

Your Number One Job: Prayer
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Several years ago a sweet elderly woman asked me, “Pastor, why am I still here?” She was ready to go home. She was tired of the aches and pains of old age. She wasn’t mobile enough to really leave her room often. She loved the Lord but didn’t see what purpose she served in her little room at the assisted living home.

I said, “Can you pray for me, the church, and your fellow residents here? We need your prayers. God has definitely given you a clear job that you can do. Your prayers, even whispered requests, serve others as much as any other job a Christian could have.” Sure enough, she prayed. God answered. The Church thrived, partly due to her prayers and many others like her.

Jesus makes some outlandish claims about prayer. “Ask and you shall receive!” (Matthew 7:7-8) “Whatever you ask in my name, my Father will grant you.” (John 14:13-14) And many more. Prayers are not wishes. They aren’t just requests lost in the wind. Jesus commands us to pray. It’s not an option. Jesus promises that God not only hears prayers but answers them. Prayers are actions that benefit others and even keep the earth spinning and the preachers preaching the Good news of hope and peace in Jesus Christ.

Do you believe that? Do you believe Jesus? It’s easy to dismiss Jesus’ words. After not having prayers immediately answered as we would like, we doubt their efficacy. Or we throw Jesus’ words back at him. “Won’t God’s will be done without our prayers?” “Doesn’t the Father know what we want before we ask?” So what! That literally has nothing to do with God’s clear command to not take the Lord’s name in vain, use it in prayer! Why? Because He said so.

Probably the biggest reason we don’t pray to God is that we are busy praying to other gods. We place our worries on ourselves. We put our hope in government, politics, the stock market, social media influencers, and so on. Oh we pray a lot, but not to God. How strange, since He is the creator of all things, rules all things, demonstrated His extraordinary love for us by sending His Son to die and rise for us. He is the only God who can actually address our worries and needs. And He has invited you to go to Him directly in the name of His Son.

When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, He gives them His prayer. It begins with “Our Father...” (Matthew 6:9-13) Jesus gives us His Father. In holy baptism, we are made children of God. Christ has removed our debt and welcomed us back home. We can call God Father!

If you are looking for just the right words, posture, or cadence for God to hear you, Jesus tells us to say, Our Father... What better way to get His attention? If you’re a parent, your ears perk up when you hear your daughter call you. It’s the magic word, given to us by grace. We aren’t talking to the mysterious unknowable creator, but our Father in heaven. Try it.

This week give it a shot. Just like my old friend, it's actually your job too. Here's a challenge. 1. Set aside specific time, even 10 minutes, to just pray. 2. Pray for unity and faith, for workers and people. 3. Pray that more of us rediscover the gift and good work of prayer!

Jesus says, "Ask and you shall receive." Try it.