

DOES PRAYING REALLY DO ANY GOOD?

Luke 18:1-5.

August 2, 2006 Sunday p.m.

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Wouldn't it be nice if there were some magic words which would automatically obligate God to do what we ask...sort of an "abracadabra" for God.
- B. The way some people look at prayer could be considered like magic words. For example.
 1. Some think if you are just good enough God will answer.
 2. Some...if you light enough candles.
 3. Some...if you have enough faith. (compare John 14:13-14 with I John 5:14).
- C. So why pray? If we can't sway God, what's the use?
 1. Its like we are in one of those cars at the amusement park that runs along a metal rail. There is a steering wheel, but if you turn it nothing happens.
 2. But the Bible tells us that God does answer prayers.
 3. Illustration of college student's letter.

It's like the college student who wrote his parents. "Dear folks, I feel miserable because I have to keep writing for money. I feel ashamed and unhappy to have to ask for another hundred dollars; every cell in my body rebels. I beg on bended knee that you forgive me. Your son, Marvin.

P.S. I felt so terrible I ran after the mailman who picked this up in the mailbox at the corner. I wanted to take this letter and burn it. I prayed that I could get it back, but it was too late."

A few days later he received a letter from his father. It said, "Your prayers were answered. Your letter never came!"
 4. So what can we learn about prayer that might help us?

I. FIRST, NOT EVERY PRAYER IS ANSWERED THE WAY WE WANT.

- A. David's prayer wasn't not answered-2 Samuel 12:16.
- B. Paul's-2 Corinthians 12:9.
- C. Our prayers aren't always answered the way we want.
- D. Yes, what, Jesus' prayers weren't either-Luke 22:42.

II. SECOND, THE PURPOSE OF PRAYING MAY BE TO CHANGE US, NOT GOD.

- A. One day, three men were hiking and they unexpectedly came upon a large raging, violent river. They needed to get to the other side, but had no idea of how to do so. The first man prayed saying, "Please God, give me the strength to cross this river." Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs, and he was able to swim across the river in about two hours, after almost drowning a couple of times.

Seeing this, the second man prayed to God, saying, "Please God, give me the strength...and the tools to cross this river." Poof! God gave him a rowboat and he was able to row across the river in about an hour, after almost capsizing.

The third man had seen how this worked out for the other two, so he also prayed saying, "Please God, give me the strength and the tools... and the intelligence... to cross this river." And poof! God turned him into a woman. She looked at the map, hiked upstream a couple of hundred yards, and then walked across the bridge.
- B. Instead of thinking prayer changes God, it may be more accurate to say it changes us instead.
 1. Jesus told his disciples a story about prayer-Luke 18:1-5.
 2. Although the judge in this parable drastically changed his attitude toward this woman, this is not the point of the story. Jesus isn't saying God is like this judge. It's just the opposite.

III. THIRD, PRAYER HELPS US TRUST GOD MORE.

- A. Since we cannot manipulate God, we must trust him to do what's right even if its not what we want him to do-Genesis 18:25.

- B. When we trust God with our prayers keep two things in mind.
1. Sometimes God gives us what we really need , not what we ask for or want.
 2. Sometimes, though, God gives us something better than we ask for.
Once when the power went off at the elementary school, the cook couldn't serve a hot meal in the cafeteria. She had to feed the children something, so at the last minute she whipped up great stacks of peanut-butter and jelly sandwiches.
As one little boy filled his plate, he said, "It's about time. At last -- a home cooked meal!".

CONCLUSION.

- A. There are no magic words we can use to make God answer our prayers.
- B. There are some truths about prayer that can help us, though.
 1. God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want help to.
 2. The purpose of prayer is to change us not God.
 3. We must learn to trust God to do what's right.