



Does Prayer Really Change Life's Outcomes?

**James 5:16: (KJV) Confess your faults one to another,
and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.**

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

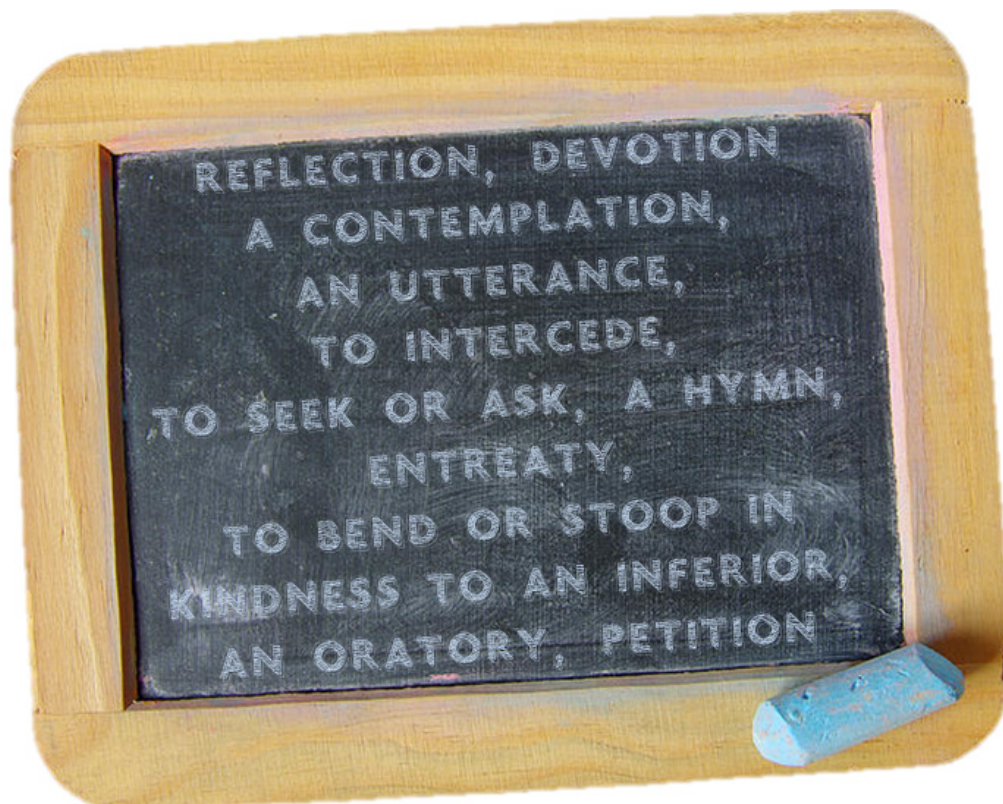


Prayer is an almost universal phenomenon. People pray to all kinds of "gods," and we pray about all kinds of things. We use all kinds of tools to help us pray - prayer shawls, wheels, rugs, books and beads, to name a few. People pray to worship, to ask for help, guidance, peace, patience, strength, courage, and tolerance. People pray to complain and vent. People pray to seek revenge, judgment, and self-worth. People pray to dictate, command and get rich. People pray for whatever people want, see, like or wish. People pray - does it do any good?

 Introduction, *Does Prayer Work*, BBC Documentary

- *Prayer! I don't know if you'll have noticed or not, but it's really coming back. More and more people are asking other people to pray for them. They're starting to see a difference but they're also starting to feel a difference.*
- *Science is trying to prove on their own terms something that everybody's known since people came out of the caves. Prayer works.*
- *Normally I get an answer on my prayers. If you're faithful and you believe that God will do it, He will do it!*

A summation of prayer based upon biblical words:



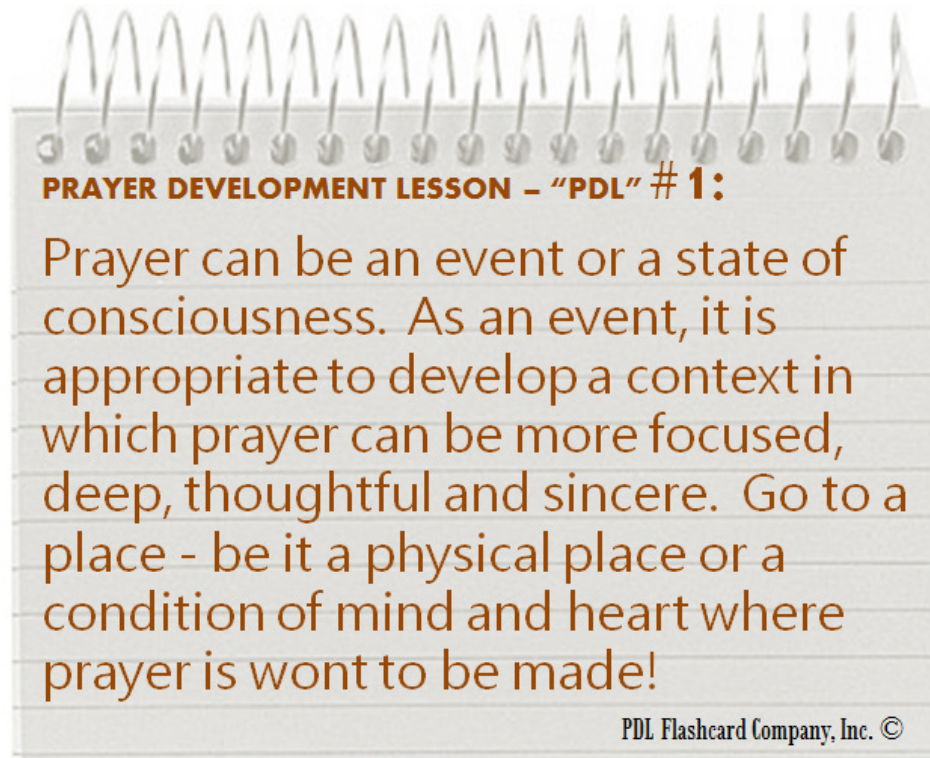


What does this tell us? It tells us that we, as frail human beings, do many things to try and focus our minds on spiritual things. Our brains seem to be wired for spiritual devotion.

This next text is a good example:

Acts 16:13: (KJV) *And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.*

They went to a place conducive to prayer. It sounds like a picturesque, peaceful place.



What motivates you in your prayer life? Perhaps listening to certain music, being at a certain place, or looking at nature. Prayer comes from our mind in conjunction with our heart.



This program explores the lessons of prayer as told to us in James 5:13-18.

James 5:13: (NASB) ¹³*Is anyone among you **suffering** <2553>? Then he must pray...*

Suffering: Strongs #2553 kakopatheo (kak-op-ath-eh'-o); to undergo hardship

2 Timothy 2:3: (KJV) *Thou therefore endure **hardness** <2553>, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

Notice **hardness** and **suffering** are the same Greek word. In this case, a soldier is strong, disciplined and ready for battle.

2 Timothy 4:5: (KJV) *But watch thou in all things, endure **afflictions** <2553>, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*



By the context of this word, *suffering* has to do with trials of faith as a challenge or test, not trials of illness. When somebody is in a position where they have been trained and ready, they are then tested.

Is there as much need to pray when we are focused on and doing the right things for Christ?

 **God and Poseidon, Sam Harris shows prayer studies for the joke they are**

- You could say no scientific study has ruled out the existence of Poseidon. And yet, this analogy, which I'm now drawing between Poseidon and the personal Christian God or the Jewish God or the Muslim God, really strikes theists - Christians, Jews and Muslims - as a total non sequitur. What you have on your side are sheer numbers of subscribers: 2 billion Christians, 1.3 billion Muslims. That personal God is compatible with an endless amount of progress in science and yet the mood you feel about Poseidon, the reflex of rejection of Poseidon is the mood that could extend to the God of Abraham and should extend.*

To have faith in the God of Abraham is a much stronger source than many of the scientific approaches to life. We have a Bible written over thousands of years that contains prophecies that have come true. We can see in nature itself God's handiwork. To have such without a Creator would be mathematically impossible.

Prayer is strength to the strong:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: (NASB) ⁷*Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!* ⁸*Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.*

Paul was already strong in the Lord, yet when he underwent hardship, he prayed for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed. But Jesus said NO!

⁹*And he has said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*

Was Paul crushed? No, rather he was made stronger!

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak (physically), then I am strong (spiritually).

PRAYER DEVELOPMENT LESSON - "PDL" #2:

In those times when we stand and fight the battle, the function of prayer is to strengthen the strong with a strength that is not our own. Embrace this strength (which must be accepted by faith as it is not your own) as a signal to step out further in faith!

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Likely Paul was praying for his eyesight:

Galatians 4:15: *For I bear you witness that if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.*

He really believed he could be better if that burden was taken away from him, but the answer was no. So what did he do? He got better anyway, by the grace of Jesus Christ working in his life! That is how prayer can transform. It took his thought of "I could be stronger," to "You (God) could be stronger in me." We don't want to rely on our own strength, rather it must be God's strength working through us.

Prayer's effect on the brain, *Science of Prayer, CNN*

- *Generations of people believing in God...generations of skeptics trying to figure out why. Now hard science is taking a hard look, exploring the brain to see whether human beings are hard wired for faith, and astoundingly the answer may be "yes."*
- *The brain is set up in such a way that it's very easy for us to have religious and spiritual beliefs and experiences and make religion and spirituality a part of our lives.*
- *No matter what the religion, no matter what the form of worship, prayer makes certain regions of the brain light up in a special and unique way.*



James 5:13: (NASB) *...Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.*

It seems only fitting that cheerfulness comes after strength to the strong!



Some examples of cheerfulness and praise:

Psalms 34:1-9: (NASB) ¹*I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. ²My soul will make its boast in the LORD; The humble will hear it and rejoice. ³O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. (Praise is contagious!) ⁴I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed. (That contagious attitude leads to transformation...) ⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. ⁸O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! ⁹O fear the LORD, you His saints; for to those who fear Him there is no want.*

All of this leads to blessing and protection from God - which leads to praise!

You have heard of a vicious circle? Well, here we have a *blessed* circle!



How can we find cheerful praise when all of experience has gone dark?

Here is a New Testament example of cheerful praise:

Acts 16:22-26: (NASB) ²²The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. ²³When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison...and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; (Note, there is no indication that they were praying for a miracle of freedom) ²⁶and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

Even when they were in this miserable situation, their faith was strong and they continued to praise God - *in spite of their circumstance!* Their circumstance did not drive their prayer; their strength drove their prayer.

What is the process to develop cheerful praise?

Colossians 3:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵**Let** the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful...

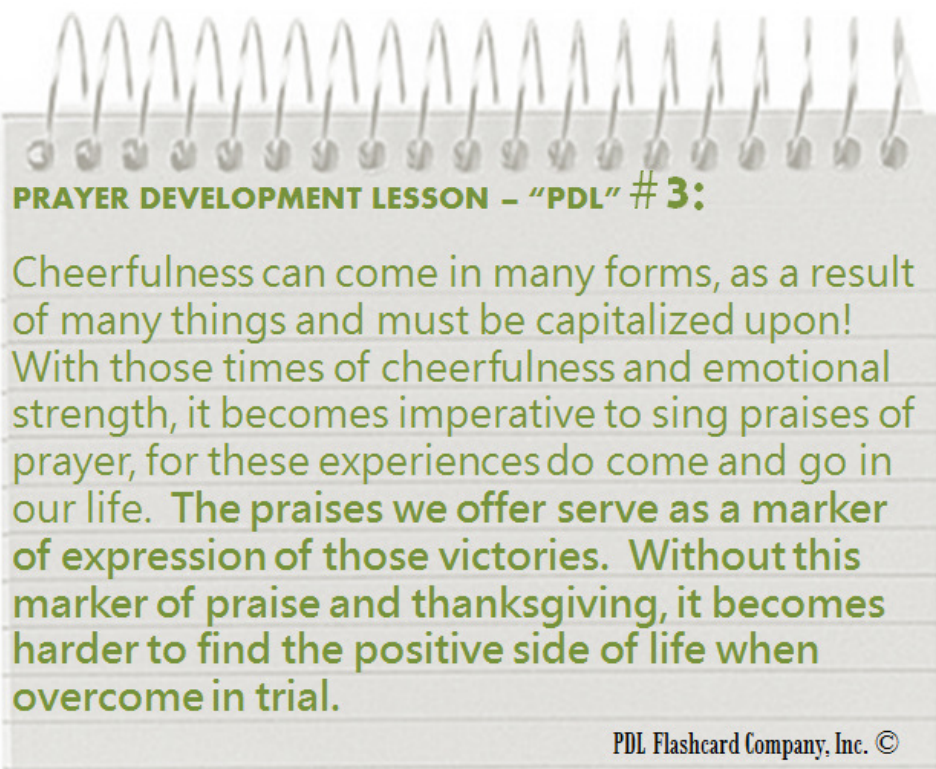
Let - this is a choice! Choose this day what will rule in your *heart* - the turmoil of life or the peace of God! It is a choice.

...¹⁶**Let** the word of Christ richly dwell within you...

Choose this day whose words guide you: the words of the world, flesh and devil or the words of Christ!

...with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Now, act upon what you have **let** into your *heart* and *mind*!



PRAYER DEVELOPMENT LESSON - "PDL" # 3:

Cheerfulness can come in many forms, as a result of many things and must be capitalized upon! With those times of cheerfulness and emotional strength, it becomes imperative to sing praises of prayer, for these experiences do come and go in our life. **The praises we offer serve as a marker of expression of those victories. Without this marker of praise and thanksgiving, it becomes harder to find the positive side of life when overcome in trial.**

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Speak out! Praise forward! Show how God has blessed you both in your prayer life and outwardly to others around you.

A caller suggests: We must trust God's judgments on the matter, whatever His reply is to our prayer. Hebrews 11:6: (KJV) *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* James 4:3: (KJV) *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

Parts of the brain affected, Science of Prayer, CNN

- *...the frontal lobe right behind the forehead focuses concentration. The limbic system deep in the center triggers feelings of awe and joy. The parietal lobe at the back of the brain brings on that feeling of becoming part of something greater than oneself. Dr. Newburgh says that the faithful see this as confirmation that God has designed us to believe.*

The act of prayer simultaneously activates different parts of our brain. We were created in the image of God with the ability to think, reason, have dominion and to praise. God designed us to be able to connect with Him! Why not avail ourselves of such an amazing connection with our amazing God?

James 5:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴*Is anyone among you **sick <770>**? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;* ¹⁵*and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is **sick <2577>**, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*

The beginning of this James lesson on prayer was about praying when strong and cheerful. That is only one necessary perspective of prayer; the other being overrun and weak. It is appropriate that we first learn how to strengthen the strong and to pass on the praise of cheerfulness as a basis for working through weakness. We have to prepare for the times when life seems to be falling apart all around us.

Does this aspect of prayer cover the actual healing of actual physical illnesses? Do these Scriptures tell us we should pray for a physical illness to go away? We do not believe so.

Are we asking for the things the Scriptures tell us to ask for? Or do we ask for the things we want instead? Part of prayer is learning how to use the "natural wiring" we have connected to God for the purpose it was intended.

Notice there were two words for *sick* used in James 5:14-15: Strong's #770 and #2577.

Sick: Strong's #770 *astheneo* (as-then-eh'-o); to be feeble (in any sense)

#770 has been used to describe physical illness *as well as* spiritual weakness - two different things. It is most often used (but not exclusively) as spiritual weakness in the epistles. Here are a few more examples:

2 Corinthians 12:10: (KJV) *...for when I am **weak <770>**, then am I strong.*

Romans 14:1-2: (NKJV) ¹*Receive one who is **weak <770>** in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.* ²*For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is **weak <770>** eats only vegetables.*



Can prayer heal, *Does Prayer Work*, BBC Documentary

- (Narrator) *Is it possible for one human being to affect the health of another merely by praying? All over the world, millions of people believe that prayer can heal the sick. Are they right?*
- (Guest) *There's nothing they could do that would convince me that prayer works. There are just too many completely implausible elements to it. The idea that if you receive prayers, you'll get better much more quickly, that's absurd!*

Now let's look at the second word used in James 5:14-15:

Sick: Strong's #2577 kamno; properly, to toil, i.e. (by implication) to tire (figuratively, faint, sicken):

It is used one more time here:

Hebrews 12:3: *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be **wearied** <2577> and faint in your minds.*

So, this James text really has nothing to do with physical illness at all, rather it has everything to do with spiritual illness/feebleness.

We do not have scriptural precedence for believers that every time a Christian gets sick, we are to pray for God to take away that illness.

The feebleness here is not in the category of just having a bad day, rather it is a deep symptom of a spiritual life turned fleshly that requires much more than a typical "pray for me" request, much more than a sharing of an experience in fellowship. This feeble and tired condition requires intervention because that person is going off track!



This is the responsibility of the shepherds of the flock:

James 5:14: (NASB) *Is anyone among you **sick** <770>? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him.*

Sometimes we need to get help refocusing on things above. This can be serious.

Galatians 6:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

James 5:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹*My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

James proves the context by explaining he meant *sick* as a sinner going down the wrong path.

Also we need to remember that humility on the part of one who is spiritually sick is a sure sign that their hope is still alive!



James 4:10: (NASB) *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

PRAYER DEVELOPMENT LESSON – "PDL" #4:

Spiritual sickness and weariness may come to us if we let down our guard and relax our principled stand for Christ. Personal humility and the fervent prayers on our behalf of those who are spiritually strong are required to restore such a potentially deadly condition back to righteousness. Through the prayers of others and contriteness of heart, reconciliation and spirituality can again be attained!

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A caller warns: Prayer is not like the handle on a Jack-in-the-Box, where we dictate to God to "pop out!"



The main purpose of prayer is for us to be in alignment with God's will, not to tell God what *our* will is so that we can get what we want!

Prayer helps us when spiritually sick,
but do we really have to share it "with the group?"



Basic data says no - but, *Does Prayer Work, BBC Documentary*

- *I think a natural part of human nature is any time you swing the bat you want to hit a home run. The most basic data tables are negative. There is no difference. When you see table after table that don't show any difference, well, gee, are we going to learn anything?*
- *But as the meeting progressed, certain anomalies, little blips in the data, began to attract their attention. "MIT" stood out. The Music, Imagery and Touch session appears to reduce patient distress significantly. There is an unequivocal statistically highly significant relationship between having the Music, Imagery and Touch and a sense by the patient that they feel better. They feel like they feel better.*



IMPORTANT



**OUR GOAL IS TO GET THROUGH
OUR ILLNESSES AND DIFFICULTIES
SPIRITUALLY STRONG.**

James 5:16: (NASB) *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. (Healed from those sins)*

Now that we have seen the power of humility and prayer in the direst of spiritual conditions, James here provides us with yet another application of prayer: mutual prayer and fellowship. This application of prayer becomes far more powerful once we realize that prayer can strengthen the strong, expand the cheer of the cheerful and save the spiritually sick. This application of prayer covers the rest of our life's experiences!

Prayer should be a free flowing tool of fellowship and service:

John 13:12-15: (NASB) ¹²*So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments and reclined at the table again, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.*



The humble service that Jesus taught us includes prayer and honesty one to another. We can be vulnerable with one another and heal each other of spiritual faultiness by sharing with one another.

Luke 22:32: (NASB) *but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*

Peter's faith went off track, but it did not fail. We strengthen through action, example and prayer!

2 Thessalonians 3:1: (NASB) *Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.*

This prayer was so that the Gospel would be spread - nothing selfish. Christianity and prayer are not here so that we can get wealthy or so that your life can be secure. We are here to walk in the footsteps of Christ.

We are all merely members of a body - prayer and honesty towards other members can only contribute to building up that body:

1 Corinthians 12:18-26: (NASB) ¹⁸*But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body... ²³and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable... but God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, ²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one*



member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

All members have the ability to contribute to building up one another.

PRAYER DEVELOPMENT LESSON – "PDL" #5:

Prayer is just as vital a tool in the smaller and more mundane experiences of our Christian walk as it is in our more powerful and crisis related experiences. Our lives are made up of so many of the less dramatic type of experiences that those experiences must therefore fill a critical role in the development of the scriptural habit of PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. Your everyday life and fellowship create the necessary muscle memory that prayer needs to deal with the inevitable times of trial and darkness which will assail you.

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So, just how powerful is prayer?

James 5:16: (NASB) *The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

Here is the conclusion of the prayer lessons in James: No matter what the circumstance - if we are strong, cheerful, spiritually ill, or learning day-by-day, *prayer can be the most powerful resource in our fighting the good fight of faith.*

James 5:16: (Rotherham) *...Much availeth (it brings results), the supplication (puts something continually before God) of a righteous man, when it is energized (not an empty repetition of words).*

Prayers are so much more than just repetition. If you have prayers that you pray over and over and over again, we strongly suggest you rethink it, because it is not a prayer from the heart or the mind. It is by rote and habit. The energizing of our prayers can accomplish many things! The effectual fervent prayer is what accomplishes much.



Prayer changes things! Two examples:

James 5:17: (Rotherham) ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Elijah was tapping into the will of God, doing what he was supposed to be doing with energized prayer.

Acts 12:5-7: (NASB) ⁵So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. ⁶On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. ⁷And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, get up quickly. And his chains fell off his hands.

Elijah and Peter were special men of God in special circumstances. Our responses of prayer will likely not be as dramatic.

PRAYER DEVELOPMENT LESSON – "PDL" #6:

The prayer of a follower of Christ in any aspect and under any circumstance of life is a necessary ingredient to fight the good fight. The energized and active prayer of a willing, humble and hardworking New Creation of God is a necessary ingredient to becoming more than an overcomer! **To offer prayer is one thing – to be offered up in prayer is another!**

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Observations that James has taught us about prayer:

- If you are strong, you need to pray.
- If you are cheerful, you need to pray.
- If you have fallen off the path and need help, you need prayers on your behalf.
- If in your daily experiences you are having struggles, you need to pray.



- If you are focused on doing the will of God, then all of those prayers can avail much!

Can you measure this with science? Probably not. The core principle of prayer is finding the will of God so you can follow it and finding the peace of God so you can be blessed by it.

A closing example of prayer - of being offered up in prayer:

Habakkuk 1:2: (NASB) *¹How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, Violence! Yet You do not save.*

God! Why? Why is the world so out of balance? Why does evil prevail?! Don't you see...? Why don't you do something??? Doesn't this prayer sound like so many of us today?

How did Habakkuk prepare for the answer? Did he cower in the corner, afraid of the world? No...

Habakkuk 2:1-3: (NASB) *¹I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved. Habakkuk positioned himself to be of value and use to the cause of God...what faith!
²Then the LORD answered me and said,*

It was only then that he received his answer:

Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run. ³For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it, for it will certainly come, it will not delay.

The answer? The vision is not lost or late. It will be manifest. We just have to wait for God's time. Meanwhile, write it, show it to others and inspire others with the message that God is not gone, He is not blind, but rather, He has a plan, even though we don't see the whole plan unfolding at once before us. Human nature wants the answers right now.

In Habakkuk's day, the wicked prospered, just like in our day. Yes, the wicked DO prosper...and it does not mean a thing! We can't do the same as others to achieve great advantage. Earthly prosperity is not part of our Christian sacrifice. What happens to them is not our concern. It doesn't mean anything because this life is just a temporary stopping place where sin reigns. Let it go...God has got this!

We, through prayer, need to understand that in the world in which we live that is so turned upside down, our prayers need to focus us on living "above" this world.

PRAYER DEVELOPMENT LESSON - "PDL" #7:

Hebrews 4:16: Come boldly to the throne of grace and receive grace to help in EVERY time of need!

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It is interesting to note what Hebrews 4:16 does *not* say. It does not say to come boldly to the throne of grace and physical healing. It does *not* say all our questions will be answered. It does *not* say that every bad situation in our lives will turn good. It simply says we will receive grace to help in every time of need - not that the need will go away or the trial will be made less. You will receive a help to get through spiritually. Just like Jesus prayed, *Not my will but Thy will be done*. Jesus taught us to honor God and put things in perspective. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is done in heaven*. Everything else is supplemental to the primary concern of the accomplishment of the will of God on earth. God has a plan! God allows sin to happen until the proper time.

Prayer puts us in line with that future hope so that we can deal with our present better.

Prayer is strength to the strong;
Prayer is praise to the cheerful;
Prayer is healing to the fallen;
Prayer is daily encouragement as we go through our lives.

And if we put them all together, the engaged prayer of those who are following after Christ can avail much. We must be focused on the will of God so that our lives can become more like Christ. It is not to get - prayer is to give.

*So, does prayer really change life's outcomes?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



What are some of the things prayer does for us?

- Prayer affords us the opportunity to give praise:

Psalms 105:1-5: (KJV) ¹O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. ²Sing unto Him sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. ³Glory ye in His holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. ⁴Seek the LORD, and His strength: seek His face evermore. ⁵Remember His marvelous works that He hath done; His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth;

- Prayer brings us guidance:

Luke 6:12-13: (NRSV) ¹²Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles:

- Prayer brings us deliverance:

Hebrews 4:14-16: (KJV) ¹⁴Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points



tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

- **Prayer gives us the ability to participate in the lives of others:**

Luke 6:28: (NRSV) *bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.*

Philippians 1:2-6: (NRSV) ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Living faithfully and righteously enables our prayers to be heard:

Psalms 32:1-8: (NRSV) ¹Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah ⁶Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. ⁷You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah ⁸I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Is everyone entitled to equal opportunity for prayer, or is it a privilege only?

If prayer were an entitlement, then everyone would have an equal opportunity and privilege to pray... The Bible seems to tell us otherwise...

First, it seems as though we are to have the correct perspective about our God and about ourselves:

Isaiah 57:15: (NRSV) *For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

Next, built upon our perspective, we need to be living in a manner that would be pleasing to God:

Proverbs 15:6-9: (NRSV) ⁶In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked. ⁷The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the minds of fools. ⁸The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. ⁹The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves the one who pursues righteousness.

Living in such a way does not exempt us from mistakes and bad judgments, but it does enable us to properly deal with them:

Psalms 32:1-8 (NRSV) ¹Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah ⁶Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to You; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. ⁷You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah ⁸I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.



Having opened the door of blessing from above, we now need to keep it opened:

James 4:7-10: (NRSV) ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Does all this mean that everyone who prays is NOT on equal footing before God?

Proverbs 15:28-29: (NRSV) ²⁸The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil. ²⁹The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Psalms 102:1-8: (NRSV) ¹Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to You. ²Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress. Incline Your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call. ³For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. ⁴My heart is stricken and withered like grass; I am too wasted to eat my bread. ⁵Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my skin. ⁶I am like an owl of the wilderness, like a little owl of the waste places. ⁷I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on the housetop. ⁸All day long my enemies taunt me; those who deride me use my name for a curse.