

DCF:

How many different ways can you communicate with someone else? In today’s world, we have a broad choice of communication options. We can write a letter or an e-mail. We can fax a message, send a telegraph or just text or tweet, snapchat or twitter. But perhaps the most convenient and personal way to talk to someone who isn’t right next to you is by phone. What a joy to hear the voice of a loved one, or a friend even though they are hundreds of miles away! What a joy to hear your phone ring and know it’s for you.

God says the same thing about His gift of prayer. He loves to hear from us. He loves to listen to our voices. Don’t think that God is too busy to listen to our prayers. He isn’t! **“PRAYER - IT’S FOR YOU!”** Jesus encourages us to pray with faith, for others and with confidence.

Part One: Pray with faith

What is prayer? Prayer is our half of a conversation with God. Prayer is talking to God and asking Him things. In order to pray, to talk with God, we have to make the right connection. We must make sure that we’re dialing the right being. The centurion in our story for today did just that. He was a believer who knew the Old Testament prophecies. As Luke tells us, **“he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”** (v. 5) He certainly wouldn’t have done that if he didn’t believe in what the Jewish religion taught. He also, I’m sure, had heard of the miracles that Jesus had done. He had heard, I’m sure, the teachings of our Lord. By the power of Christ’s message, he had come to believe that Jesus was the fulfillment of all those Old Testament prophecies. Why, he even called Jesus “Lord” which indicates that he knew exactly who Jesus was.

He believed. How important faith is when it comes to communicating with our Lord! If we don’t pray with faith, if we don’t pray believing in the one true God, why, then we’re not connecting with God in our conversation. So many people today just address their prayers to “the guy upstairs.” So many people believe that we all pray to the same God, and are communicating with the same being. Not so! Oh, God knows what everyone is saying, but not everyone is connecting with Him. Not everyone is having a conversation with the Lord. Faith makes the connection.

Now, just what kind of faith are we talking about here? The kind of faith that connects us to the one true God in our prayers is a faith that believes God is triune. A connecting faith believes that God is one, yet three Persons. A connecting faith believes that God is triune, even if we can’t understand or comprehend how this can be. A connecting faith also is one that believes God’s Word completely. If a person says they believe in God and yet rejects portions of the Bible, that kind of faith is not a true, connecting faith. His prayers are simply not heard.

A true faith also expects to receive an answer. God had promised that He will answer all the prayers of His believers, and He does. A true faith knows that God has the power to do absolutely anything. A true faith knows that God has answered millions of prayers in the past. He won’t stop answering true prayers now. He won’t stop answering our prayers, either. Prayer is for all believers.

Part Two: Pray for others

But what do we pray for? Oh, it’s real easy to pray for ourselves, isn’t it? Our needs and wants are first on our minds, and so often we simply pray for those things. We pray for our forgiveness. We ask God for money, trips, meaningful relationships, healing of diseases, and all sorts of things that benefit ourselves. Now, there’s nothing wrong in asking God for such things. He commands us to ask Him for all the things we have.

But we are not to stop there. We need to be reminded and taught to pray for others. The centurion that we meet today shows us just what God wants us to do. I’m sure he prayed for himself, asking God for forgiveness and help in all the areas of his life. But he went a step further, and prayed for others. He asked Jesus, who is God, to heal his servant. He valued this servant, and wanted him blessed by God’s power.

What a moving testimony to the love of God in this man’s heart! “Love your neighbor as yourself” is the second greatest commandment in our Lord’s holy Law. This man’s will was God’s will. He cared for his servant, and wanted him to experience the power of Jesus in his life. Sure, it would be a great benefit for the centurion, but an even greater benefit for the servant.

Do we want others blessed by God's power? Do we want people we know to be blessed with the forgiveness of sins, a stronger faith, a joy and enthusiasm in praising the Lord? Sure we do! Others are loved by God just as we are loved by God. Do we want others to be blessed physically by God? Do we want them to recover from surgery, have a good job, have a wonderful marriage and healthy children? Sure we do!

So, pray! Ask Jesus to give these things to people that we know. Just like the centurion, we are to pray for others. We are to pray for those in need. That's easy enough to do, and easily understood. But how about praying for people that seem to be living a pretty good life? Are we to pray for them, too? Sure! Everyone can use a stronger faith. Everyone can use the Lord's protection from accidents and tragedies. Everyone can use more kindness and love for their neighbors. There's not a single person on the face of this earth that we can't pray for. May we take a lesson from the centurion in our story for today and pray for others.

As we pray with faith and for others, we can pray with confidence.

Part Three: Pray with confidence

The centurion certainly did. He was supremely confident that Jesus would answer. ***"But say the word, and my servant will be healed."*** He believed Jesus had the power. He believed Jesus knew what He was doing. He believed that Jesus could do what he asked him to do. And, he left the answer to his prayer up to Jesus.

Jesus answered this man's prayer, his request, with a yes. He did heal this man's servant. However, Jesus didn't heal this man because of the many good things he had done for the Jewish religion. He healed this man because of the centurion's faith. This centurion had confidence that Jesus could answer his prayer, and Jesus did answer it with a yes.

Be assured that the Lord will answer all our prayers as well. He has promised to answer all true prayers. He has reassured us that He will answer them according to His will. He knows what's best for us. He knows what's best for His kingdom. He will not give us something that could hurt our spiritual health, for He loves us dearly and wants us in heaven with Him for eternity.

A story is told of a young boy who asked God for a pony one night. The next day he got up out of bed, raced downstairs, out into the back yard, and didn't find the pony he asked the Lord for. His conclusion? God didn't answer his prayer.

Are we like that young boy, at times? Do we think that the Lord isn't answering our prayers when we don't get what we want? Well, He is answering! We just don't always like His answers! Sometimes God answers our prayers with a yes, just like He answered the centurion's prayer. Sometimes He answers with a no, because He knows it's not good for us. Sometimes, He says yes, but not quite yet. Pray with confidence, my friends. The Lord does answer every single prayer we send His way.

The last thing that I would like to say about prayer today is this - pray with persistence. Keep on asking the Lord for the things that we need. We are to pray continually in our lives. We are to integrate this thing called prayer in to every waking moment of our lives. Oh, I don't mean we are to spend our days on our knees, ignoring the job that the Lord has blessed us with. No, I mean we are to pray, to communicate with God as if we were talking to a friend. We are to live our life in a constant awareness that He is with us, and let Him know what we are feeling or thinking about. And if there is something that is burdening our hearts, keep on praying for it! Pray persistently. The Lord may not answer our prayers today. He may not answer them tomorrow. But He will answer all of them!

I know a man who grew up in a Christian home. He enlisted into the military, married a lady who was not a Christian, and stopped going to church. This pained his parents tremendously, for they loved him and wanted him to be in heaven with them. For 30 years this man's parents prayed for him. Finally, the Lord answered their prayers. One year before his mother died, her son started reading the Word again. He started praising God in church on Sundays. He brought his wife along, and she became a believer in the Lord as well. It took 30 years of prayer, but I know you'll agree it was worth it. Pray persistently. The Lord will answer all our prayers!

If we think of our prayers as phone calls to our Lord, we know that He will always pick up the receiver. He never leaves the answering machine on. He is never too busy to talk to us. ***"PRAYER - IT'S FOR YOU!"*** May we pray with faith, for others and with confidence.

AMEN