

Hope Trending

[3] The Steeped Fingers—No More Fear of Alone

- Dana Tierney: “Over the years, I’ve come to feel I’m missing out. My friends and relatives who rely on God—the real believers, not just the churchgoers—have an expansiveness of spirit. When they walk along a stream, they don’t just see water falling over rocks; the sight fills them with ecstasy. They see a realm of hope beyond this world. I just see a babbling brook. I don’t get the message. . . . Luke’s prayers can stretch to infinity and beyond, but I am limited to one: Help thou mine unbelief.” (www.nytimes.com/2004/01/11/magazine/lives-coveting-luke-s-faith.html)
- Jeremiah 29:13-14—“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you.”
- Anne Lamott: “Prayer means that, in some unique way, we believe we’re invited into a relationship with someone who hears us when we speak in silence. . . . Prayer is taking a chance that against all odds and past history, we are loved and chosen, and do not have to get it together before we show up. The opposite may be true: We may not be able to get it together until after we show up in such miserable shape.” (*Help Thanks Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* 4-6)
- Anne Lamott: “My belief is that when you’re telling the truth, you’re close to God. If you say to God, ‘I am exhausted and depressed beyond words, and I don’t like You at all right now, and I recoil from most people who believe in You,’ that might be the most honest thing you’ve ever said. If you told me you had said to God, ‘It is all hopeless, and I don’t have a clue if You exist, but I could use a hand,’ it would almost bring tears to my eyes, tears of pride in you, for the courage it takes to get real—really real. It would make me want to sit next to you at the dinner table.” (Ibid 6-7)
- Paul Miller: “Trying to dissect how prayer works is like using a magnifying glass to try to figure out why a woman is beautiful.” “Something mysterious happens in the hidden contours of life when we pray. If we try to figure out the mystery, it will elude us. The mystery is real. . . . If you turn God into an object, he has a way of disappearing. We do the same thing when a spouse or a friend consistently treats us like an object. We pull back.” (*A Praying Life* 128, 126)

HOPE

- C. S. Lewis: “Worry him with the haunting suspicion that the practice [of prayer] is absurd and can have no objective result. Don’t forget to use the ‘Heads I win, tails you lose’ argument. If the thing he prays for doesn’t happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don’t work; if it does happen, he will, of course, be able to see some of the physical causes which led up to it, and ‘therefore it would have happened anyway,’ and thus granted prayer becomes just as good a proof as a denied one that prayers are ineffective.” (*Screwtape Letters* 126-127)
- C. S. Lewis: “This impossibility of empirical proof is a spiritual necessity. A man who knew empirically that an event had been caused by his prayer would feel like a magician. His head would turn and his heart would be corrupted. The Christian is not to ask whether this or that event happened because of a prayer. He is rather to believe that all events without exception are answers to prayer in the sense that whether they are grantings or refusals the prayers of all concerned and their needs have all been taken into account. All prayers are heard, though not all prayers are granted.” (In Philip Yancey’s *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* 104)
- Dear God—if You really exist, please open the eyes of my mind and my heart to “see” You—whatever that means, in whatever way You choose to reveal Yourself to me. If the Maker of all things loves and wants me, then I would like to be in contact with Him—Amen.
- *Steps to Christ*: “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.” (93)

Questions:

- ___Why was the atheist mother, Dana Tierney, troubled by her young son’s praying?
- ___What is the promise God is making in Jeremiah 29:13-14?
- ___How can the definition of prayer—“the opening of the heart to God as to a friend”—simplify the act of praying?
- ___Would you like to experiment with prayer for the next few days—even if you’re not sure God even exists? What would an experimental prayer like that feel like?