

Are You Ready to Be the Answer to the Prayers You Pray?



By Kim Butts

It happens to all of us! We see a homeless person, come upon the scene of an accident...or hear of a family in financial need. Immediately, we may think to pray in each of these situations, "Lord, please help that person. Send someone to meet that need!" What if God wants to use you and your family to be the answer to your prayer? Are you prepared to back up your prayers with action if the Lord directs? I believe that our Father wants us to learn how to be the hands and feet of His Son to hurting or lost people.

Since Jesus lives in us we should consider as we pray what He would do to meet this need or help this person if He were physically present – because He is! He is physically present in the midst of every situation because He is incarnate – in us! Could this thought and realization change the way you respond to the prayers that you pray? Instead of thinking that you have done the right thing by praying and then moving along

to the next activity of your day...do you need to take your prayer to the next level by listening to what the voice of the Spirit speaks to your heart? How many opportunities have we missed because we have not acted in response to the impulse of the Spirit urging us to make Jesus known in the midst of lives or situations?

I believe that many prayers we pray can be answered quickly and with amazing results if we become better listeners to the voice of the Holy Spirit. If we could learn to change our mindset as we pray, I believe we would be used of God in mighty ways to be His agents of transformation. Can you imagine how fulfilling and exciting your lives would be if your family would continually wait upon the Lord to see how He may want to use you to be the answer to prayers that you pray?

Let me give you an example of the first time this amazing reality became a part of my prayer life. When I was a new Christian, everything about the Lord was a wonderful surprise. Fortunately, that hasn't changed over the years! I remember being in a small group of women studying the Word together and learning to pray. One young woman had three small boys and a husband who was working in another state to support them. He only made it home for a weekend every few months. There was very little money, but Bertie was always joyful. Her prayer one evening (we met in her home, as she couldn't afford childcare) was for her husband to be able to come home for Christmas, and that they could have a wonderful celebration together as a family. We prayed for the Lord's provision and for this husband and father to be able to come home in time to celebrate with his family.

As we were praying I had an overwhelming sense that I was supposed to do something for this family. I shared my thoughts with another friend, Nancy, and we decided that between us we could help in this situation and began to make some plans. The first thing we felt led to do was to leave our friend, Bertie, some money, so we left an anonymous envelope on the seat of

her car. We had a strong sense that we weren't to reveal to her who had left this gift. She tearfully told our small group during the next meeting about how she had been worried about not having enough grocery money for the week. Imagine her surprise and joy to find the envelope, which amazingly (but not to the all-knowing God) had the exact amount of money she needed! She made the statement, "God knew exactly what I needed and He provided it!" Nancy and I were astonished that not only had God used us to be givers in response to our prayers for her, but He had arranged it so that we would meet her need *exactly*! We were now hooked into the fact that the Lord could use us to do something we had been praying about.

The story doesn't stop there! When we heard that Bertie wanted to go visit her husband for a weekend in case he was unable to come home over Christmas, the two of us quickly offered to take turns staying at her house to take care of the boys. While she was gone, we took them to get a Christmas tree. After it was set up in their house, we found out that they had no ornaments or other decorations, so we got paper, markers, glitter and glue and the five of us started decorating and singing Christmas carols. Paper snowflakes were hung all over the house and popcorn strings with homemade ornaments adorned the tree. The boys had a wonderful time and were so excited for their mother to come home. We prayed with them for their father to be able to come home too. Imagine the surprised faces when *both* of their parents came through the door! What a wonderful reunion this family had, and a very special Christmas! My heart was full, and I determined to spend my life listening to the voice of the Spirit instructing me how to help people. Every act of obedience has been profoundly life-transforming for me.

This is a very simple example, and you may say, "We don't need to pray before we help people." Very true, but we are often in a hurry and may miss opportunities as the Lord puts them in our paths. May I suggest a short prayer that your family can

lift up each and every day? “Lord, show us the people You want us to help or encourage today. Lead us to those who are hurting or in need and we will trust you for the means to do something about it.” I can promise you that your loving Father will answer if you will listen and obey. He will trust you with small things first and then He will stretch you to be obedient in His bigger plans and purposes.

Being the answer to the prayers of others is one way to be used by God. Being the answer to our own prayers is an astonishingly powerful privilege. There may be situations in the lives of people you know, or perhaps He will choose to use your prayer to work in the lives of those you may never meet. Prayer is a great mystery, but God has chosen to use us to be His agents of answered prayer. Knowing this makes prayer such an honor. It encourages us to pray more and to listen better! We should always be ready to stand in the gap when the Lord places a burden or need on our hearts. He may not always use you in certain situations, but because of your prayers, He may have touched the heart of others to respond. A good prayer when those you are praying for are far away is, “Lord, would you put one of Your willing servants into the path of this person today who can be a blessing to them?” The family of God is extensive and worldwide. He will use every heart that is willing to listen to His voice.

An Example from Scripture

Nehemiah is probably one of the best examples of someone who was intimately connected to the Lord through prayer, and who was used to be the answer to the prayers he prayed. You can read his entire story in the book of Nehemiah. He paid attention to what was going on around him, and knew how to pray what was on the heart of God. He was humble, always giving God the credit for the work he was given to do on behalf of the nation of Israel. Nehemiah was obedient to the things God called him to do. Twice, in the book of Nehemiah, he refers to what the Lord had “put” on his heart: “*I set out*

during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:12a). “So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families” (Nehemiah 7:5).

Some practical ways to prepare

God works through His prepared servants. Here are some ways (many inspired by Nehemiah) to teach your family how to yield themselves to the Lord’s plans and purposes as they pray – individually and corporately:

- **Learn how to pray God’s heart:** Praying just for the sake of making a religious noise, is not God’s intent for prayer. Praying to get something from God is also not God’s plan. Studying the Word and paying attention to the world around you is a key. See what God is busy doing and what He desires us to do as His people. As we pray those things that are close to His heart, He is pleased to answer! We know He wants us to love Him with all of our hearts, and to love others as we love ourselves. He wants us to pray for the lost and that His people will experience revival. We know that He wants unity in the body of Christ...and you and your family can probably add many others to this list.
- **Humbly expect and be willing for God to use you to be the answer to your prayers:** If your heart never expects God to answer, there is literally no point in praying. James states, *“But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man [or woman, or child] should not think he will receive anything from the Lord...”* (James 1:6-7). When you pray in the Name of Jesus, believing that He has heard and will answer, you will see Him do amazing things – sometimes in and through you! Always remember that the ultimate goal of answered prayer is to bring glory to the Lord: *“And I*

will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:13).

- **Be a good listener:** It is important to spend time being quiet before the Lord. If we are doing all of the talking, we won't be able to hear Him speak. *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10).* I wonder how many instructions and promptings we miss because we don't take the time to learn to distinguish the voice of the Shepherd! *“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27).*
- **Be obedient:** When you sense that you have a word from the Lord and it agrees with the Bible, act upon it. God is not going to give us more than we can handle, and He will likely start us out slowly. As you are faithful in the small things, He will trust you with bigger issues. Maybe He will impress upon your heart to write a note to someone, or to make an encouraging phone call. If you didn't actually hear directly from the Lord, you are still doing something that is like the character of Jesus living within you.

Encourage and mentor others to be willing to be the answer to the prayers they pray. Help your children and others to learn how to be the hands and feet of Jesus. People need to be stretched a bit sometimes.

If your family will determine to make a lifestyle of listening to the Lord as you pray together so that He can use you to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the lives of others, you will experience blessing upon blessing. God has blessed you so that you might be a blessing to others, as He used Abraham in a similar manner (see Genesis 12:1-3). As your family prayer life grows, continue to remember that Jesus, who lives in you, will show you how to be the answer to many of the prayers you pray.

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