

Ingredients for a Powerful Prayer

© Tim Dubberly, July 9, 2000

Text: Luke 11:5-13

Introduction:

Many times people pray because they know they ought too. However, their prayers go amiss and unanswered. The reason is that their prayer didn't have the right ingredients. Many will try to pray a certain amount of time and not pray over a certain thing or things. Many will try to pray out of habit and not out of love.

Jesus had just taught the disciples how to pray in verses 1-4. He now wanted them to know that prayer needs more than an outline to make it powerful.

g George Reindrop, in his book *No Common Task*, tells how a nurse once taught a man to pray; and, in doing so, changed his whole life from being a dull, disgruntled, and dispirited person into a man of joy. Much of the nurse's work was done with her hands, and she used her hands as a scheme of prayer. Each finger stood for someone. Her thumb was the nearest to her, and it reminded her to pray for those who were closest to her. The second finger was used for pointing and it stood for all her teachers, in school and in the hospital. The third finger was the tallest and it stood for the leaders in every sphere of life. The fourth finger was the weakest, as every pianist knows, and it stood for those who were in trouble and pain. The little finger was the smallest and the least important and to the nurse it stood for herself.

Hewitt (418)

Today as we face many trials and temptation in our life, we realize more and more our need for prayer. However many people who pray abandon their prayers when they don't see an immediate answer.

In our text today we see some key "ingredients" that make prayer powerful. If you want to get God's attention, send up a prayer that He will not ignore.

I. Prayer must be motivated.

- A. We must feel the need in order to really desire an answer to our prayer. This man had a friend who had come needing food and he had none, so he went to another friend at midnight and asked for food.

Don't pray haphazardly, you may get something you really don't want. The man who went hunting bear, fell got hurt and prayed for God to make the bear that had found him a Christian. So the bear chased the man to the edge of a cliff where he couldn't get away and then bowed on his knees and gave thanks to God for this meal he was about to enjoy.
Hewitt (420)

- B. We must use spiritual transference. We need to do what Paul the Apostle said, pray as if you were the one in need. We need to take that person place spiritually and pray as if it were our own need.
- C. We are not only motivated by the need we feel or the taking it as our own need, but we are also motivated by God's word that has declared many, many times that He answers prayer. We have an assurance that He will answer prayer.

"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever that ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (Mk 11:24

The Word of God reveals men of faith whom had their prayers answered.

Moses prayed and Israel was saved from destruction.

Hannah prayed and God gave her a son.

Solomon prayed and the presence of God fell in the sanctuary.

Elijah prayed and fire fell from heaven.

Hezekiah prayed and God gave him fifteen more years to live.

Peter prayed and God healed a lame man.

Paul prayed and demon spirits came out and many were healed.

The church prayed and peter was delivered from prison.

And when you pray, believing God will do, get ready to receive from God.

J.W. Buckalew prayed in a jail cell in Gadsden Al. In 1910, after being falsely arrested. Drunken policemen burned his tent to the ground while he and Br. Cartwright watched. They prayed all night long and sang. A crowd began to gather by morning singing "Jesus passed this way before." Being released they stood on the ashes of the tent and preached to an acre of hungry souls. Thus a church was born.

II. Prayer must be persistent.

- A. We must not take silence as an answer. God will answer if we persist in asking. He does not grow weary when we continue to ask because it shows Him our faith; we believe He can do what we are asking Him to do. We must not think that we must be persistent to persuade God to answer, it is for our benefit.
- B. In Jesus' teaching here, we find that He wants us to continue to ask, seek, and knock until we receive our answer. He told his disciples that thought this friend would not rise and give even though he was a friend. However, because of the persistence of the man at the door this friend got up and supplied the need.
- C. Jesus promised that persistence would pay off. He said, "for everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

g In an article entitled "Scientists Still Measuring Gravity," I read a statement which was a real shocker. It said, "When a magnet picks up a paper clip, it defeats the gravitational pull of the entire earth." We all know this is true, yet when the power of a little magnet is put this way we are impressed.

Just think--a tiny magnet out-pulling the earth itself. The earth is of course tremendous in size and weight. Yet a magnet will remove a paper clip from the surface of this huge force.

When I read this, I thought of what Jesus said about how faith can move mountains. "...I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20 NIV).

All of us come upon mountains in our lives that need to be moved. There are obstructions in the way of serving God. There are mountains of physical handicaps and illnesses. There are people inside and outside the church who fight the gospel. Worst of all there are mountains of sin, which stand in our way. But Christ said that by faith the size of a mustard seed a believer can command the mountain to depart.

Of course the power is not in faith but in God, who gives the faith. And yet there is no doubt that God chooses to use His believing people to accomplish His purpose in the world. Sometimes "little" people, with little reputation, education or political clout, through faith and persistence turn the course of history. A woman named Rahab, simply by believing God's messengers, saved her whole family, and was honored to be in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Heb. 11:31).

Don't be discouraged by big problems or obstacles. Be like the magnet. Trust God and you can be a powerful force for good.

--John Thornbury

III. Prayer must be confident.

- A. We are confident that God can do what He said. We are motivated by faith and that faith gives us confidence. After we have received answers to our prayers, we then stand as much if not more on experience than we do faith. We know God can do it.

g When Rear Admiral Du Pont explained to his superior officer, Farragut, why he had failed to take his ships into Charleston Harbor, Farragut heard him through to the end and then said, "Admiral, there is one explanation which you haven't given."

"What is that?" asked Du Pont.

"This: you didn't believe that you could do it."

That lack of confidence has been the secret of failures not only in the field of war but also in this greater warfare of the soul.

May CD

- B. We are confident because we know the nature of God. We know, just like Jesus taught, that our heavenly Father will not give us a stone when we are asking for bread or a scorpion when asking for an egg or a serpent when we need a fish. Even faulty parents give their children what they need and how much more will a loving Father give us what we need.
- C. We are confident because of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost helps us to pray. And if our Father would give us the best gift like the Holy Ghost then we can be assured that there is no gift He will not give us.

Conclusion:

Someone once said, "One might estimate the weight of the world, tell the size of the celestial city, count the stars of heaven, measure the speed of lightening, and tell the time of the rising and the setting of the sun, but you cannot estimate prayer-power. Prayer is as vast as God because He is behind it. Prayer is as mighty as God because He has committed Himself to answer it. Leonard Ravenhill.

Hewitt (424)

When we pray, we need to use these “ingredients” that will help us grow spiritually and have confidence in our prayers. When we pray we are saying “God I can’t do this on my own!” Put it in His hands and leave it there.

g Little Johnnie was saying his bedtime prayers a week before his birthday. In a loud voice he listed all the things he wanted. "Do not pray so loudly," his mother instructed. "The Lord is not hard of hearing!"

"Maybe He isn't," admitted Johnnie, "but Grandma is."

A lot of our prayers may be like Johnnie's. We ask God, yet make other provisions. There is something good about the axiom, "Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you." But, in one sense, it reveals our spirit of independence. It conveys the notion: "I will have to do it all myself, anyway!"

We must admit the essentiality of dialogue with God. And our requests must come from righteous lips, for "he hears the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29). Prayers are like skyhooks--if we get enough fastened in up there we will have something to hang on to when the world is jerked out from under us.

Yes! Pray believing! Then God will answer your prayer. He may answer, "No!" He may answer, "Later!" He may answer, "Maybe!" Or he may answer, "Yes!" But let us understand one universal truth. The Father in heaven is eager to hear and answer in positive ways those of us who are his faithful children.

"Almighty Father, accept our prayers of faith as confessions of our utter dependence upon your love and generous mercy. In Jesus' name. Amen."

May CD

References

May, Steve (1999) 1001 Contemporary Illustrations. Raliegh, North Carolina: Heaven Word Inc.

Hewitt, James S. (1988) Illustrations Unlimited. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers