

Life Changing Prayers

Patrick DeFoe, Associate Pastor, Richmond Hill Baptist Church, June 5, 2011

What if we communicated with God as often as we use our cell phone or Black Berry or other electronic devices? What guidance and insight might we achieve? What would our lives be like with His input on a regular basis throughout the days/weeks/months and years? Today I hope to introduce you to prayers that well may be the beginning of a whole new level of communication with God.

In our Connect Class teachers' meeting a couple of weeks ago Zachary Hillman made the comment: *"We don't preach for preaching's sake, we preach for life change."* That quote is very powerful and is very apropos for today's message; Life Changing Prayers. I took the liberty to change it a bit to say *"We don't pray for prayings sake, we pray for life change."* My message today is about life change – changed through specific prayers to God.

In *1 John* scripture tells us *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him."* **(1 John 5:14-15)**. The prayers we will review today are directly from the Bible and I am confident are in God's will for every person. Therefore, we can have confidence that God will honor them if we pray in all sincerity.

On May 15th, Zach also spoke to us about "A True Disciple". In his message he talked us through the concept that becoming a true disciple of the Lord requires hard work. We must train spiritually just as an athlete trains physically. Our spiritual training and success doesn't come by our own effort. It comes from the grace, blessings and power of God manifested by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We're all in training but is it giving us the results we want?

On May 22nd Thomas Verboom talked to us about Revelation 3:14-22 where God (through John) told the church at Laodicea that they were *"So, because you are lukewarm, - neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth."* Is your relationship to God lukewarm? Do you want to revitalize and/or take your relationship to a new level? Are you really satisfied with your present relationship with God?

I suspect that most of us, including yours truly, feel that our relationship to God is not as good as we want it to be. We want to do what's right; what fits into God's plan for us but discerning what God has in mind for us and feeling good about our interpretation of His will is a constant challenge. It can be both exhilarating and frustrating depending on how we see God's direction or lack thereof.

We long for a strong relationship with God but I bet most of us feel like we're not as close to God as we desire. If I were to ask you how strong your relationship is to God I wonder what kind of answer I would get. I'm not going to ask such a personal question but to help you better analyze your relationship with God; I have a test for you to take.

TEST:

1. Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
2. Do you spend time in personal Worship of God every week?
3. Do you tell God that you love Him every day?
4. Do you read your Bible most days of the week – more than 4?
5. Do you spend one-on-one time with God; just you and Him?
6. Do you pray to God every day?
7. Do you believe God answers your prayers?
8. Do you believe that you have a close, personal relationship with God?
9. Can you honestly say that you love God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul?
10. Do you want to improve your relationship with God?

NO Grading – the test is between you and God to figure out how you are doing and what the next steps will be in your journey. Ponder them and pray about them over the next few days. If changes are in order then make the appropriate changes as soon they become evident to you.

If you want to make a life changing impact on your relationship with God the pay attention. I want to introduce you to four (4) prayers that I am certain will help you in your relationship to God.

These four great New Testament prayers are from Paul, spoken under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These prayers are very powerful, and they invite us to elevate our desires to have an experiential knowledge of God and to lay hold of the power of God's grace in our lives. Few people pray in this way, yet these exemplary prayers encourage us to pursue the God's purposes and not our own agenda.

These prayers were originally prayed by Paul for others. I also believe they can be prayed for ourselves. Either way they will add value to your prayer life. The four prayers come from Ephesians (2), Philippians and Colossians. Paul's purpose in writing each letter is:

Purpose of Letter to the Ephesians: He prayerfully longs for his readers to advance in faith, love, wisdom and revelation of the Father of glory. He prays

that they live lives worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul seeks to reveal the fullness of God's eternal purpose of redemption in Christ.

Purpose of Letter to the Philippians: To encourage them to press on to know the Lord in unity, humility, fellowship and peace.

Purpose of Letter to the Colossians: To stress the true nature of new life in Christ...

Let's take a look at each prayer in some detail.

[Ephesians 1:17-19a](#)

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him--since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened--so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe"

This prayer reflects God's highest desire for every believer in Christ – to grow in the knowledge of Him (that's both head knowledge and more importantly, heart knowledge; knowing God intimately as our Lord and Savior). The prayer includes a request that the Holy Spirit grant us more wisdom, revelation, and knowledge concerning our hope in being called to be "children of God", to grasp the magnificent inheritance of heaven promised to us and to realize the greatness of God's power in our lives.

[Ephesians 3:16-19](#)

"I pray that according to the wealth of his glory [the Father] may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

Oh, to be filled to the fullness of God – what an amazing thing that is. No one can be filled with God; He is too big for any man or woman to have all of God dwell in us. The phrase "filled up to all the fullness of God" means that we are filled to the capacity we can handle at this point in our lives. I add a little "DeFoeism" to the prayer and ask God to expand my capacity so I can get more of the fullness of God over time.

To have the "inner being" strengthened by the Spirit is to have our feelings, thoughts and purposes placed more and more under His influence and direction

so that the Spirit can manifest his power through us in greater measure. The purpose of this strengthening is four fold: 1) that Christ may establish His presence in our hearts, 2) that we may be grounded in sincere love for God, Christ and others, 3) that we may comprehend with our minds and experience in our lives Christ's love for us and 4) that we may be filled with "all the fullness of God"; i.e. that God's presence may so fill us that we reflect from our innermost being the character and stature that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:9-11

"And I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God."

This prayer is really about the powerful combination of love and knowledge and their cumulative impact upon our lives. Love, if it is to be Christian, must be based on Biblical revelation and knowledge. Knowledge is not merely head knowledge but it is spiritual knowing in the heart. It means that we know God in a personal, intimate relationship rather than intellectually knowing facts about God.

Thus, to know God's Word or to know God's will implies a knowledge that expresses itself in fellowship, obedience, life and nearness to God. Knowing theological truth has as its goal love for God and freedom from sin.

"So you can decide what is best" means that a believer, through love and knowledge, discerns what is good and evil. And we can decide to follow and act upon that which is good/best.

"Sincere" means without any mixture of evil and "blameless" means "not causing offense to God or to another person". Such holiness must be the ultimate aim of all believers. Only by an outpouring of abounding love within our hearts by the Holy Spirit and a full commitment to God's Word will we be "pure and blameless until the day of Christ."

Colossians 1:9-12

"[I ask] God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects--bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light."

To me, this is the pinnacle of my walk with the Lord – to live a life worthy and pleasing to Him. I know I can't do it on my own. In order to live in a manner worthy of the Lord we must be strengthened by His power. This impartation of power is an ongoing experience of receiving from God His own life.

In summary, these four prayers lead us through fifteen requests and praises to God. That's why I find these prayers to be Life Changing. I am seeking God, His purpose, His power, His wisdom, and His love. Why? So I can 1) Know Him more fully, 2) be filled up to all the fullness of God, 3) Decide what is best, and 4) Live a life worthy and pleasing to the Lord. For me that is life changing.

15 Praises & Requests

1. Understand God's will
2. Gain Spiritual wisdom
3. Live holy, lives pleasing to the Lord
4. Bear fruit for Christ
5. Be strengthened spiritually by the Holy Spirit
6. Persevere in faith and righteousness
7. Give thanks to the Father
8. Continue in the hope of heaven
9. Experience Christ's nearness
10. Know Christ's love
11. Be filled with God fullness
12. Show love and kindness to others
13. Discern what is good; avoid evil
14. Be sincere and blameless
15. Eagerly await the Lord's return

Life Application

My request to you is that you take a copy of these prayers (printed and on the table in front along with the relationship test and the 15 Praises and Requests) and begin to pray these four prayers daily for an indefinite time. As you pray, begin to make these prayers truly yours. Avoid just reading Paul's words. Put your heart and soul into each prayer.

Here's how I have been doing it in my prayer time:

- When I go to my prayer room, the first thing I do is begin with these prayers.
- I pick out the key phrases from each prayer as my focal point, but I also intertwine other phrases from the prayers (each day may be a different focus).

- Once I spend considerable time in these prayers, then and only then do I turn to my Bible and begin reading Scripture.
- I close my prayer time with intercessory prayers for others, circumstances, etc.
- And I listen carefully for God's voice as I await His guidance, wisdom, etc.
- I also find myself going back to these prayers during the day as I experience all that life brings my way.

I pray these prayers for myself every day. I also pray them for others as appropriate, including you.

I hope this message has made sense to you. I believe that God is opening an important opportunity for you to begin this prayer journey with Him.

Psalm 37:4 says *"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."*

When we delight ourselves in God and His will, God Himself places desires within our hearts that He then sets out to fulfill. I think the Life Changing prayers we have just studied do exactly that, place us in delight of the Lord. Now we have truly opened ourselves up to His fulfillment of all He wants to do in our lives.

Let us pray.