

## 2007 PRAYER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

### Colossians 4:2-4, Hebrews 4:14-16

This Morning I want us to look at Prayer and its affect on Christian living.  
 Newsweek said 64 % of all Americans pray every day.  
 But this past two weeks as I have watch our people recover  
 From the flood I would say that its 95% of our people are praying.  
 As Christian we don't just want to pray we want to pray well.

### A lady was out walking and praying out loud.

Two little neighborhood girls riding bikes stopped and scooted over to her.  
 "Hey, Lady, who are you talking to?"  
 She said: "Well I'm kind of saying things out loud that I need to remember.  
 Yeah? But who are you telling them to?"  
 She said: "I'm praying and talking with God about my husband and my little girls and  
 things I'm hoping for them and lots of other people too."  
 One said: "You must be a loving person."  
 She said: "Oh I hope so, one of my prayers is for the people in this neighborhood, so I'll  
 be praying for you later, Ok?"  
 Really? Cool! Hey, did you hear that? That lady's gonna pray for us.  
 Cool indeed.

People often ask, "Why do you insist on prayer in the church?"

The answer is very simple - because Jesus did.

**Luke** could be called the Prayer Gospel because he records the prayer life of Jesus.

1. Matt, Mark, John, say Jesus was in the Jordan the Spirit descended on Him as a dove  
**Luke** says it was *\*while He was praying\** the Spirit descended on Him."
2. The other evangelists say that Jesus chose 12 disciples –  
**Luke** says it was after He spent *\*a night in prayer\** that He chose 12 disciples.
3. The other evangelists say that **Jesus died on a cross** –  
**Luke** says when He was dying **Jesus was praying\*** for those who persecuted Him.
4. The other evangelists say Jesus was transfigured –  
**Luke** says it was *\*while He was praying\** that He was transfigured.

There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer.

When you think about it.

Flip back through your scrapbook of SS memories,  
 Camp, or Bible Studies,  
 Can you think of any single Bible hero who didn't pray?  
 Abraham? Noah?  
 David? Mary?  
 Peter? Paul?  
 If the Son of God needed time in prayer,  
 Don't you and I need time in prayer?

## I. PRAYER DEVELOPS OUR RELATIOSHIP WITH GOD.

Hebrews 4:16

**14Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens,  
 Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess... 16Let us then**

**approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**

Prayer is inviting God into our lives.

IT is bringing our lives into the very throne room of the God of the universe.

Why?

So we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.

**C. H. Spurgeon was converted at the age of 16**

and began preaching in London at the age of 19.

When he was 27, they built him a tabernacle seating 6,000

which he packed twice on Sundays - that's 12,000 –people

and 6000 came again on Thursday nights. Why?

He waited on God. He got alone with God. He studied...and he prayed.

He didn't learn that as an adult, but as a child.

Lets teach our children to pray so they can know God personally.

**Debie 7** prays: Dear God: Please send a new baby for Mommy.

The baby you sent last week cries too much. -

**Children's prayers can be pointed:**

**Angela 8** Dear God: Could you please give my brother some brains. So far he doesn't have any.

**They can be Honest:**

**Hank 7** Dear Lord: Thank you for the nice day. You even fooled the TV weather man. -

**Like the little boy in our congregation after the storm as he was standing on the porch of his house, looking at the water that surrounded them.**

He said: God Lied.

He may have gotten it wrong,

But he knew the bible story

And what God had promised about never flooding the land again.

Prayer invites God into our lives.

And never more that when we are desperate.

When there is a crisis, we pray the best.

I remember praying desperately for my daughter when she was just 1 years old.

She had a high fever and went into convulsions.

I was home alone. I had never seen a convulsions.

Much less in a little child.

Much less in my child.

How many time I have heard someone say to me.

**IF it hadn't been for our divorce I would never have known God like I do.**

If it hadn't been for cancer, heart disease, or trials of life.

God would not be as precious as he is.

God hears desperate prayers.

Gideon,

David,

Rebecca,

### **Hannah in I Samuel 1:1-15**

Scripture goes into detail over her pain and prayers.  
 She wept before the lord, because she could not provide a son for her husband.  
 She poured out her bitter soul before the Lord.  
 Her heart was grieving,  
 Provoked and ridiculed by others, sorrowful of spirit.  
 It left her staggering and even Eli the priest thought her drunk.  
 But her fervent prayer was heard.  
 She gave birth to Samuel who became a mighty prophet.

God answers desperate prayer and Crises prayer!  
 Too many of us pray as though our answers  
 Depend on our own ability.  
 Our own desires and wants.  
 But God loves nothing better than a heart that sings:  
**"Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling...."**

The more self- confidence you have, the less you pray.  
 The less self-confidence you have, the more you have to pray.

**God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. I Corinthians 1:27-28**

When I am weak then I am strong in the Lord.  
 So that I do not glory in the flesh, but in His promises.

### **I. PRAYER DEVELOPS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

### **II. PRAYER HEALS OUR PAIN**

**In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express... because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Romans 8:26-27**

When our pain goes too deep for spoken words,  
 God's Spirit intercedes for us.

**A father and his small son went to town for some errands. At lunch they went to a familiar restaurant. When the waiter brought their food, the father said:**  
**"Son, we'll just have a silent prayer." Dad got through praying first and waited for the boy to finish his prayer, but he just kept his head bowed for a long time. When he finally looked up, his father asked him, "What in the world were you praying about all that time?" With honesty of a child, he replied, "How do I know? It was a silent prayer."**

But God knows what we need and the spirit himself intercedes for us.  
 Prayer is the language of the poor.  
 The poor in heart,  
 The poor in spirit.  
 Over and over again David, the King of Israel, says,

**"This poor man cried and the Lord heard him..." (Psalm 34:6).**

**"Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and answer me; for I am afflicted and needy" (Psalm 86:1).**

God hears the prayer of the afflicted and needy.  
Of those in pain or trial.  
When you began to pray you began to heal.  
I don't always understand the ways of God.  
But I know his Holy Spirit intercedes for me.

**Dr. V. Raymond Edman of Wheaton College,**

was in Ecuador as a missionary.

He hadn't been there long before he became sick and was dying.

He was so near death that the Ecuadorian's had already dug his grave.

He had the death rattle in his throat.

But suddenly he sat straight up in bed and said to his wife,

"Bring me my clothes!" He dressed and got up. Nobody knew what had happened.

But he was healed.

Years later he was retelling the story in Boston.

And a little old lady with a small, beaten-up book, approached him and asked,

**"What day did you say you were dying?"**

**What time was it in Ecuador? What time would it be in Boston?"**

When he answered her, her wrinkled face lit up.

Pointing to her book, she said.

"There it is, you see? At 2 a.m. God said to get up and pray –  
the devil's trying to kill Raymond Edman in Ecuador."

And she'd gotten up and prayed.

Today the Chapel at Wheaton is named the Edman Chapel.

## **II. PRAYER HEALS OUR PAIN**

## **III. PRAYER INFLUENCES GOD'S ACTIONS**

God welcomes our prayers, because  
prayer can change the course of destiny.

Remember the prophet said to Hezekiah

**"Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.**

**Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the lord...and wept bitterly.**

**Isaiah 38:1-2**

But the Lord heard and said:

**"Go and tell Hezekiah: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add  
fifteen years to your life. Isaiah 38:5.**

Prayer changes the course of our lives,  
and the destiny of our world,  
and influences the mind of God.

Do you want the war to end in Iraq?

Then pray for our president and the leaders of our military.

Too many people only criticize and complain about what is being done  
 But this war is not against flesh and blood.  
 It is against the spiritual host of wickedness.  
 And we will not win this war with cannons and bullets,  
 but on our knees.

Moses went up the mountain to meet God and receive the 10 commandments.  
 But the people sinned and built a golden calf and they worship it.  
 God was so angry he was to destroy them all.  
 But Moses prayed.

**The Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.  
 Exodus 32:14**

Who do you think in the New Testament, fetched Peter out of prison?  
 It was the angel.  
 Who do you think fetched the angel?  
 It was the prayers of the people.

It may seem strange when the Lord gives you a command to obey.  
 You may sense a brother or sister in need,  
 You may feel a concern for a child or youth.  
 You may receive a request on a prayer chain.  
 It may be a intrusion or burden to pray.  
 But if the Lord tells you something,  
 carry on and pray and intercede.  
 Someone is waiting for your prayer.  
 Someday in heaven we will see the wonderful results of Gods answer  
 When you and I pray it influences God's actions.  
**God loves nothing better than to answer fervent, desperate prayers.**

**III. PRAYER INFLUENCES GOD'S ACTIONS**  
**IV. PRAYER CHANGES US AND OUR WORLD.**  
**Because prayer changes you.**

I have heard a lot of people say:  
 Prayer changes things.  
 No!  
 Prayer doesn't' change things.  
 It changes people.  
 And they change things.  
 We all want the archangel Gabriel to do the job.  
 God says, do it yourself – my grace is sufficient for the day.

In the flood we saw that the difference in the degree of the crises and damage  
 Was equally related to the difference in the lifestyle of a person home and habits.  
 For some their Lifestyle created a more destructive scenario.  
 Prayer is not going to change that house,  
 But prayer can change that person.

It changed me.  
 Because I have a desire to go home and clean out my basement.  
 Simplify my lifestyle.  
 Prayer changes us.

We need to get like this woman, Hannah.  
 She wept, she was grieved, she had a complaint, fasted - and she prayed.  
 And focused on God with her need.

**Just how focused are you really when you pray?**

When our little dog Buffy was alive.  
 At mealtime she would come and sit by the table beside my chair.  
 She would watch me eat.  
 She would sit motionless with unblinking eyes  
 To see if just one crumb might fall her way.  
 I often thought  
 'Oh, if I could only focus in prayer the way this dog watched!  
 There was no other conflicting thought.

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

We are called to Pray in the midst of every circumstance  
 No matter how difficult or confusing they may be.  
 Pray when you're facing trials  
 Pray when you have a fractured relationship,  
 Pray when pain is beyond human understanding.  
 Pray when your life is full of sin.

Your mind can be spinning,  
 Your heart can be broken,  
 But in that moment of prayer  
 God is there and moves in us a work that transcends all our understanding.

If God changes you, he can use you to change our world.  
 If you were watching "Hour of Power" last Sunday with Robert Schuller.  
 You heard the Testimony of Evil Knievel.  
 How he has become a Christian.  
 He said it was by the power of prayer.  
 A praying wife and daughter.  
 God reached out and touched his heart in Jesus Christ  
 Grabbed him and took a hold of him.  
 And he was filled with the Holy Spirit.  
**He woke up in the night and said Devil I cast you out of my life.**  
**He said I was a sinner, but I'm not a sinner anymore.**  
 If you don't believe in Jesus Christ you will die in your sins.

Then he asked Pastor, Robert Schuler, to baptize him in the Christian faith.  
 And last Sunday Robert Evel Kinevel was baptized.  
 The audience stood and applauded in praise of God.  
 Pastor Schuler ended the service with a call for all there to  
 come and find Jesus as your savior and be baptized.  
 The alter was filled.  
 People came from every corner to renew their love for God.  
 When the lines were empty and It was almost over.  
 Pastor Schuler was walking back to the pulpit,  
 When a man came running down the isles.  
 Because he didn't want to miss out on the blessing  
 The crowd was one their feet applauding again.  
 All because someone prayed and the power of god changed A life..

At the end of Malachi it says,

**"And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple" (Malachi 3:1).**

I like the word suddenly.

**Suddenly** there was with the angel a heavenly host.

**Suddenly** the Holy Sprit came on them in that upper room with tongues of fire..

**John Wesley said: Suddenly I felt my heart strangely warmed.**

**Suddenly** on August 13, 1737. A group of Moravia were praying.

And **\*suddenly\*** the Holy Spirit came.

The prayer meeting that began at 11:00 lasted 100 years!

Even children six and seven years old were praying for countries  
 whose names they couldn't even spell or speak.

Revival or change costs a lot.

It was the Methodist camp meeting that spread Christianity throughout America.

The reason we don't have revival in America today

is because we're content to live without it.

We're not seeking God –

We're not spending the time on our knees.

Were not obedient.

Were not tithing.

And we wonder where is the blessing.

Suddenly.

While they were praying.

I want to challenge you today to began praying.

Someone today needs you to pray for them.

To lift their need

To bring their name before the throne of grace,

and "Pray them through"

That's the key.

Will you let God touch and use your life

Will you be willing to pray through for your family and friends?

Let God bless you as we close with this Video on "Praying through"