

The Incredible Transforming Power of Prayer!

Discovering the practical and
positive power of prayer!

Ps Roger Spackman
Te Atatu Baptist Church
September 2007

Let me read to you some ‘prayer letters’ written to God by some kids in Sunday School:

Dear GOD, Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones to replace them, why don’t you just keep the ones you have? - Jane

Dear GOD, Is it true my father won’t get in to heaven if he uses his bowling words in the house? - Anita

Dear GOD, At school we read that Thomas Edison made light. But in Sunday school they said you did it. So I bet he stole your idea. - Sincerely, Donna

Dear GOD, I think about you sometimes *even when I’m not praying*. - Elliott

Don’t you love the innocence of children, especially when it comes to prayer.

There’s no doubting, confusion or questions – just simple straight forward childlike faith!

So - how and when did we make prayer so complicated and loose our childlike faith and trust in God?

I mean, what if each of us here today were to write down our *prayer letters* to God?

I wonder *if we were honest*, if they might sound a little bit like the guy in this short video we’re about to watch:

Slide #2 – Inspirational Video – Prayer – honest doubt and questions.WMV

Video available for viewing from:

www.net.tatuzaplist.com

So – what now God?

I'm tired of failing.

I cannot live like this anymore!

And this prayer thing, I really don't know how to do it.

Are You even listening!

I mean, I pray for financial help – and things aren't getting better.

I pray for guidance and making decisions, but decisions aren't getting easier.

I pray for my relationships to improve, but there're just getting worse.

Won't You talk to me!

I can't hear ya!

I can't smell ya!

I can't touch You, I can't feel You.

Would You just please talk to me.

What do You want me to do, and I'll do it!

Do you want me to read more?

You want me to pray more – is that what You want?

Fine!

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven...

Thy kingdom come??? Ha.

I don't even know what that means!

What – a kingdom of justice, of equality, of freedom – what!?

A kingdom of French fries and sour cream – of cucumbers!!!

Of what!

Because all I know is this eternal rotten world!

Where is this kingdom?

I mean, is this all there is?

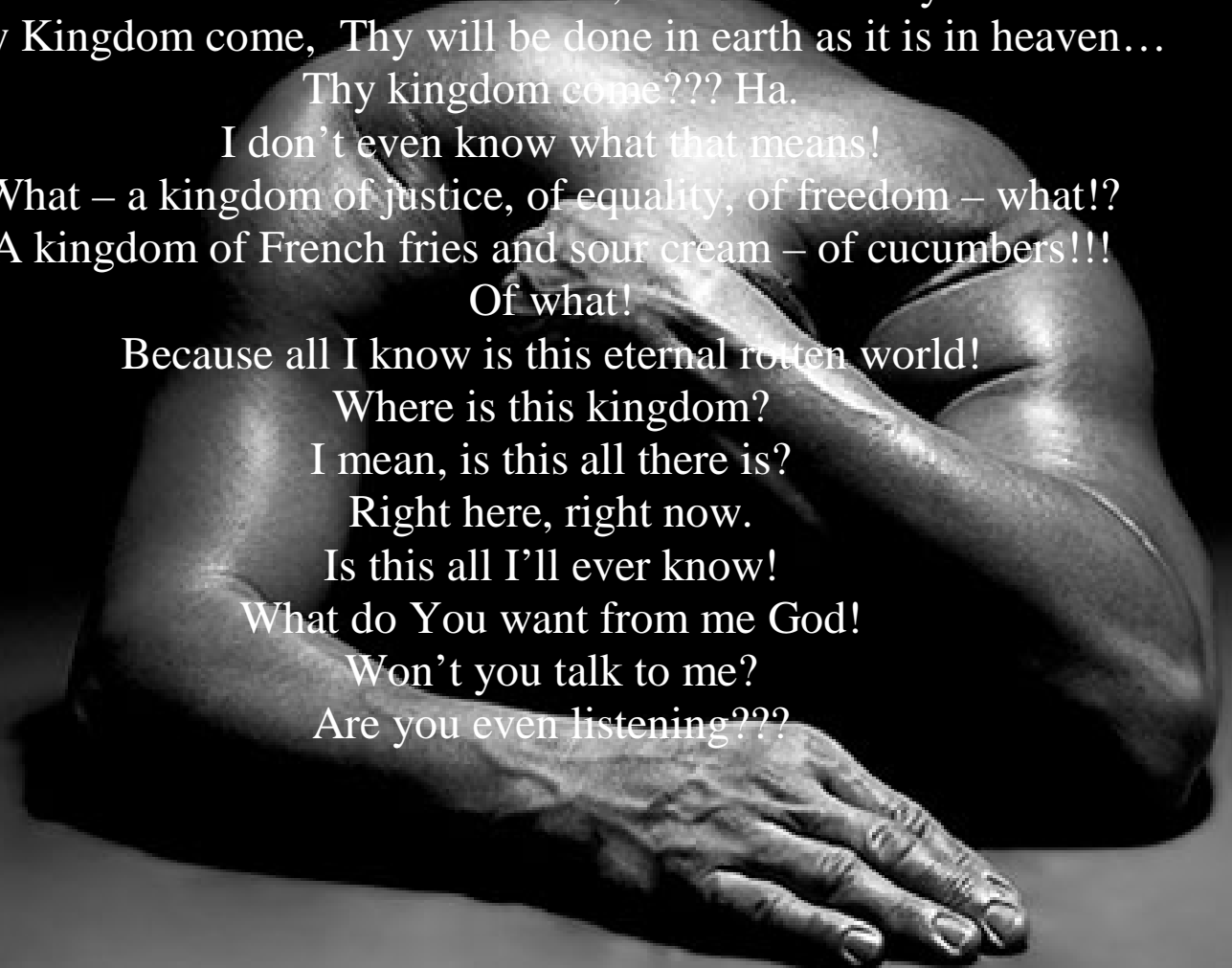
Right here, right now.

Is this all I'll ever know!

What do You want from me God!

Won't you talk to me?

Are you even listening???



You know the interesting thing about the video?

By directing his questions and doubts about prayer to God, this guy is actually praying!

Real, deep in the guts, honest and searching prayers to God the Father!

Prayers that God loves to answer!

Because God loves it when we strip our churchianity away from our Christianity!

When we discover what prayer is *really* all about!

Prayers built upon rock solid faith that is based upon the facts, evidence and foundations of God's Holy Word – The Bible!
(Hebrews 11:1)

You need to understand that it isn't your responsibility to create or 'conjure up' more faith, or *pray harder* or *believe more!*

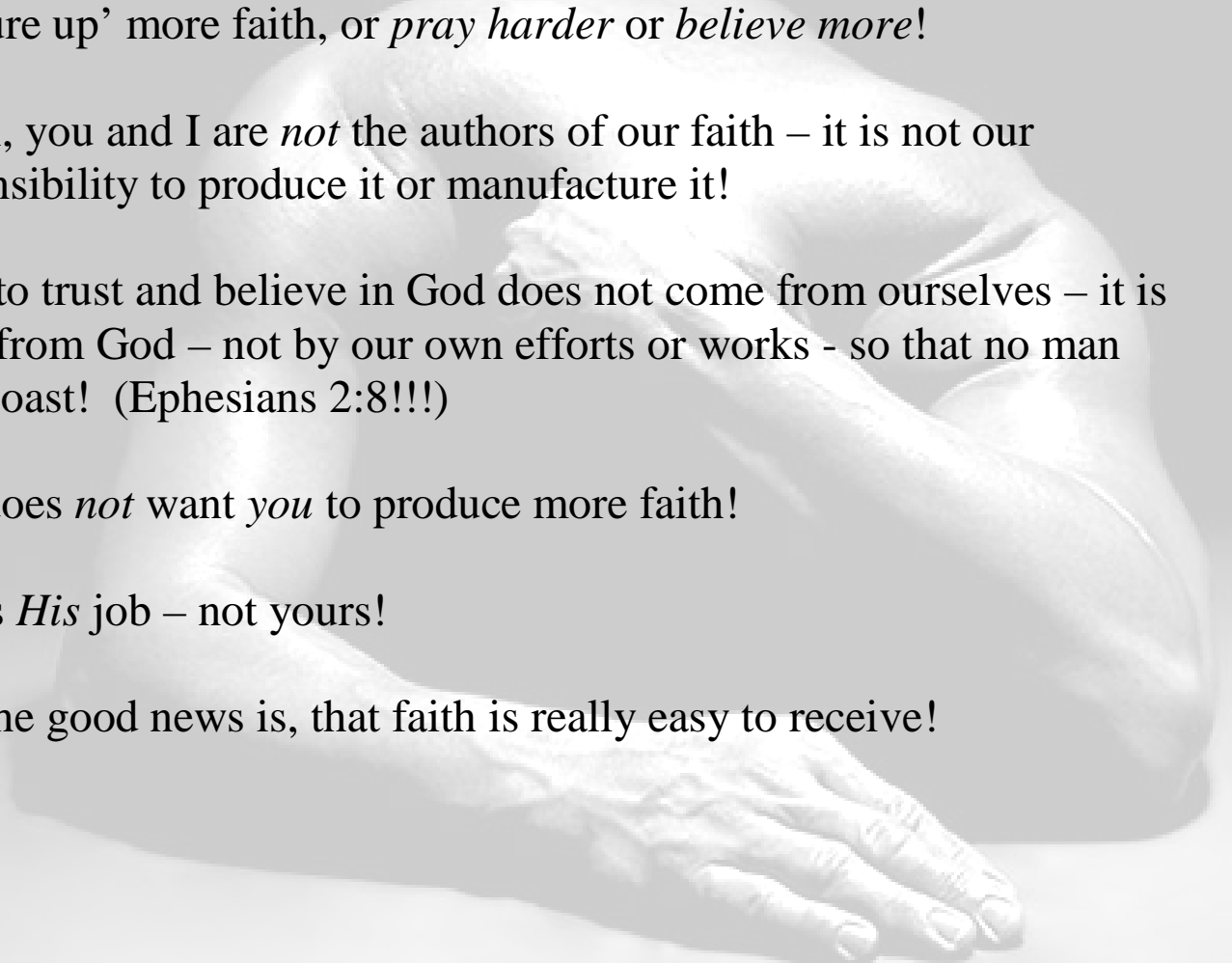
Listen, you and I are *not* the authors of our faith – it is not our responsibility to produce it or manufacture it!

Faith to trust and believe in God does not come from ourselves – it is a gift from God – not by our own efforts or works - so that no man may boast! (Ephesians 2:8!!!)

God does *not* want *you* to produce more faith!

That's *His* job – not yours!

And the good news is, that faith is really easy to receive!



In fact, God will do everything He can today, to pour more faith into your heart and life!

As we reminded ourselves last week – according to Romans 10:17 –

Faith comes through hearing the Word of the Lord!

So – my goal today is to work with God’s Spirit to increase the level of our faith by *learning together* from the Word of God on the topic of prayer,

...so that you can leave here today with more faith and desire to pray – pressed down, shaken together and over flowing!

And while it is true that there is no power in our prayers – as if they were magic chants!

And while it is true that the only power we receive - comes from Father to whom we pray.

We must also acknowledge, that there are *benefits, rewards* and *blessings* that come –

- not just from the Father when we pray - but simply from the faithful Christian who bows their knee in honest, heartfelt and genuine prayer.

Slide # 3 – Heading below

**The Incredible Transforming
Power
and benefits
of Prayer!**

In fact, let's *lift the curtain* on Prayer this morning!

Have you ever been to a play, and seen the curtains close,

...and on re-opening, even just a few moments later, the stage looks different, new props are in place, and wondered, how on earth did they do that?

And then by accident somebody bumps the curtain and you can see between the gap - people moving the props about, and actors taking positions;

...and the mystery is solved, now you know how the stage got changed!

Well today - as we turn to God's Word – we are going to 'draw back the curtain' just a little, and catch a glimpse of what really happens when we pray.

Together, we will briefly answer three important areas:

Slide # 4 – Three points below – over photo

1. How do our prayer get to Heaven?
2. What happens when we pray?
3. The practical benefits of praying!



To answer these questions, we are going to use a healthy blend of references both in the Old Testament and the New.

Slide # 5 – Heading below – with photo

How do our prayers get to Heaven?

Lets first look at the example of Daniel the prophet – in Daniel chapter 10.

Turn with me there, and keep your finger in the page.

Daniel is a man of prayer, we see him praying 3 times per day,



- he prayed in his room,
- he prayed in the lions den,
- he prayed for wisdom,
- he prayed for guidance,
- he prayed for the sins of his nation,

But here in chapter 10 - we see him pray - because he is *troubled!*

He is *concerned*, so for 21 days he fasted, and he got some friends to pray with him.

May I recommend prayer and fasting.

Indeed, when Debbie and I first met and started dating, one of the first things we did was spend a week in prayer and fasting to seek God as to whether we should pursue marriage.

Guess what the answer was? :-)

And so it was with the prophet Daniel, as he was praying and fasting with his friends for God to stir His people up to return to the Promised Land.

Let's pull the curtain back a little and see what happened next!

Daniel 10:4-6¹

4 Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

Slide # 6 – Picture below



5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen (the clothes of the High Priest), whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz!

6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

GLORY TO GOD!

Think for a second what if something like this would happen at our prayer meetings?

¹ Some commentators believe the entire vision was of – and from an angel. However, the description is very similar to when John on Patmos saw Jesus. Therefore, other commentators believe this was an appearance of Christ. But why then did Christ need the help of an Archangel? It actually makes sense that this was an appearance – first of Christ, and secondly of a ministering angel.

Daniel and his friends had been praying and fasting, and suddenly Daniel has his eyes opened to see into the spiritual realm!

First Question: *Who could this be standing before him?*

Remember John the Apostle on the island Patmos?

He had a similar experience.

Revelation 1:12-14

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Both Daniel and John saw the glory of the Lord Jesus in their midst!

So - my second question: Did Jesus Christ just decide to do a *quick visit*, or what exactly happened here?

There is another place in the Word that will answer this very important question: Elisha and his servant in 2 Kings chapter 6

The King of Syria wanted Elisha killed, and he send his army, who entered Dothan at night, and when the servant went out the next

morning, to his shock they were surrounded by the enemy forces,

Let's read together from 2 Kings 6:14-18

14 Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Slide # 7 – Picture below

Lord, I pray open his eyes!

Not that he was physically blind, but like us - his fleshly eyes could not penetrate through the curtain, could not see into the spiritual.

2 Corinthians 4:18

...we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things

which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are spiritual and eternal.



Do you get it, Jesus was there all the time, even while Daniel and his friends were praying on day one!

He is our midst tonight, he is next to a saint when he goes on his knees to pray to God, he is in the midst where 2 or 3 meet in His name!
(Matthew 18:20)

Yes He is here today!

Glory to God!

Jesus is Omnipresent!

He is both here in our midst, and interceding on our behalf before the Father in heaven! (Romans 8:34)

Next time you pray and it feels as if your prayer can go no higher than the ceiling in your room.

The next time Satan lies to you and tells you, you are alone, tells you, you are defeated, tells you, you are a loser, tells you - you might as well give up!

KNOW this! The King of the Kings, the Lord supreme is next to you!

Is with you, His holy Spirit lives in you, precious child of God!

Heb 13

5 For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear..."

What a blessed place - when we see the unseen, and start to look at life and all its challenges and temptations with our spiritual eyes!

What happens when we pray? (behind the scenes)

Daniel has just seen the glory of the One he prays to, and is now about to learn more about what happens *when* we pray

Daniel 10:10-14²

10 Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.

11 And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you! " While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

12 Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

A *second* being was now send to help Daniel - touches Daniel and helps him to his feet.

² Some commentators believe the entire vision was of – and from an angel. However, the description is very similar to when John on Patmos saw Jesus. Therefore, other commentators believe this was an appearance of Christ. But why then did Christ need the help of an Archangel? It actually makes sense that this was an appearance – first of Christ, and secondly of a ministering angel.

Daniel stood trembling and shaking.

Then the Angel revealed to him some things about prayer!

Surely this has been given also to us to show *us* what happens when *we* pray. (Romans 15:4)

Not only is the King of Kings there, but also helping angels

Hebrews 1:14

14 Are they not spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Angels are here to help God to do His work, when we pray!

Now verse

Do not fear; for you have heard the voice of the Lord speaking to you on the first day that you set yourself before your God, your words were heard; and you have seen that I have come because of your words.

Firstly:

Our prayers are heard: IMMEDIATELY!

and I have come because of your words

Secondly:

When was the answer sent: IMMEDIATELY!

We can be assured today!

Your prayer has already been heard at the Throne, and an answer has been sent!

Thirdly:

Delays are

Verse 13: But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days.

You see there are not only good angels, but also fallen angels, trying to oppose and delay God's work!

Ephesians 6:12

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Allow me to briefly talk about Spiritual Warfare.

Spiritual warfare is not yelling at (praying to) the devil and commanding him to leave.

Spiritual warfare is not 'binding and loosing'.

In fact if you read this verse in its context, it is talking about church discipline, not the demonic realm! (Matthew 18:15)

Spiritual warfare is destroying speculations and vain imaginations (2nd Cor. 10:5) that the devil has developed within the hearts and minds of God's children. (Eph 6:12)

Slide # 9 – Scripture and picture

For we challenge and change false understandings and stronghold within people's minds that towers high in defiance



of the truth of God, and we carry off every thought as if into slavery into subjection to Christ.

You can yell and shout at the inroads the devil has over a community, nation or country – but unless you actually get out there and do the ‘leg work’ of confronting the people, policies or programs that the enemy is working through – *not much is going to change!*

Just like if you cast out a demon of addiction or anger from a person, but unless the reason it entered in the first place is resolved through persuasion and re-learning of God’s ways, the demon will return with ten more of his mates! (Matt 12:43-45)

Spiritual warfare is NOT praying or speaking to the devil – it *is* speaking to the person who has *accepted* the false teaching and lies of the devil, and replacing those lies – with arguments and persuasions of truth from the Word of God.

It is being transformed by the renewing of the mind! (Rom. 12:1-2)

Let me give you a real practical example of this that the Lord revealed to me several years ago.

When you listen and believe a lie in your mind or spirit, such as the following:

You’re are ugly!

You’re stupid!

You’ll never succeed!

God isn’t listening to you!

God doesn’t love you!

You’re a failure!

Where do you think these word or whispers come from?

Think about it.

If they came from yourself, then why do they begin with a YOU!!!

Slide # 10 – Sentence below and photo

Recognize the whispers and lies of the enemy, and replace them with the truth!

You must do as Christ did, and confront the enemy - and yourself – *which is often our greatest enemy* – and speak, understand and believe the truth!

And here's the wonderful thing about all of this:

Just as the
the ability
into the ea
minds of p
does the S
ministering angels!

Fourthly:
God answer will never be too late!

and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.

God will muster all the force needed to respond to your prayers!

Next time you pray,

- know you are involved in Heavenly warfare,



- know that God hears you, and answers immediately,
- know that you should remain in prayer, and keep faith,
- and know that God's answer will never be too late!

That is why prayer is so vitally important, keep on praying, keep the faith!

1 Timothy 2:1-2

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Slide # 11 – Heading and photo below

The Practical Benefits of Praying!

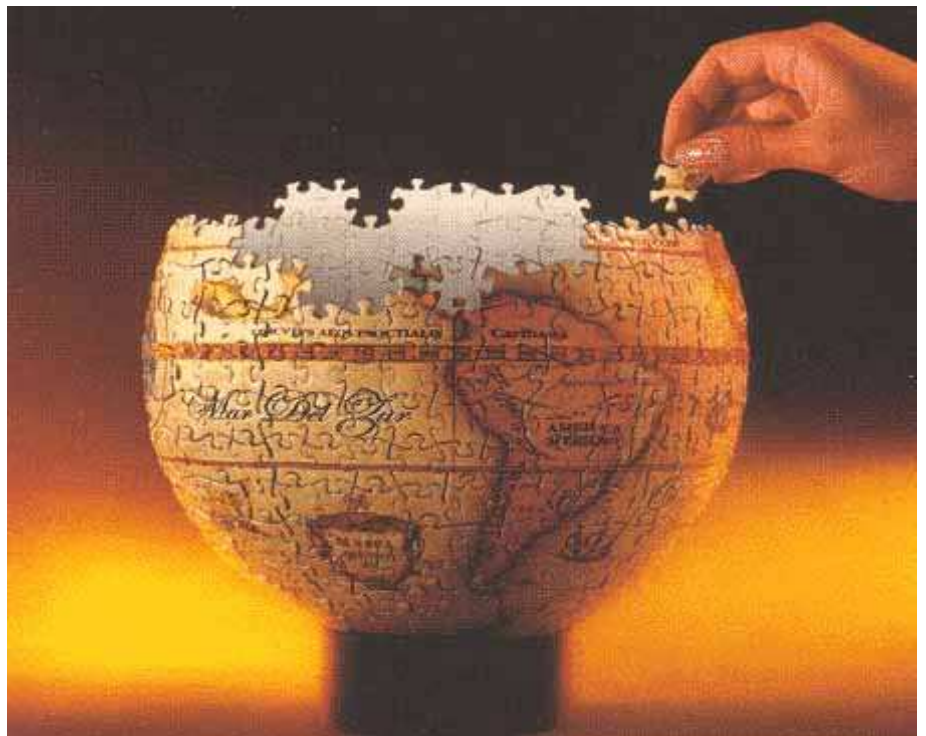
Daniel 10

15 When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.

16 And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke,

saying to him who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength.

17 For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me."



Here we can see that the prayer actually has a *terrible* physical effect on Daniel, he had no strength and he was overcome with sorrow (the Afrikaans Bible says, he was *overcome with cramps!*)

It serves as a reminder to us, that intercessory prayer has a high cost on us, let me tell you – that anybody that says that intercession is not hard work, has never worked hard at intercessory prayer!

It *is* hard work, sometimes we don't feel like praying, and there are times that it is absolute agony to pray!

But through interceding for others, Daniel received some practical benefits for himself as well.

Daniel 10

18 Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me.

19 And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be *encouraged!*" So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

Daniel is strengthened, and the wonderful thing about this example, is that we are told exactly *how* he was strengthened!

O man – *greatly beloved!* Fear not!

Daniel was strengthened with the words and awareness that he was deeply loved by the Father!

The Lord spoke to him, and with the power of His Word - imparted peace, strength and courage!

That is what prayer does to the one that prays!

It brings peace to the soul

It brings strength to the body

And it brings courage to the Spirit!

The whole man, body, soul and spirit have been ministered to!

Slide # 12 – Scripture below

Philippians 4

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

PEACE: that wonderful sense that *all is right, even though nothing has changed!*

Peace: the same Daniel had!

It gives strength to the body, and it gives courage to the will, it restores the Spirit.

Even if the news is bad, the redundancy final, the exam failed or the fear reality.

Peace is the wonderful sense that *all is right, even though nothing has changed.*

And it comes through praying a prayer at the start of each day that says;



‘Lord, I commit this day into your loving hands.
Strengthen me to follow you in all I do today –
then I can have the confidence and peace that
nothing that happens to me today takes You (or
me) by surprise!’

And you are ready to face life again, ready to pray again, ready to
battle in the spiritual realm again!

That is what prayer does!

The Bible clearly shows the results of prayer throughout its entirety.

Abraham prayed for a son.
God gave him Isaac

The children of Israel prayed for deliverance from slavery in Egypt.
God sent Moses

Moses prayed for deliverance from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.
God allowed the children of Israel to cross and drowned the Egyptian
army.

Hannah prayed for a child.
God gave her Samuel.

David asked for help many times.
God provided every time!

Solomon asked for wisdom.
God gave it to him beyond measure.

Elijah asked for a show of God power against the pagan prophets on Mt. Carmel.

God sent a fire so intense it not only burned up the offerings, it also dried up thousands of gallons of water poured out to drench the offerings.

Jabez asked for success in all he did.

God granted his request.

Ezra asked for safe return to the Promised Land for God people in Babylonian captivity.

God not only granted the request, He provided the funding for the return from treasury of pagan peoples.

Zacharias and Elizabeth prayed for a child.

God blessed them with John the Baptist.

The people of Israel prayed for a Messiah.

God sent His one and only Son.

Jesus prayed and people were healed and raised from the dead.

A dramatic storm was stopped dead in its tracks.

5 loaves and 2 fish were turned into enough food to feed over 5,000 people.

The disciples prayed in an upper room. God sent the Holy Spirit.



Slide # 14 – Jesus Hug
Picture

The apostles and other early church leaders prayed and people were healed, churches were strengthened, and the people of Christ found strength to face the daily toils of life.

And for you and me today and tomorrow, the peace, strength and courage to face each day can come, and will come from the Father, as we kneel before Him in humble prayer and adoration.

Allow me to leave you with a bit of an 'after dinner mint' a short inspirational video to encourage you to always seek God first, to trust in Him, and not in your prayers!

Slide #15 – Inspirational Video – Playhouse Prayer.WMV

Video available for viewing from:

www.TeAtatuBaptist.com

A young girl laid in her bed, and the Saturday morning sun came up.
Since it was a little to early to begin her adventurous day.

She looked at the ceiling and decided to pray.

God – I REALLY want a playhouse!

A little house of my own that I can play in – all day.

You know, with a roof and windows.

Right in my back yard!

I will even buy fancy curtains and paint the walls.

Please God – when I look out the back window,

Please let there be a beautiful playhouse for me.

The pleading with God went on for about ten minutes,

Until she finally fell back asleep.

A couple of hours later – as soon as her eyes opened,

She remembered her insistent prayer for a playhouse

And jumped to look out the window.

Before looking out into the back yard,

She squeezed her eyes shut one more time – and said,

“Please – let it be there!”

It took a moment for her eyes to adjust to the brightness of the morning, before she searched the yard for her new playhouse.

She looked in every corner – even into the woods at the back of the yard.

Nothing!

The yard looked exactly the same as it always did.

Why didn't He answer?

At one point, she found herself in the empty yard – despite the rain that had started to fall.

‘God – why didn't you give me the house I wanted?’

She looked up to the grey sky for an answer, just in time to notice a beautiful red Cardinal which landed on a little tree on the edge of the yard.

The brilliant color captivated her and led her closer to investigate, leaving her in a corner of the yard she had never explored before.

She noticed that this small tree was one of eight that formed a circle, and as she stepped past the tree into the center, she realized that the ground was perfectly dry – despite the rain that was falling.

Her eyes slowly rose up, and she noticed that the branches of the trees formed a perfect roof. The leaves created beautiful green walls with just enough windows and the blooms that grew on the branches – they were by far more beautiful than any curtains she could have hung.

This playhouse was so much better than the one she'd pictured. So much more than she could ever have imagined.

God had answered her, just not the way she had expected.

Come into my presence,
talk to me, share your concerns.
I'm interested in you.
I'm your Father,
I can help!
All power in heaven and earth is mine.

