

Humor about prayer:

A Direct Line....

In the 1963, President Kennedy had a hot-line installed in the Oval Office to head off the possibility of Nuclear disaster by means of a direct connection with the Kremlin. By simply picking up the phone, the leader of the other large SuperPower would pick up his immediately as well. It was a direct line. No call waiting, no busy signals, no answering machines....someone was always there to pick it up.

1. Prayer flies in the face of our too busy lives because it demands we stop and **seemingly do nothing**.
 - a. It is alien to our human nature.
 - i. We want to fix things....And when we pray, we ask God to fix things.
 - ii. We want to do things...And when we pray we wait on God to do things.
 - iii. We want control...And to pray is an admission that we are NOT in control!
 - b. And all of these things lead us to anxiety, because deep down inside, we know we are not in control!.
 - c. **Phil. 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** (Key Passage)
 - d. It is amazing how much anxiety we will live with before we will pray.
 - e. Sometimes we prefer to worry because we feel as if we are “emotionally involved” rather than turning it over to God in prayer which would seem to imply that we aren’t as involved in the situation.
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2. **What is Prayer?**
 - a. Talking with God –one good friend to another.
 - b. *“Prayer is surrender to God – surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw a boat hook out from a boat and catch a hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.”* (Stanley Jones)
 - c. Prayer is Listening to God - The prayer of Samuel “Speak Lord, your servant is listening”
- **If prayer is that easy, why do we find it so hard to pray?**
3. Prayerlessness – a prayerless life is filled with hopelessness, anxiety and despair.
 - a. It is hard for God to release His power into your life when *YOU put your hands into your pockets and say, “I can handle it on my own.”*
 - i.
 - ii. Polled:

- iii. We are prayerless because ...
 - 1. time
 - 2. priorities
 - 3. discipline
 - 4. commitment
 - 5. distraction (got little kids?)
 - 6. Wrong beliefs about prayer
 - 7. Guilt
 - 8. Sin
 - 9. Unsure on how to pray
 - 10. Doubt God's power or willingness to answer
 - 11. Unanswered prayers in the past
- iv. Prayerless people cut themselves off from God's prevailing power.
- v. They feel defeated, overwhelmed, overrun, beaten down, pushed around.
 - 1. It is amazing how many of us are willing to settle for lives like that!
- b. **No one has to live like that!**

4. Because God is ready to hear you!

- a. The scriptures are filled with passages telling us that our almighty, omnipotent God is ready, willing and able to answer the prayers of His followers.”
- b. God's power can change circumstances and relationships.
- c. God's power can help us face daily struggles
- d. God's power can heal psychological and physical problems.
- e. God's power can remove marriage obstructions.
- f. God's power can meet financial needs.
- g. God's power through prayer can encourage the discouraged.

5. **Skeptics say that answered prayers are only coincidences, but isn't amazing how many coincidences occur when one begins to pray?**

- a. *George Mueller's answers to prayer...who he was and what he did.....*
 of Mr. Mueller's life, among the gifts (for the feeding of the orphans) recorded were 7, 203 loaves of bread; 5,222 buns; 20 boxes of soap; 9 tons of coal; 26 haunches of venison; 112 rabbits; 312 pheasants; 5 bags of oatmeal; 26 cases of oranges; 5 boxes of dates and 4,013 pounds of meat along with hundreds of other items. Additionally he had prayed for the financial needs of the orphan houses and had during the course of his lifetime received over 2 1/2 million dollars--always making his requests known only to God. All of these gifts were needed to help care for and feed the thousands of orphans under his careful wing

- i. Mr. Mueller testified that in his lifetime 50,000 specific prayers were answered. Years before he died, about the middle of his career, he affirmed that up to that time 5000 of his definite prayers had been answered on the day of asking.
- ii. He made it a habit to keep a notebook with 2-page entries. On one page he gave the petition and the date, and on the opposite page he entered the date of the answer.
- iii. In this manner he was able to keep record of definite petitions, and their specific answers. He recommended this form to believers who desired specific results to their prayers. Thus there is no guesswork as to when God answers prayers.
- iv. "...I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lie down and when I rise up. And the answers are always coming. Thousands and tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right and for the glory of God, I go on praying for it until the answer comes. George Mueller never gives up!"
- v. "Let not Satan deceive you, " writes Mr. Mueller during those faith-wrenching days, "in making you think you could not have the same faith, but that is only for persons situated as I am. When I lose such a thing as a key, I ask the Lord to direct me to it, and I look for an answer to my prayer; when a person with whom I have an appointment does not come...I ask the Lord to be pleased to hasten him to me, and I look for an answer...Thus in all my temporal and spiritual concerns I pray to the Lord and expect an answer to my request; and may not you do the same dear believing reader?"
- vi. the Mueller's set off for the United States in August 1877 aboard the *Sardian*...Off Newfoundland the weather turned cold and the ship's progress was seriously retarded by fog. The captain had been on the bridge for 24 hours when something happened which was to revolutionize his life. George Mueller appeared on the bridge.
 1. "Captain, I have come to tell you I must be in Quebec by Saturday afternoon."
 2. "It is impossible," said the captain.
 3. "Very well, " said Mueller, "if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way--I have never broken an engagement for 52 years. Let us go down into the chart-room and pray."
 4. The Captain wondered which lunatic asylum Mueller had come from.
 5. "Mr. Mueller," he said, "do you know how dense this fog is?"
 6. "No, my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life."
 7. Mueller then knelt down and prayed simply. When he had finished the captain was about to pray, but Mueller put his hand on his shoulder, and told him not to.

8. "First, you do not believe He will' and second, I believe He has, and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it."
 9. The captain looked at Mueller in amazement.
 10. "Captain," he continued, I have known my Lord for 52 years, and there has never been a single day that I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, captain, and open the door, and you will find the fog is gone."
 11. The captain walked across to the door and opened it. The fog had lifted. It was the captain himself, who later told the story of this incident, and who was subsequently described by a well known evangelist as "one of the most devoted men I ever knew."
- b. If you are willing to invite God to involve himself into your daily challenges, you will experience His prevailing power in..
 - i. Your home, school, relationships, parents, circumstances... wherever it is most needed.
 - ii.

6. Fallacies about prayer:

- a. God is busy keeping the cosmos in order, He doesn't want to hear about my little problems.
- b. God would think I was selfish if I prayed for my own needs. If I really love Him I'll put myself in last place.
- c. I can do it myself.
- d. I'm not good enough for God to answer my prayers.
- e. I asked Him for something a few weeks ago, I don't want to overstep my bounds.
- f. Only weaklings pray. I will figure a way out of this.
- g. THESE ARE LIES FROM THE PIT OF HELL!
- h. Why do we think that God is stingy with His blessings?
 - i. The bible teaches over and over again that He takes great joy in bestowing his blessings and power *upon His children*.
 - ii. Dt. 28:2-6, 12 says, "*You will experience all these blessings if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in your towns and in the country. You will be blessed with many children and productive fields. You will be blessed with fertile herds and flocks. You will be blessed with baskets overflowing with fruit, and with kneading bowls filled with bread. You will be blessed wherever you go, both in coming and in going. The LORD will send rain at the proper time from his rich treasury in the heavens to bless all the work you do. You will lend to many nations, but you will never need to borrow from them.*"
- i. God is our magic genie? This extreme is also wrong. We act as if God is someone that we call to ask for a milkshake, dinner, breakfast, whatever our heart desires or our stomach will tolerate. We have put God as some sort of divine bellhop.

7. **We are His children** if we have received Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives...
- i. Eph 1:5 “predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.”
 - ii. Gal 4:7 “and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”
 - iii. Rom 8:16-17 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”
- b. Generous Fathers**
- i. I had a generous father – I honestly believe God used him to help me understand how generous He is. Not all of us have had such great parental examples. But the truth is, God is far more generous than any earthly parent.
 - ii. “Which of you if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”(Mt 7:9-11)
 1. Can you imagine sitting at a great Thanksgiving feast with our family and your father tossing you a rock saying, “hey, chew on this”?
 - iii. Have you ever felt, after being blessed by God, when the other shoe will drop...as if for some reason, that you should feel guilty about your good fortune, blessing, or that God was about to take it all away?
 1. That is a human reaction and a human view of God, not a divine revelation of who God is and what He is like.
 2. We have to learn how much He loves us
 3. Instead of expecting a reaction like
 - a. I’m busy at the office, I don’t want to hear about your lost bike or unfair teacher.
 - b. Don’t bother me with your personal needs, I want to take care of everyone but you. If you really love me you will survive on bread and water.
 - c. Sure I’m rich, but there’s no reason I should give you anything.
 4. Good fathers don’t talk like that. And God certainly is better than the best of all fathers!
8. **Most of us *admit* that we don’t really pray that often about our deepest needs.**
- a. Maybe because we DOUBT God has the ability or desire to change things. *Our actions betray our beliefs.*
 - b. Yet the bible says something completely different. God is so interested in our lives and our world that He INTRUDES, He EXPLODES into our lives

- i. By sending His Son incarnate into the world...
 - 1. He raises the dead
 - 2. He heals the sick
 - 3. He heals marriages
 - 4. He turns hearts toward Himself.
- ii. Our God is not like the Moslems.
 - 1. Our God is involved in our lives.
 - 2. Our God desires to be an active Part of our lives if we let Him.
 - 3. Our God wants us to be intimate with Him.
 - 4. Our God wants to be a Father to us, if we will let Him.
 - 5. Our God LOVES us.
- c. The reason our prayers are weak is that our faith (our trust and knowledge of God) is weak.
 - i. **We must do battle against our own unbelief.**
 - 1. Expecting our prayer life to change without some effort on our part is foolishness.
 - ii. Dig into the scriptures:
 - 1. *(faith comes through hearing and hearing from the Word of God)*
 - 2. In a few weeks we will be talking about Faith some more.
 - 3. Look at the promises of God.
 - a. You can strengthen your faith by reading some of the promises of God.
 - b. Jesus Person Pocket Promise Book. A promise for every need you have.
 - iii. Look at what He has done in the past in your own life.
 - 1. Remember David mustered his faith before fighting Goliath by responding
 - iv. We think we need great faith in God, but what we need is faith in a Great God!
 - 1. Reviewing His promises will remind us of His faithfulness
 - 2. And will reveal His goodness and Greatness to us over and over again!
 - 3. Stay away from the word of God and your faith and prayer life will stink!
- d. **We have what seems like Impossible circumstances....Can God....?**
 - i. The whole church began to pray when Peter was arrested by Herod. And yet, God sent an angel to open the cell door and remove the chains in the middle of the night and he walked home in amazement. And the people who were praying were equally amazed at the answer to their prayers.
 - ii. God is Able –
 - 1. to save three from a fiery furnace
 - 2. to save Daniel from a den of lions
 - 3. to give a child to a 90 year old woman
 - 4. to give his followers all they need

5. to save completely all who come to God through Jesus

iii. Mountain Moving prayer

1. Faith comes from **looking at God not at the mountain** (or obstacle).

*Don't look at your inadequacy (it will lead you to more prayerlessness)...
look at God's adequacy*

- a. Our obstacles will consume our attention and our strength.
- b. Looking at your obstacle will keep you from looking at God.
- c. If your obstacle is close to you, if you look at it, you will be able to see nothing else!
- d. If you look at God, you will see nothing else!
- e. You will see His ability!

2. God gives us faith as we walk with Him.

- a. Sometimes we have to take a step of faith (like the priests carrying the ark into the Jordan river) and get our feet wet to see God work.
- b. I believe **so that** I can see. As opposed to those who don't believe what they cannot see.
- c. David didn't just see a big giant, he saw a bigger God.
- d. ***We don't have to spend a lot of time describing the mountain to God. We need to focus our attention on the mountain mover, His glory, power and faithfulness. Then walk by faith and watch Him move the barrier.***

- iv. *A prayer warrior is a person who believes that God is ABLE, to do anything and change any circumstance – and refuses to doubt God.*

9. Why are some prayers left unanswered?

- a. **God hears every prayer and does answer every one.**

- i. If the request is wrong, God says no
- ii. If the timing is wrong, God says slow.
- iii. If you are wrong, God says grow
- iv. If the request is right, the timing is right, and you are right, then God says "GO"

- b. **Inappropriate requests:**

- i. God loves us too much to say yes to our wrong requests.
- ii. Oh God, change the other person. (wives, husbands, children, employees about bosses) Our motive is generally "I don't want to face up to my shortcomings so change this person to accommodate my personal needs"
- iii. Motive check - If God granted this request would it...
 1. bring glory to God?
 2. advance His kingdom?
 3. help people?

4. help me grow spiritually?

iv. Prayer can purify us. "Help me present requests in line with Your Will"

c. The answer of "slow" to most of us is not much better than a "no"

i. Instant society.

ii. Parents say "not yet" to your kids and watch the reaction.

iii. We are the same when God says it to us.

iv. Sometimes God delays so that...

1. our faith is purified. Waiting purifies a heart.

2. we might modify our requests to align with God's will

a. I don't like "if its your will God...do this or that"

i. The only time Jesus prayed that was in submission of His will to the Father's

ii. It is possible for us to know the Father's will concerning prayer needs and to pray that way.

iii. We do not need to be praying as if we "hope" it is God's will.

3. to grow our character. i.e. endurance, patience, submission. They are fruits of trust and waiting.

4. Often the wait is worth it...God does exceedingly and abundantly above and beyond all of our expectations in such a way we are glad later that he did not answer our initial request so quickly.

d. A no may mean something is wrong in our lives. We have sin in our lives.

i. Imagine your mower is broke...but your neighbor said you could us his, but you never returned his tools last month, they are rusting in your shed. Don't you think you ought to clear up the offense before you ask for the mower?

ii.

10. What motivates you to pray?

a. Answered prayer! One miracle makes it easier to pray for the next!

b. What discourages you from prayer? Unanswered prayer. But it isn't God's fault, it is a call for us to change! And change is something that only Babies like!

11. What keeps us from getting our prayers answered?

a. Prayerlessness. You cannot get an answer to something you haven't asked for.

i. "You have not because you ask not" (James 4:2)

ii. In Korea, 10000 people gather from 8pm Friday evening until 7am Saturday morning to pray that the church would experience God. The church grew from 100,000 members to 450,000. Why? People prayed.

iii. In heaven, there is a room that will surprise us all when we see it. The room has large boxes neatly packaged with a lovely ribbon on top with your name on it. A

label is affixed to the box saying, “Never delivered to Earth because never requested from Earth.”

- iv. If you bring a thimble to God, He will fill it. If you bring a bucket to God, He will fill it. If you bring a 500 gallon barrel to God, He will fill that.
- v. Asking Him is vital to receiving. He is waiting on you to call.
 - 1. You have a direct line if you have come through Jesus.
 - 2. No party line.
 - 3. No need to call collect.
 - 4. No need to be worried about a busy signal.
 - 5. You have the hot line and He is ready and willing to pick it up.
 - 6. You have his private number.
 - 7. And someone is always home.
- b. Sin – Unconfessed sin.
 - i. Cheating God (Mal. 3:5) – if the fuel you put into your car has water or dirt in it, your vehicle will not run right. Sin, even a little, will contaminate your prayers and keep you from achieving a healthy prayer life.
- c. Broken relationships –
 - i. (Mt 5:23-24) “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar and first Go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.”
 - ii. 1 Peter 3:7 “Husbands...be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker (more delicate) partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”
- d. Selfishness –
 - i. “When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” (Jas 4:3)
 - ii. **We pray “keep me from trial or tragedy or pain or anything that would really make me grow and become a man of God. Just give me a convenient, happy, satisfying, problem free life.”**
- e. Uncaring Attitudes –
 - i. “Prov. 21:13 “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.”
- f. Inadequate faith –
 - i. Is God Able?

12. Slowing Down to Pray

- a. Cram more in, start earlier, work later, take work home, phone calls in the car, laptop in the airport terminal. Busy, busy, busy. And if you think you are busy, consider the life of a single parent.

- b. Where does the still small voice fit in? When do we slow down enough that we don't just collapse into a sleeping ball when we try to kneel and pray?
- c. Rest- **It is an old and ironic habit of human beings to run faster when we have lost our way.**
- d. Sharpening my ax (rest)
 - i. One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did." "But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was **sharpening my ax** when I sat down to rest."
- e. So it is with prayer.
 - i. Is 40:29-31 *"He gives strength to the weary, And to {him who} lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up {with} wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary"*.
- f. Imagine a marriage where both partners are so busy they never slow down to spend time with one another? They pass each other in the hall and the driveway. They may not be involved in a vital, refreshing, authentic relationship. As our marriages need our work and attention to slow down and nurture and spend time with each other, so also does our relationship with God.
 - i. Slow down by journaling. It can be so easy to RACE through a quiet time of bible reading that we never digest the spiritual food we have just consumed.
 1. Ordering Your Private World – suggests opening your notebook to a new page each day and limited yourself to one page. Write down "yesterday" (or if in the evening, write today's date) and list a description of your disappointments, accomplishments, where you saw God work or where you ignored Him.
 2. Your rpms of your life will slow down as you journal. Now write out your prayers in another section of your journal. Then kneel down and pray that prayer to God.
 3. Now ask God to speak to you. Begin to learn how to listen. And you have to come to a near stop to hear Him. (topic for another day).

STORY OF RESTAURANT – MAN WAITING FOR HIS DATE...AGAIN!

Closing:

13. A sermon on prayer is always certain to create guilt on the parts of the hearers, because the truth is, few of us pray as much as we could.
 - a. What we want to accomplish here today is that God would put a desire in your heart to spend more time with Him.
 - b. To not take Him for granted any longer
 - c. To comprehend that He desires to meet your needs
 - d. And to know that He wants very badly to spend time with you.
 - e. Won't you turn to Him today and seek Him in a deeper way than ever before?
14. Is Jesus Christ a part of your life already? If not, your prayers will be nothing more than pleas to God. You must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to have the promise of answered prayer.
 - a. Do you know the only prayer that God answers from a non-believer is that prayer to receive Christ?
 - b. Won't you ask God to become your savior today and to enable you to have a relationship with God that allows you to be a child of His?
15. Maybe Christ is a part of your life, but you have been like that young lady, standing him up every night because you are too tired, too busy, or preoccupied. Won't you change that today?

"It is not enough to begin to pray," he advises us, "nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must patiently, believingly continue in prayer, until we obtain an answer; and further, we have not only to continue in prayer unto the end, but we have also to believe that God does hear us and will answer our prayers. Most frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained, and in not expecting the blessing."