



THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

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What is Prayer? Prayer is the intercession, supplication, or solemn request for help. It is an expression of thanks addressed to God, a devout petition to God, or a spiritual communion with God. (paraphrased from dictionary.com)

The Lord has been teaching me about prayer and why it is so important. As a missionary, I covet the prayers lifted to our Heavenly Father on my behalf. Because of the prayers of others, I am who I am today. Growing up, I was taught that prayer is important, but this truth did not become real to me until the past few years. June 16, 2020 marks seven years since the passing of my dear mother. Through the prayers of many people my family and I have made it through the worst days of our lives. I am not saying we do not still miss her, because we do. I am not saying that the hurt is totally gone, because it is not. The emotions and pain still come and even catch us off guard. However, the waves of grief come further and further apart.

The Power of prayer is amazing. I sent out my first prayer letter in January 2019. The letter informed people that God had called me to be a missionary, and it laid out some of my immediate plans. I made plans for a survey trip to the Philippines to see if this is where God would have me serve as a missionary. The financial gifts of many people made it possible for me to go on this survey trip, but many more were praying for me. They prayed for my safety and health and prayed that God would show me clearly where I was to serve. While I was in the Philippines, I spent four weeks with Kevin and Jo Ann Trout. They have a small orphanage. In those four weeks I learned so much. One of things I learned was living by faith. The Trouts do so much on so little. They do not make their immediate needs known; instead, they trust God. During my time with them I saw many answers to prayer; I saw God glorified.

One night, Jo Ann, two other missionary ladies, and I had traveled four hours away to get some official work done for Jo Ann to be able leave the country. While we were sitting around and playing a game in our motel, I received a message from the missionary family that I was to stay with for my last week in the Philippines. The missionary's wife was going to have emergency gall bladder surgery, and they were not able to host me. I freaked out! I was about to be in a major foreign city of 13 million people by myself. I did not know what to do. I messaged my dad, and he calmed me down. He told me that he would start messaging people that he knew and see if any of them would be able to host me that last week. When I got off the phone with him, I was very anxious, and afraid that I was not going to have anywhere to go. Jo Ann and the other ladies looked at me and said there is no reason to fret, because God is in control. I started praying silently to myself, asking the Lord to calm my spirit and that His will would be done. As soon as I prayed, I felt peace. Though I was still a little worried, I knew the Lord would take care of me. The next morning my father called me and told me that he had contacted several people and was just waiting for their response. Later on that day, he messaged me letting me know that Pastor Rusty and Baby Lita Ocampo were more than happy to host me. My prayers were answered. Through this situation God opened my eyes and heart to the Ocampo's ministry in Lipa City, Batangas.

The church I grew up in supports them as missionaries, but I never had the chance to meet them. I prayed a lot, not knowing what to expect, but the Lord worked it all out for His good. I was able to accompany the young people from Heavenly Bible Baptist Church on an overnight trip. They were delivering provisions for two ministries in the City of General Nakar. One of these ministries reached out

to the tribal people in the area. How they lived was unforgettable. They were so poor. They live in open huts made from grass and palm tree branches with only the “bedroom” closed in. Seeing how these people lived truly broke my heart. I was also able to see other ministries of Heavenly Bible Baptist throughout the week. I saw their children’s outreaches and daily Bible studies. I had one week with this ministry, but it seemed as if I grew up there. I had the most difficult time leaving. I begged God to create some way for me to stay longer, but that answer of prayer did not come. When I returned to the States, I spent that first week in prayer, seeking the Lord and studying the Scriptures. I longed to know what was next. I prayed that God would clearly show me where He wanted me to be. He answered my prayer; the Lord showed me that Lipa City, Batangas, Philippines was the place that He wanted me to go for my first term as a missionary. God answered my prayer when Pastor Rusty Ocampo formally invited me to be part of their ministry. If it were not for people praying that God would give me clear direction, I truly believe I may not have had this experience and true direction from the Lord.

Why is it that we always exhaust all our resources when something goes wrong instead of turning to God in prayer first? The Lord tells us that all we need to do is ask, and it will be given unto us (Luke 11:9). Is it because we do not fully trust that the Lord can provide for us? Is it because we do not have a close relationship with God causing Him to be an afterthought? I have been reading the autobiography of George Müller. George Müller was a missionary that God used to do great things. He honestly lived day by day in complete faith. He had several orphanages, schools, and ministries. In his autobiography, he reveals what happened behind the scenes when there was no food for the next meal, no money to pay the bills, and when death seemed to surround him. He would go to God requesting Him to intervene and provide. There were times God would answer his prayer within seconds after he prayed. But there were times that he prayed for weeks and months before God would answer his prayer. At the beginning of his ministry he did not tell a soul besides his own wife of their physical needs. At certain times when the need for funds affected his staff, he would ask his staff to pray with him in confidence. George started having prayer meetings with them in the evenings. God used these times when the answer did not come right away to strengthen not only George’s faith but the faith of his staff.

George Müller refused to tell a soul outside of his ministry’s staff the needs. One day a man wrote to George Müller to see if there was a need. Knowing that George never told anyone the need, the man added, “Surely it would be okay to inform me of the need since I request it of you.” The man wanted to put his money where it was needed. George replied, “I do not feel I have the right to inform you of the need.” Once George sent the letter, he went down on his knees and took it to the Lord in prayer. George asked the Lord to lay on the man’s heart the need, and the Lord answered it. The man sent exactly what was needed. Let God be your first resource. Go to Him in prayer first, before telling anyone else, and watch God work it out. God is always ready to answer prayers; He is waiting for us to come and ask.

Prayer is not only important for provision, but it is also important for communion with the Lord. We should not only pray when we need something. We should pray daily to be in constant contact with our Lord. George Müller believed that sometimes God did not answer immediately because He enjoyed hearing from His children. I have heard preachers say that God sends us through trials so that we will communicate with Him. He loves fellowship with us! When is the last time you spoke to the Lord? I find myself talking more and more to Him every day. The best thing about talking with God is that I do not have to wait or go somewhere. I can talk to Him anywhere and everywhere. When I want to talk to my earthly father, I must use a phone or travel to speak with him in person. With my Heavenly Father, all I must do is cry out, and He will hear me (Psalm 6:9, 66:19-20).

Prayer is not only important for provisions and for fellowship; It is also imperative that we intercede for others. On a Sunday in January 2020, I received news that there was an eruption of a volcano just east of Lipa City, Batangas, Philippines. Remember, Lipa City is where I will be spending my first term as a missionary. I am halfway around the World! There is nothing I can physically do! I felt stuck, helpless. The pictures were heart breaking. I wanted to be there helping the evacuees. My heart felt like it weighed fifty pounds. During the Sunday morning service, I was reminded that in the times we cannot do anything for the situation we can and should go to the Lord in prayer and lift them up. I cried out to God and told Him that I wanted to be there, to be with my friends, to be with the people affected by the volcano. I wanted to be there telling the people of the Hope that they can find through Jesus Christ. I prayed that He would speed up my return to the Philippines. Through the prayer and communication with God, He gave me a new yearning to keep going, to keep calling pastors, to keep reaching out to people. While I am waiting for His perfect timing, I am not to be idle. I am to "... press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). I was comforted through prayer. Even though I was halfway around the world, I could lift them up in prayer and know that God was going to take care of them (Matthew 21:22).

Another way to intercede is on behalf of a person's salvation. Many people pray year after year for a spouse, a family member, or even a close friend pleading with the Lord on their behalf. They plead with God, asking Him not to pass by, to soften a heart, for repentance and faith. This past year my family and I have been praying for my stepmom's dad. He has been battling cancer for a little over a year and the treatments were not working. We were unsure of his salvation. His life did not exhibit any godly fruit or evidence of salvation. Several people talked with him and he would just put them off. My step-grandad, Sam, went for an appointment due to a mass on the back of his head. The doctors ordered an MRI to see if it was the cancer growing. The MRI results showed that it was all over his brain. You see, Sam kept saying he was going to beat it. He kept looking for the light at the end of the tunnel, but he was looking for the wrong light. The doctor was very honest with him at that appointment. The doctor told him that the light at the end of his tunnel was death, because there was nothing else that they could do. The news hit Sam hard. As a family we continued to cry out to God on his behalf. We prayed that it would wake him up to the reality of his need to know Jesus as his personal Savior.

I am part of a small lady's group at my church. We gather every third Thursday to catch up on things we are doing in the community, we go visit shut ins, and we try to meet needs as they are brought to our attention. We are a quiet group; we do not boast on how the Lord uses us. But on January 16, 2020 we had our first meeting of the year. I came into the meeting broken for so many things that were going on in my life personally (one of my co-workers' husband had passed away, the uncertainty of the volcano in the Philippines, and then the news of my step-grandad's prognosis). At the end of our meeting we gathered in prayer. I was impressed to pray for Sam. That night we prayed for him, his salvation, and many other people and their situations. On January 20th I received word that my step-grandad made the decision to accept Jesus as his Savior. I asked my stepmom when he made the decision of salvation. She informed me that it was that very night the Lord pressed on my heart to pray for him at the lady's meeting. Prayer is the most powerful weapon. It is so important to lift our loved ones and friends up in prayer. It is important that when God brings someone to mind that you pray for them right then. You may not even know why, but God does.

Lastly, Prayer is important because it is a way to worship the Lord. It is the way to thank Him for all He has done for us. When God answers my prayers, I rejoice and want to tell everyone. Sadly, I forget to

thank the Lord. God has been teaching me that thanking Him personally through prayer glorifies Him and His name. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 it says, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." We ought to turn to Him as soon as He has answered a prayer and thank the Lord, because it is the will of God. When is the last time you thanked God for answering a simple prayer request? I am trying harder myself not to thank God just for the big things but for the little things like safe travels. How often do we take for granted that we are going to arrive safe from one destination to another even when it is just down the road? I do every day. I live two minutes from the main clinic I used to work at before going part-time. I worked at that clinic for two years; I took it for granted that I would make it. Thank God for the little things.

In closing, I want to share an article I read, it is called *The Power of Prayer: Biblical and Theological Foundations*. I read this article when I was searching for content and truth from the Scriptures about the importance of prayer. It is right on point with what I am trying to communicate. Hopefully, this sums it up! The article is from online.grace.edu.

The Power of Prayer: Biblical and Theological Foundations

Prayer can be defined as talking to God, but it is much more than that. Prayer is an act of worship that glorifies God and reinforces our need for Him. Through living a life of prayer, we respond to Christ's work of salvation and communicate with the very source of and purpose for our existence.

Prayer is a popular focus in sermons and Christian literature. A few important questions guide and clarify the power of prayer in each Christian's life.

Why Should We Pray?

Several truths help illustrate why we need prayer in our lives.

- We are commanded to pray. Multiple times we read that we are to be in continual prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Philippians 4:6-7, Ephesians 6:18-19). And in Luke, Jesus "spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1 NKJV).
- It gives Him the glory. Prayer is a way to serve God (Luke 2:36-38). Through prayer, we have the opportunity to glorify and praise Him for all He is and has done (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- It helps us overcome. Jesus tells Peter to pray for strength in overcoming temptation (Matthew 26:41). Also, in Luke 6:12-13, Jesus demonstrates the importance of prayer in making major decisions. Prayer helps us face and overcome all types of struggles.
- It brings our requests to Him. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you," Jesus said in Matthew 7:7. This does not mean that we will be granted anything we ask, but when we ask for things that are in His will, He will give those things to us (1 John 5:14-15).
- It helps us discern His will. Jesus prayed continually to the Father for guidance. We too can begin to understand His will for us when we stay in communion with Him. "What is the goal of the Christian life?" asks theologian and pastor R.C. Sproul. "Godliness born of obedience to Christ. Obedience unlocks the riches of the Christian experience. Prayer is what prompts and nurtures obedience, putting the heart into the proper 'frame of mind' to desire obedience."

We need the power of prayer for understanding, spiritual growth and unity with God. “The prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who offers it,” writes philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard in his book *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*.

How Should We Pray?

Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

Paul encourages us to pray for everything with a thankful heart. When we are open and present all to Him, He will protect us with His peace. This passage captures the heart and mind we should strive to have when we pray. When combined with 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, we see how we should be in continual prayer — that is, we should always connect with our Lord and Savior.

What if we can't find the “right” words when we pray? “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses,” Paul writes in Romans 8:26-27. “For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” As Christians, the Spirit intercedes on our behalf during prayer.

Some people tend to focus on less important aspects of prayer. Care should be taken for specifics such as whether or not we close our eyes, what time of day we pray, and the length and number of our prayers. These types of guidelines can be helpful or harmful.

A Life of Prayer

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Prayer should reflect the relationship we have with God. After all, it is beautiful to think that we have been given the ability to communicate with Him. In any moment and from any place, we can thank Him, ask for His strength, discern His will and become more like Christ. As James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

Ministry leaders in all settings should model Christian servant leadership to serve others and point them to Christ. The power of prayer can help leaders grow spiritually and inspire other people to communicate with God.

My prayer is that God uses what He has taught me to bless someone. Prayer is very important. Pray for your country, your country's leaders, your church, your church's leaders, your families, and your co-workers. Pray that God would teach us to pray and the importance of it. May we become prayer warriors like George Müller and not let a day go by where we have not communicated with God through prayer. It does not have to be a formal prayer; it can just be a conversation like you would have with your best friend. Cry out to Him. I am here to tell you; He will hear your voice and will answer your prayer in His perfect timing.