

Spirit Prayer

On Sunday, we continued our new sermon series called “Ghost Stories” in which we’re studying mystical Scriptures that tell us about the “Holy Ghost,” aka, the “Holy Spirit.” On Sunday, we explored a specific kind of prayer that is enabled by the Holy Spirit.

1. Warm up question: Jeff told about a “childish” prayer he prayed as a kid, asking God to miraculously change the color of his toy truck while he slept, as a sign of God’s presence. When you were a kid, did you ever ask God for something that now seems a little silly?
2. Prayer is powerful. On Sunday, we heard about a woman named Cindy Riches, whose prayer awakened her friend Debbie out of a coma and healed her of cancer. Tell us about a time when you have witnessed (or personally experienced) a powerful answer to prayer.
3. Prayer is powerful, but figuring out how it works is also confusing. So let’s share our thoughts and pool our wisdom. How would you answer the following questions:
 - a. The Bible says, “Ask and you will receive.” (Mt. 7:7.) But often we ask and don’t receive. Why?
 - b. Some people say we should only ask for what God already wants us to have. But if God already wants us to have something, why do we have to ask for it? If God wants it to happen, isn’t it going to happen regardless whether we pray?
 - c. Is it possible that our prayers can persuade God to do something God wasn’t otherwise going to do? And if not, why even pray?
4. Questions like the foregoing challenge us to think deeply about how prayer works. So on Sunday Jeff offered his own three-part theory of how prayer works – not because his theory is perfect, but to give us something concrete to react to, as we develop our own understanding. Take a look at the theory, which is summarized on p. 3, then respond to the questions found there.
5. Read Daniel 10:1-14. What makes sense to you in this passage? What doesn’t? What do you think we’re supposed to learn about prayer from this passage?
6. St. Augustine said, “Pray as if everything depends on God; act as if everything depends on you.” Is that good advice? Why or why not?
7. Now that we’ve thought deeply about prayer and how it might work, we’re ready to explore a special kind of prayer powered by the Holy Spirit. Read Romans 8:18-28.
 - a. This passage begins by reminding us of all the frustration, futility, and groaning we experience in this earthly realm that often leaves us confused about what to

pray for, but then offers us a powerful antidote to that confusion in verse 26. What do you think verse 26 means? How would you explain it in your own words?

8. The basic idea in verse 26 seems to be that, when we simply don't know the right words to pray, the Holy Spirit is willing to come along side us and step into the gap. The Spirit can take our silence or speechlessness, or our groanings, or even give us a "spirit language" (praying in tongues), and turn it into the best-possible, most-powerful, most well-directed prayer imaginable.
 - a. Do you feel you've ever experienced Spirit Prayer? If so, what form did it take for you? Describe your experience.
 - b. Jeff described his experience when he was first given the ability to pray in tongues. Have you experienced this kind of Spirit Prayer before? What questions or thoughts do you have about it?
 - c. Jeff also encouraged us to experiment with nonverbal prayer. For example, when you find yourself unsure how to pray about a very important situation, you could simply make a sound that springs from the inner yearnings of your heart expressing what you're feeling, trusting the Holy Spirit to translate that sound into a divinely inspired prayer. Have you ever experienced that kind of Spirit Prayer before? What questions or thoughts do you have about it?
 - d. Tell us about a situation in your life right now that you feel could really benefit from intentional Spirit Prayer.

A Theory Of Prayer

How it works and why it sometimes doesn't

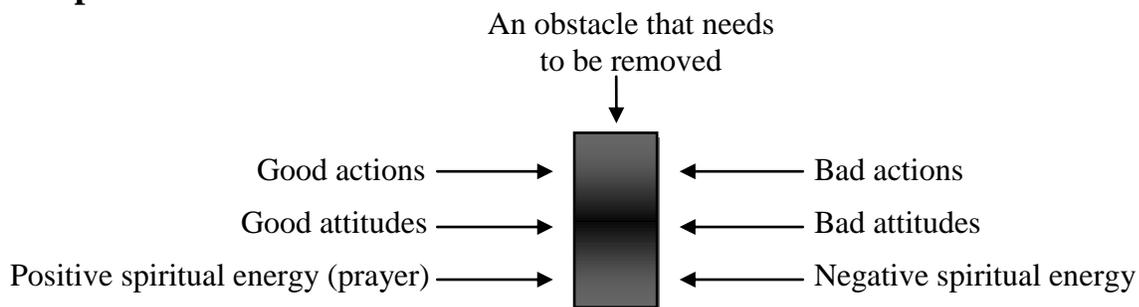
1. **God is love (I Jn. 4:8).**
Love motivated God to want to share the gift of life by creating other living beings. God could have created us as robot, programmed to do only what God wanted. But then we wouldn't have been real. Being real requires "free will," i.e., the ability to make genuine choices that have real consequences.

2. **So, out of love, God decided to give us free will.**
That means God has placed us in a reality where God voluntarily limits God's own power, so as not to dictate outcomes. God doesn't go around changing things and fixing things willy-nilly. Otherwise we'd be robots.

3. **For free will to be real, prayer cannot be an absolute power.**
Otherwise our prayers (and God's prayers) would be able to destroy the free will of others. Instead, it may be best to think of prayer as something that releases positive spiritual power into situation, influencing the outcome along with other factors like: (a) my attitude; (b) the attitude of others; (c) my actions, (d) the actions of others; and (e) negative spiritual energy (bad prayers). The outcome of any given situation will be determined by the complex interplay of these factors.

Conclusion: Prayer can powerfully influence, but not dictate, outcomes. The more positive prayer energy we put into a situation, the more likely there will be a good outcome.

Graphic Illustration:



The more positive spiritual energy (prayer) infused into the situation, the more likely the obstacle will be removed! So flood it with prayer!

Questions:

What do you think about this theory of prayer?
What do you like? What do you dislike?
What would you change?