

Will Prayer Change Your Life?

Psalm 143:1: (NASB) *Hear my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications! Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!*



Prayer is a staple of religion. If you do not follow any particular religion then perhaps you meditate. The point is, humans by and large are tuned to opening their minds to some kind of external power or tranquility. For many, this opening of their minds provides a sense of security and peace as they feel heard, accepted and cared for. So, is prayer a commodity that should be passed out to and encouraged among the masses? Is it an elixir that can be taken to cure what ails you? How does prayer even work? What are its key ingredients and what is its process - or is there one? Can prayer, will prayer change your life?

Due to the enormity of the subject at hand we will look at prayer primarily as it is defined and exemplified in the Bible. As we have done so often in the past, we will look to David and the Psalms to help us establish a firm footing.

A Summation of Prayer, based upon the biblical words used to describe communication with God:

*Reflection, Devotion,
A contemplation; by implication,
An utterance, To intercede, To seek or ask,*

*Intercession, Supplication,
by implication, a hymn, Entreaty,
To bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior,
An oratory, Petition*

(Please see more on this in the Bonus Material!)

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.

Will prayer change your life? NO! Continue to see how the answer unfolds.

We will be examining meditation via audio clips as we discuss prayer to understand the connection between prayer and meditation. Meditation can be very different to different people but it is important to set up what meditation *for a Christian* is and what it is not.



Eastern meditation, *What is Biblical Meditation*, UNLEARN

- Eastern religion and New Age spiritualism has had such a strong influence on our world that when most people hear the word meditation they instantly think of yoga poses and chanting mantra, but is that what the Bible has in mind when it speaks about meditation. The object of Eastern and New Age meditation is to focus on emptying the mind of thoughts or images and trying to enter a trance-like hypnotic state in which their prefrontal cortex is basically turned off. They're trying to place their mind into an alpha mode to avoid any active thinking or logic thinking because this makes them more receptive to the demonic spiritual influence they are seeking to find.*

The problem is when you clear your mind and look for something to come in, what you attract is generally darkness, not light.

Our meditation should not be Eastern meditation. This could open you up to influences that are not Christlike.

**LESSON FOR
THE
CHRISTIAN:**



We will use Psalm 143 as a basic foundation for discussion.

(Source: John Gill's Exposition of the Bible) This Psalm was composed by David when he fled from Absalom, his son, according to the title of it in...the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin...versions.

David's life was in a great turmoil at that point in time. His own son turned against him and was trying to take his throne in Israel.

A bit on the construction of the Psalm:

(Source: The Expositor's Bible) The former half (verses 1-6) is complaint; the latter (verses 7-12), petition. Please see the CQ episode from December 11, 2017, "Does Complaining Ever Help?" ...The complaint branches out into a plaintive description of the psalmist's peril (verses 1-3), and a melancholy disclosure of his feelings (verses 4-6); while the prayer is similarly parted into cries for deliverance (verses 7-9), and for inward enlightenment and help (verses 10-12.)

Psalm 143:1: (NASB) Hear my **prayer** <8605>, O LORD, Give ear to my **supplications** <8469>! Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!

First, let's look at which definition is used here:

Prayer: Strong's #8605; intercession, supplication;
by implication, a hymn

Many of David's prayers were turned into hymns.

Is a "supplication" the same as a prayer?

Supplication: Strong's #8469; earnest prayer

Supplication: Strong's #2603 properly, to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, bestow; causatively to implore



Give ear to my supplications - David is asking God to kindly bend down and listen to him because he is so inferior before God. David's attitude was one of humility.



Prayer Observations: David's prayer at its very outset...

- Was formed because of a desperate complaint - *do we have desperation?*
- Was humble - it was delivered with imploring to one above him - *are we first humble when we pray?*



I had an experience several years ago while I was working. I was sitting with a client and we were discussing Christian thoughts. I was getting ready to leave and he asked, "Can I pray for you?" I said, "Sure." I never had a client ask me that before. He started to pray, and in his prayer he became more and more demonstrative and commanding. He was saying, "Lord, I command that the roads will be clear so Brother Rick can get to his destination. I command that his day go in accordance in the way he would want it to go." As he kept going through this prayer I got more and more disturbed inside. When he finished, I thanked him and said, "That was different; I generally don't pray that way but I appreciate what you're trying to do, thanks very much." I left. When I got in my car, the first thing I did was I bowed my head and apologized and said, "Dear Lord, I am so sorry. I do not want any part of commanding anything from You." It made a big impact on me on how we should approach prayer.

- Was praising of God and therefore praiseworthy by us - *would we fit the precision of this mold?*



Prayer is effective when it is a result of a prayerful life.

**So far, prayer is a clear exercise in humility.
Is prayer an entitlement to all or a privilege for a few?**

Living in a time as we do when including everyone for everything seems to be the very most important issue of life, the answer to the prayer entitlement question is not an easy one.

We need to ease into this answer by carefully following what David prays next in this Psalm:

Psalms 143:2-3: (NASB) ²*And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous.* ³*For the enemy has persecuted my soul; He has crushed my life to the ground; He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.*

Is David telling God how to go about His business? No. Do we ever tell God how to go about His business?

(Source: Bible commentary by Albert Barnes) Do not deal with me on the ground of justice as toward "thee;" do not mark my own offences against thee, when I plead that justice may be done as between me and my fellow-men. While I plead that thou wouldst judge righteously between me and them, I am conscious that I could not claim thy needed interposition on the ground of any righteousness toward thee. There I must confess that I am a sinner; there I can rely only on mercy; there I could not hope to be justified.



David is saying, "God, I am speaking to you about justice between humans, not about our inability to be just before you." *For in Your sight no man living is righteous.* David is not telling God what to do, he is simply reminding God and himself that he is not like these people and He is asking God's help for justice between men.



Prayer Observations: David's prayer shows us that...

- His personal state was not good before God - *what is our view of our personal state?* God already knows our personal state but for us to restate it means we are acknowledging it, which is important when we go before God.
- In spite of being unworthy he still complained, showing boldness in his humility, for his heart was for God - *how strong is our humility?* For a Christian, our worthiness is through Jesus and he covers our sins.

Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers. — J. Sidlow Baxter

Our prayers can also be for those who are persecuting us!



Christian meditation, *What is Biblical Meditation, UNLEARN*

- *This is quite contrary to biblical meditation which seeks to fill our minds with the Word of God and to focus our thoughts on what the Bible says. Biblical meditation involves pondering, thinking deeply and trying to gain deeper understanding. This type of meditation actively engages the prefrontal cortex causing us to gain wisdom, understanding and self-control while strengthening our mind against the attack of the enemy. When we meditate on the Scriptures we are preparing our mind for success. Meditating on God's Word brings about a renewing of our mind which causes a change in our behavior enabling us to do according to all that is written in it.*



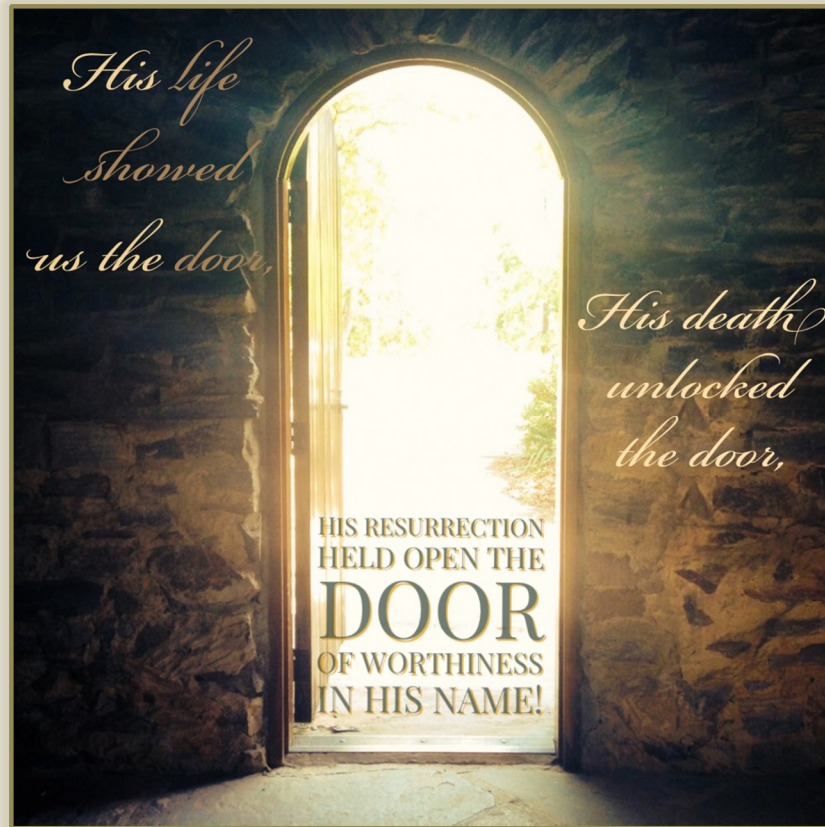
The idea of Christian meditation is not to empty your mind, but to *fill it* - fill it with goodness, godliness, godly righteousness, Scripture and Jesus, so your mind can be focused and ponder on that which is good.

With David's attitude of strong humility in place, this next set of Scriptures sets the foundation for our main question about prayer as an entitlement:

Hebrews 4:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.* ¹⁵*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all*

things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We are unworthy, yet Jesus opens a door of worthiness for us - not because we are so great - but because he is so great. It is Jesus' worthiness that gives us this incredible opportunity to talk to God.



If prayer is 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: (NASB) *For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

God Almighty says, *I dwell on a high and holy place.*

Where else does He dwell? According to God's own words, He dwells with the contrite and lowly of spirit. **Why?** *To revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

What an amazing picture! God dwells with those whose spirit is broken.

Second, we need to be actively seeking God's righteousness and not our worldly rights:

Proverbs 15:8-9: (NASB) ⁸*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.* ⁹*The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves one who pursues righteousness.*

When someone who is not godly makes a sacrifice to God, it is an abomination to Him. They may be doing the right thing but for all the wrong reasons. God will not accept that. *But the prayer of the upright is His delight.* This is a comparison between godliness and ungodliness.



Prayer Observation:

- God is selective when it comes to those He will focus on and bless - *are we within His selective sight?*

God hears us when we seek Him.

What other things should we focus on, even outside of prayer?

Prayer in its most effective form is a function of a life that is striving towards God. This is incredibly illustrated by David in the next few verses of Psalms 143 as he will next not only express how his trial has affected him, he will demonstrate a God-fearing way of living in between his prayers.

David has laid his complaint before God and he now tells God how he feels - with bold humility:

Psalms 143:4-6: (NASB) ⁴*Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; My heart is appalled within me.* ⁵*I remember the days of old; I **meditate <1897>** on all Your doings; I **muse <7878>** on the work of Your hands.* ⁶*I stretch out my hands to You; My soul longs for You, as a parched land. Selah.*

David is recounting his life experience toward God.



Prayer Observation:

- David's present challenges have wrenched his attention away from God and he expresses his need to get back to his center - *when we pray, are we so deep and clear in our approach to God?*



Concentrate and consider, [How to Meditate](http://HowtoMeditate.com), SpiritualDirection.com

- *What really helps when we want to engage in Christian meditation is having a structure for our meditation, kind of like training wheels that can help us move forward when we feel distractions or tired or just our faith is kind of weak. The structure that I recommend is the four C's. The first C is concentrate and that's really important. We need to quiet down, turn off the cell phone, go to a quiet corner, make an act of faith that God is there caring about me - wanting to talk with me, really concentrate - put myself in God's presence and kind of tune in to Him. And then once I'm concentrated then I begin to consider, consider is the second C. Where I take the text of the Scriptures or a spiritual book and I read it reflectively, slowly, I think about it, I digest it, I ask questions of it. You know, what's going on here, what does this tell me about God? I consider the revelation that God has given me about who He is and how much He loves me.*

For David to get back to his center, he uses several thought-training techniques, which is amazing. He knew the technique of communication, the technique of praise and the technique of prayer and complaint. He knew all those answers before modern technology. This demonstrates David was really working on getting his mind right *before he prayed* and he knew he was off center and did NOT want to stay that way!

It gives us solace to know David had ups and downs just like we do. It is okay to have ups and downs, but our focus needs to stay close to God in both of those. David always worked his way back.

I remember the days of old -

Remembering the GOOD things is a powerful way to clear your mind and opens the door to *a positive thinking pattern.*



I meditate on all Your doings -

Thinking deeply upon what God does is a powerful way to *refocus your mind.*

Deuteronomy 8:2-3: (NASB) ²You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness... that He might humble you... whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³He... let you be hungry, and fed you with manna... that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

We have a good friend who always reminds us of the value of journaling. Remember the experiences of the past and how God overruled in your lives to keep your faith strong when you are having a weak moment.

Meditate: Strong's #1897 to murmur (in pleasure or anger); by implication, to ponder

With all our technology, we do not take the time to ponder anymore. We need to STOP, ponder and meditate.

Acts 3:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, ²¹whom heaven must receive *until the period of restoration of all things* about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

Ponder on the enormity of the restitution process in God's plan.

Meditating on God's plans and purposes engages that positive thinking pattern towards becoming a *positive thinking habit!*

Muse: Strongs #7878 to ponder, i.e. (by implication) converse (with oneself, and hence, aloud) or (transitively) utter

I muse on the work of Your hands -
Pondering the specifics of God's creativeness is a powerful way to *recenter your mind.*



I stretch out my hands to You -
Pondering the specifics of God's creative power solidifies a positive thinking habit with awe and praise. This is an INSTINCTIVE RESULT of *a mind committed to God!*

Psalms 8:3-4: (NASB) ³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; ⁴What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?

The advantage of having a dog is having to let him out at night. When I open the door, step out and I look up, it's wonderful! I'm very thankful we have a dog so that I do that. On rare times I express myself, look up and even yell out, "That's MY Dad - He made that!"



Nehemiah 8:10: (NASB) ¹⁰...Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

He can carry you through if you look for His will and His way.

A powerful and prayerful life is a meditative and mindful life.

Back to focusing on prayer.

God helps those who seek Him - what about when we mess up?

As is obvious by David's own admission, meditating and pondering on God and His greatness are not always enough to keep us centered. We fall because we are fallen and we need God's mercy. Our own inconsistency must be paramount in our minds when approaching the throne of grace! The problem is we focus on God through a defective lens and need to check and recheck to be sure we are seeing things clearly. It is not about emotion; it is about heart dedication, decision, clarity and moving your life forward.

Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be made into a burden.

— *Corrie Ten Boom (Holocaust survivor)*

Bring everything before God.

Thus far we have seen prayer as a humble framing of a complaint before our sovereign God.

With the complaint and its effects before God, David now begins his petition to God. When we are forced to lay it out before God and speak to Him about what is bothering us, it helps us to understand the problem and gives God more room to bless, guide and deliver us by His grace.

His petition begins with great urgency:

Psalms 143:7-9: (NASB) ⁷Answer me quickly, O LORD, my spirit fails; Do not hide Your face from me, Or I will become like those who go down to the pit.

It gives us solace to realize such a godly man could have such troubles.

His petition then becomes more grounded and less emotional:

⁸Let me **hear** Your lovingkindness in the morning; For I trust in You; **Teach me** the way in which I should **walk**; For to You I lift up my soul. ⁹Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; I take refuge in You.

David only asked for deliverance after he displayed a willingness to listen, learn and walk.



Prayer Observation:

- David's plea for deliverance is accomplished by continually elevating God and keeping himself low - *are we so clear and persistent in our pleas?*



Converse and commit, *How to Meditate, SpiritualDirection.com*

- *As I consider, what will happen is my heart will be moved and I'll be moved to want to say something to God in response to what I've been considering and that's the third C, which is converse. I may want to thank Him, I may want to beg His forgiveness, I may just simply want to praise Him and express my*



wonder at His goodness, and you can go back and forth between those two C's for as long as you want. You can consider and then converse, and then when you're done talking go back to consider and then converse again and then at the end of your time of meditation, whether it's five minutes or 15 or half an hour, you want to finish up with the fourth C, which is commit. Renew my commitment to loving God and to fulfilling His will for me this day.

The circumstances of David's current prayer were about those who were after him. David maintained the same posture in his prayers even when he was the perpetrator and the evil doer. Psalms 32 was his recounting of his own horrible sins and God's mighty forgiveness.

David begins with the end result:

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.

He then recounts the pain of his sin and its aftermath while he stood in denial of his actions:

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*

God sent Nathan to him and David finally began to own his sins:

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*.

David was humble enough to receive the help. The acknowledgement of his sin was the ownership of his sin.

David then speaks of the lesson learned and the lifesaving value of honesty before God. This is a key to prayer.

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*

Selah - meaning, pause and consider.

David finally completes the process by teaching that which he has so deeply learned:

⁸I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

- In our prayers are we this humble?
- Are we honest enough to be as vulnerable as David was?
- Are we willing to give our issues so wholly to God and to let HIM manage them and guide us?

**Let's finally get down to it and answer the original question.
Will prayer change your life?**

Let's start that answer by simply saying, "It all depends." It all depends on what you mean by "change your life." If you mean it makes you feel better,

then sure, prayer can change that, but most likely only on a temporary basis. If you mean change the way you live and think every day, then the answer is a definite maybe!

Prayer DID change David's life!

It changed his life because he was thoroughly engaged in changing himself into becoming a more complete and faithful servant of God's will and way:

Psalms 143:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰*Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your Good Spirit lead me on level ground. ¹¹For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me. In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble. ¹²And in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies and destroy all those who afflict my soul, For I am Your servant.*

David lived in the time of the Law Covenant which was built on justice. God was clear that justice would be done. David was praying appropriately under the Law. For us, Jesus nailed the Law to the cross by fulfilling it, so we follow his higher teachings and not the specific Law.



Prayer Observation:

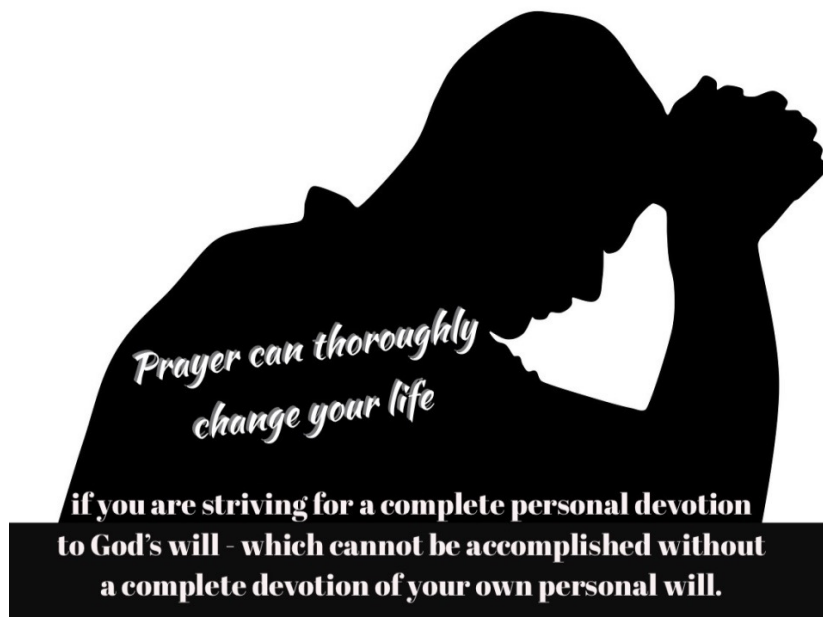
- David left himself entirely at the disposal of God and HIS will - *are we so willing to be so vulnerable?*



Internal dialogue, *What is Biblical Meditation, UNLEARN*

- *When we meditate on God's Word we think about it over and over again, filling our mind with His word. Biblical meditation is thinking, pondering, imagining, and speaking the Word of God. Biblical meditation also involves the internal dialogue that you have with yourself. Are you speaking God's Word to yourself or are you filling your mind with negative and worldly thoughts?*

Part of meditation is considering the things we have prayed about and prayed for. When we meditate we may realize the answer to our prayers. If we do not take that time to meditate, we could miss out on the answers from the Lord.

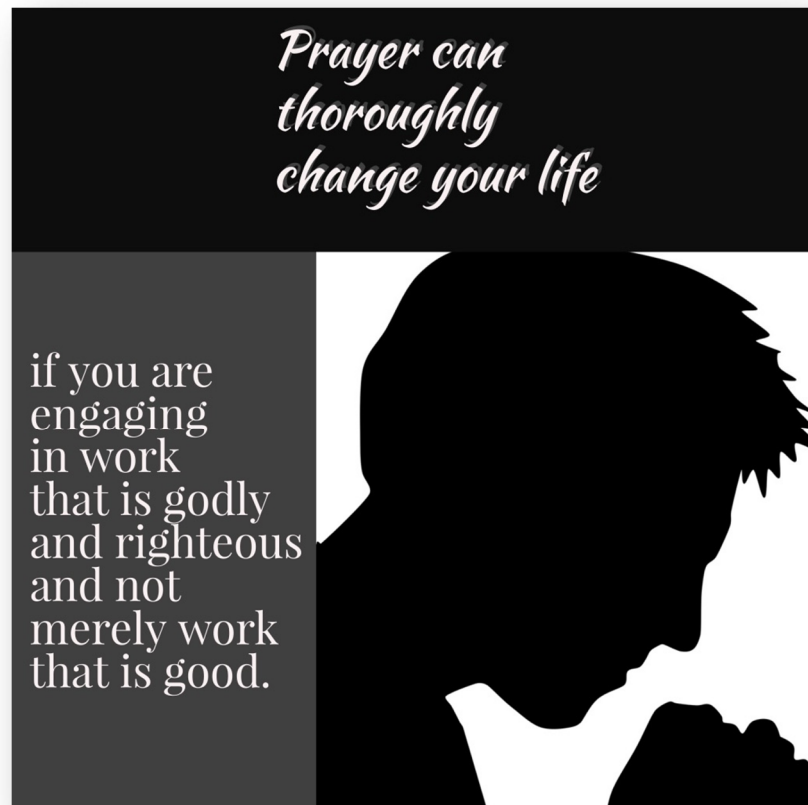


Hebrews 5:5-9: (NASB) ⁵So also Christ did not glorify himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to him, you are my son, today I have begotten you; ⁶just as He says also in another passage, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Because Jesus had committed to being the lamb of God, prayer delivered him through his suffering:

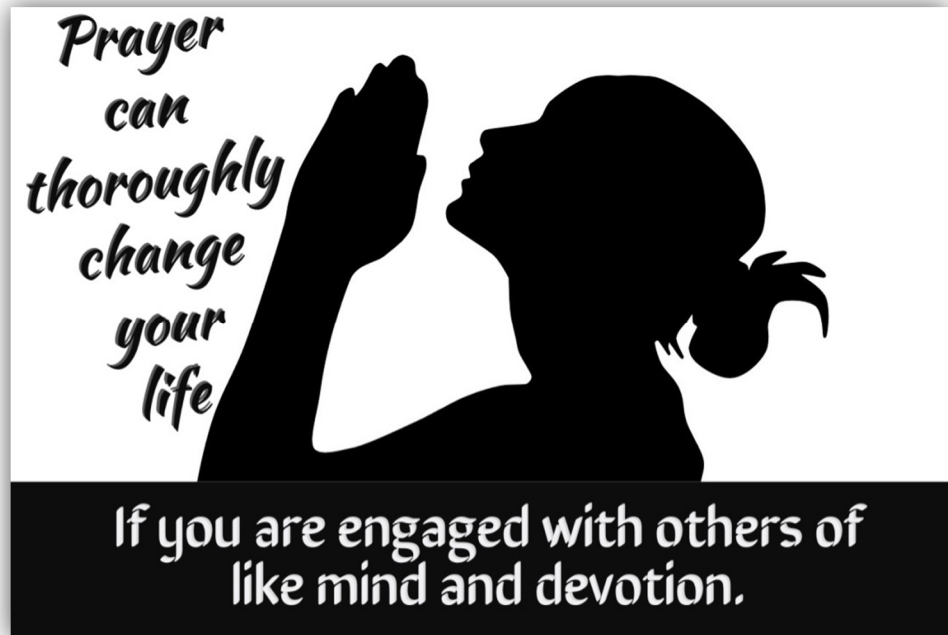
⁷In the days of his flesh, he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his piety. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered. ⁹And having been made perfect, he became to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

Jesus showed us the necessity and power of prayer in his own personal experiences. Jesus was perfect and flawless. He learned obedience from the things which he suffered. This meant he had a will that needed to be continually bent to a higher standard of doing what God would have him to do, rather than what a human being would rather do.



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. (Here is the example of a prayerful life.) 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. They were privileged to suffer like Jesus. They were praying and singing praises.) 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.

The supreme thing is worship. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a subject bent before the King... the fundamental thought is that of prostration, of bowing down.
— Campbell Morgan



James 5:16: (NASB) *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

This Scripture is in the context of praying for one another, not for ourselves. You can effectively have change in the lives around you if you are fervent in your prayerful life.

*So, will prayer change your life?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
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My prayer is that God would continue to love me enough to refuse to answer the prayers I'm praying that I shouldn't be praying. — Craig D. Lounsbrough



The essence of meditation is a period of time set aside to contemplate the Lord, listen to Him, and allow Him to permeate our spirits. — Charles Stanley

Prayer is exhaling the spirit of man and inhaling the spirit of God. — Edwin Keith

Let us always remember our inherent unworthiness:

Job 15:14: (NASB) *What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?*

Romans 3:20: (NASB) *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

In light of that, we have been BLESSED! Having opened the door of blessing from above, we now need to keep it opened:

James 4:7-10: (NRSV) ⁷*Submit 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.*

So, does all of this mean everyone who prays is NOT on equal footing before God?

Proverbs 15:28-29: (NRSV) ²⁸*The 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.*

More detail on the meditation verses of Psalm 143:

Psalm 143:5: (NASB) *I remember <2142> the days <3117> of old <6924>; I meditate <1897> on all Your doings <6467>; I muse <7878> on the work <4639> of Your hands <3027>.*

Meditate: Strong's #1897 to murmur (in pleasure or anger); by implication, to ponder:

Muse: Strong's #7878 to ponder, i.e. (by implication) converse (with oneself, and hence, aloud) or (transitively) utter

Muse: Strong's #7879; a contemplation; by implication, an utterance

More extensive background on prayer in Scripture:

Merriam Webster Dictionary:

Prayer: noun

1 a (1): an address (as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought <said a prayer for the success of the voyage> (2): a set order of words used in praying

b: an earnest request or wish

2: the act or practice of praying to God or a god <kneeling in prayer>

3: a religious service consisting chiefly of prayers — often used in plural

4: something prayed for

5: a slight chance <haven't got a prayer>

Summation of prayer, based upon Old and New Testament words:

Strong's #7881 feminine of 7879; reflection; by extension, devotion

Strong's #7879 from #7878; a contemplation; by implication, an utterance

Strong's #1156 corresponding to 1158; to seek or ask

Strong's #6419 to judge (officially or mentally); by extension, to intercede, pray



Strong's #8605 from 6419; intercession, supplication; by implication, a hymn, Supplication in the Old Testament:

Essentially describing a manner in which we are to pray

Strong's #8467 graciousness; causatively, entreaty

Strong's #2603 properly, to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, bestow; causatively to implore (i.e. move to favor by petition)

New Testament Words:

Strong's #4335 prayer (worship); by implication, an oratory (chapel)

Strong's #1189 to beg (as binding oneself), i.e. petition

Strong's #1162 a petition



Join us next week on our December 26, 2017 podcast,
"What Would Jesus Have Said to YOU?"
(Note: next week will be on Tuesday due to Christmas)