

“Prayer Can Change Your Life”

Text: John 14 - 16

August 5, 2007

Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church (www.pbpc.org)

Oakland, California

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Pray!

If I told you that you were going to have the opportunity to talk with Jesus Christ for fifteen minutes this afternoon and you could make one request of Him, what would your request be?

- If you could ask Him anything, would you ask for protection, a new job, or money? What would you ask for?

The disciples had this opportunity at one point. Luke 11 tells us they came to Jesus one day and they had a request. *“Lord, teach us to pray.”* Why, of all the things they could have asked Jesus, why did they ask that question?

I think it was because they saw the results of prayer in His life. They saw Him pray and they saw what happened. It’s interesting that the disciples watched Jesus preach the greatest sermons ever, they watched Him do miracles, heal the sick, raise the dead and all kinds of things but never once did they say, *“Lord, teach us to preach”* or *“Lord, teach us to do miracles”* or *“Lord, teach us to raise the dead.”* Instead they said, *“Teach us how to pray.”* They saw that was the life support system of Jesus Christ. They recognized that was the key to His life. There is nothing more vital to your Christian life than prayer.

Story of Tinker interviewing and challenging me over my prayer life!

We’re going to begin a new series this week called “Prayer Can Change Your Life.” Why? The average American knows more about Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura than they do about prayer. There are a lot of misconceptions about prayer, a lot of ignorance about how prayer works and why we pray and when to pray.

- Some people think prayer is a magical wand or first aid kit. They think prayer is a tug of war, trying to convince God to do something nice for you. For many, prayer is a religious duty; done out of guilt.
- In this series, we’re going to demolish some of these misconceptions. Thank you to Rick Warren for being a resource for this series.
- This morning, I want to talk to you about the **FOUR PURPOSES OF PRAYER.**

The Gospel of John, chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 are Jesus’ last words to His disciples, the last discussion that Jesus Christ shared with the twelve disciples before He was crucified on the cross. He is telling the people repeatedly, *“I’m going to die and then be resurrected and go back to heaven. I’m not going to be*

here physically but I'm going to be here spiritually. I'm going to put My Spirit in your lives – the Holy Spirit – and you can still talk to Me, even though I'm not here physically. You can talk to Me through prayer.” And He gives us four reasons for prayer.

1. Prayer is an act of dedication.

- A. It is an opportunity to express, one, our devotion to God and two, our dependence upon God. It is an act of dedicating ourselves, saying, “God, I need You.”
1. Our biggest problem in prayer is we don't feel a dependence upon God. We think we can do it ourselves. Ever since Adam and Eve, people have vastly overestimated their abilities. So we go on thinking, “I don't need to pray because this is something I just do.” The biggest problem in prayer is admitting we need God's help.
 2. The reason why a lot of people don't pray is because it costs. It costs honesty. You have to be honest with God. – “I admit I am inadequate. I am helpless. I need Your help with this situation.” As long as you think you're self-sufficient, prayer can have no meaning for you. You think you have it all together. Prayer is a declaration of dependence upon God
- B. In John 15:5, Jesus gives an illustration of a plant—*“I am like the vine and you Christians are like the branches. If you remain in me and me in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”*
1. Jesus is saying, “If you really put your dependence in Me, you can ask whatever you will and I will give it.” That's an unbelievable promise in prayer! It's like a branch and vine. The branch is connected to the vine or stem, if you cut the branch off, it loses all its strength, all its power. If you cut a Christian off from God, he withers.
 - Deep-sea divers and air hose illustration.
 2. Prayer is our support system. Until we realize we need God, we can't pray.

2. Prayer is an act of communication.

- A. If you have been a part of the Park Blvd. family for a while you know how important communication is. This is an issue that we talk about frequently. Most of our problems in life are communication problems; communication with your wife/husband/your business. Most of your problems in life come from poor communication.
1. How important is communication? Cuban Missile Crisis

illustration—Hot Line (red telephone). Communication is vital on the international scene. It is vital in the Christian life.

- B. You can't communicate with someone unless you know your relationship to them. What is your relationship to God? In John 15:15 Jesus says, *"I no longer call you servants because a servant doesn't know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything I've learned from My Father, I've made know unto you. You didn't choose Me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name."*
1. Jesus says the reasons you can ask anything in prayer is because we're friends. Isn't that amazing? God says, *"I don't treat you like servants, like slaves. I treat you as friends."* We seldom pray because we fail to recognize what a privilege it is to talk to God.
 2. In this very passage you are invited to converse with the Creator. God says, *"I am the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and you are My friend and I want to talk to you!"*
- C. Our problem is we have a hard time believing that God is really interested in us. We can't seem to conceive that the Creator of the entire universe is interested in car payments, house payments, buying new clothes for the kids for school, the guy at work who irritates you and the fact that you have back problems and everything else. When you finally discover how much God really loves you, prayer will no longer be a problem for you.
1. We love to talk to those who love us the most.
 - Marg & I on a daily basis.
- D. If you find prayer a duty or a routine that you don't look forward to going through, it means you don't understand how much God is in love with you and how much He's interested in everything that interests you. God says, *"We are friends. Talk to me."*

3. Prayer is an act of supplication.

- A. Supplication means request. Philippians 4:6 says, *"Don't worry about anything but in everything, with your prayers and your supplications, make your requests known to God and the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*
1. The result of your asking, your requests, will be peace of mind.
- B. John 16:23-24 teaches us that prayer is an act of supplication. It is the way we make requests. Jesus is talking and says, *"I tell you the truth, the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name."* And in vs. 24, *"Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete."*
1. Jesus says, *"You're going to be happy because you're going to ask and I'm going to answer and you'll be happy."*

- C. The fact of the matter is prayer is God's chosen method of meeting your needs. The Bible teaches that there are some things that God has promised to do only if we pray. Some people think, "God knows what I need so I don't need to ask. He'll just give it when I need it." That's not true. God has set it up in His plan that there are some things he will only do if You ask, if you pray.
1. When we read the New Testament about the New Testament Christians, they were unbelievable. They were happy, joyful, contagious, and enthusiastic about life. They had power in their lives. They saw miracles happening on a regular basis. You ask a typical New Testament Christian, "How's it going?" And they would say, "Business as usual. One miracle after another!" We say, "How come I don't have that kind of power? Why don't we have that same kind of power they had in the New Testament?" We don't ask.
- D. James says, "*You have not because you ask not.*" Over 20 times in the New Testament the Bible says, "Ask". Ask, seek, knock, and keep on asking.
1. C.H. Spurgeon, a great pastor in London, England, once said, "God never shuts His storehouses until you shut your mouth." You have to ask. Prayer is an act of supplication.
- E. What are you lacking right now in your life simply because you've never asked God for it? You've tried other things but you've never stopped to ask God for it. God is interested in our desires and needs.

4. Prayer is an act of cooperation.

- A. This is the most exciting thing about prayer. God has sovereignly chosen, in His plan, that we can cooperate in His plan by praying and helping see His work done there on earth. Prayer is God's program. Prayer is God saying, "*I have chosen to limit Myself to what I accomplish on earth simply by limiting Myself to the faith of my children on the earth. What they believe Me for, I will do.*" When we pray for other people, we are cooperating with God. We are teaming up with God to accomplish God's work in the world.
- B. Probably the most amazing verse in the Bible is John 14:12-13. Just before it, vs. 11, Jesus says, "*Believe Me when I say I am in the Father and the Father is in Me or at least believe the evidence of the miracles themselves. Vs. 12, I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.*"
1. Are any of you doing greater miracles than Jesus? I don't see myself doing greater things than Jesus. But He said it. Verses 13-14 make sense of what Jesus said, "*And I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may bring glory to the Son. You may ask Me for anything in my name and I will do it.*"

2. How is it possible to do greater miracles than Jesus?
Simple...through prayer. When we pray, we can do greater things than Jesus Christ did while He was here on earth. How? When Jesus was here on earth, He voluntarily limited Himself to be human and to do miracles within the time and place where He was.
 3. But prayer is not limited by time. The prayers of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago are still being answered today. Prayer is not limited by space. I could pray for somebody in Washington D.C. and it's like sending a missile directly to that person's heart and I never leave California. I can pray all over the world. Prayer is limitless in its power.
- F. Six times in this passage, Jesus says, *"If you ask, I will do..."*
Our part in cooperating with God's plan in the world is prayer. It's the most important thing we can do in our Christian life.

Prayer

Lord, I want our church to be a praying church.

I want our praying church to be an enthusiastic church where we see miracles that get people excited. We need some miracles in our church. The commitment to successfully become Purpose Driven in all we do will take a miracle of God. Some of us here today need personal miracles: marriage, health, job, finances. God, act according to prayer. We want to be a growing, praying church that sees God act.

Lord, I want our church to be a happy church where prayers are being answered, people are getting excited and praying becomes contagious.

We're going to do an experiment over the next couple of weeks. Think of one specific thing that you can pray for. What is uppermost on your mind right now? What is your greatest need? What is it you would like to ask God for? Sit still and let God talk to you. Let something pop into your mind. Dozens of you are going to have answered prayers in the next couple of weeks. We are going to believe God together to answer your request. This series can change your life. Pray for the request you've just thought of. Pray for next Sunday's service. Even pray about bringing somebody to next Sunday's service. We're going to talk about "the steps to answered prayer." Pray everyday this week for your request and for next Sunday's service.

Then, would you pray, **"Dear God, teach me how to pray. Jesus Christ, thank You for calling me Your friend. I want to have a friendship relationship with You. Help me to understand what that means. I want You to direct my life. Father, I want to see miracles happen in my life, things that can't be explained by my own effort. I want to see impossible situations made possible through prayer. Right now I ask You for..."** and then make your request to God right now. **"Help me to believe that You'll answer it."** Then

would you pray for our church, that it will grow, that it will develop spiritually. Would you pray for other people in this room who've made their requests and ask God to answer their requests.

Heavenly Father, I'm excited about what You're going to be able to do in our lives in the next coming weeks. I'm excited that many people for the first time are going to see answers to their prayers as we learn what it means to really pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.