis Week	15 Men In The Morning Prayer Emphasis Week
16 Sunday School @ 9:45 A.M Worship Service @ 11 A.M	17	18 Fusion Youth Group	19 Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	20	21 Ignite Youth Group	22 Men In The Morning
23 Sunday School @ 9:45 A.M Worship Service @ 11 A.M	24	25 Fusion Youth Group	26 Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	27	28 Ignite Youth Group	