

JOHNS CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Only Necessary Thing

Sunday, January 19

Rev. Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

An atheist was seated next to a little girl on an airplane and he turned to her and said, “Do you want to talk? Flights go quicker if you strike up a conversation with your fellow passenger.”

The little girl, who had just started to read her book, replied to the total stranger, “What would you want to talk about?” “Oh, I don’t know,” said the atheist. “How about why there is no God, or no Heaven or Hell, or no life after death?” as he smiled smugly.

“Okay,” she said. “Those could be interesting topics but let me ask you a question first. A horse, a cow, and a deer all eat the same stuff – grass. Yet a deer excretes little pellets, while a cow turns out a flat patty, but a horse produces clumps. Why do you suppose that is?”

The atheist, visibly surprised by the little girl’s intelligence, thinks about it and says, “Hmmm, I have no idea.”

The little girl replied, “Do you really feel qualified to discuss God, Heaven and Hell, or life after death, when you don’t know poop?” And then she went back to reading her book.

Well, that girl was truly inspired. She faced a challenge and quickly tackled it. Problem solved.

Would you like to be this inspired? Would you like to solve problems like that little girl?

Today, I’m going to share with you the one thing that will solve any problem, help you rise above challenges, and enable you to live the life God has for you.

This one thing has enabled people to do extraordinary things. It has extraordinary power! Abraham applied this power. Noah applied this power. So did Moses, David, and Samuel. Jesus used this power. The Apostle Paul used it. John Wesley used this power. Billy Graham also applied it. Every extraordinary person of faith you know applies this power.

The funny thing about this power is that it is so simple and obvious that many people just overlook it. In fact, I believe it is the most underutilized resource in the church today. What is this power? I’m going to let the Bible tell you. Many of you have heard these words before, but some have never taken them to heart.

Jesus said:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” -Matthew 7:7-11

The power is prayer! Prayer power! If more people realized what prayer can do for them, they would do it more often. Prayer has incredible power that can turn an ordinary life into an extraordinary life. Prayer has energy that emanates from God and becomes one of the greatest powers in the universe. Prayer power is God power. James 5:16 says, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

Some of you may be wondering if prayer is really this effective. Well, let me share this with you. Quite often when people come to see me about a problem or issue in their lives, I ask them if they have prayed about it. About 80 percent of the time the response I get is, “No, not really.” I then ask them to take two weeks and pray about their problem every day and see what happens. Never in the history of my ministry has anyone come back to me and said that prayer didn’t make a difference.

Maybe you are dealing with some struggle or obstacle. Have you prayed about it? Spend the next two weeks praying about it and watch what happens.

I have discovered that there is only one thing keeping people from being all they can be for God: prayer! Prayer gives God permission to work within us and sets God loose in our lives. You see, many believe in the idea of God. But we don't worship an idea; we worship a living God who wants to work in our lives. So, the question we must ask ourselves is, "Do I have faith in God? Do I expect God to work in my life? Do I pray to this God? Do I ask, seek, and knock?"

Many see God as some mechanical, distant entity that just keeps the universe running. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is a personal being who wants to be engaged and believed in. It is like a child who believes in a parent and seeks help from the parent. The parent is more motivated to work in the child's life. It is the same way with God. When we put our faith in God and pray to him, God can't wait to work in our lives. This is the power of prayer! Jesus says that all we have to do is ask, seek, and knock and everything will be open to us. The Bible also tells us that we will find God if we seek Him with all of our hearts. 1st Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eye has not seen or ear heard, nor has the human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

The greatest sound in the world to me is when Paul greets me with the word, "Dadda." It melts my heart. When Jesus prayed and taught us to pray, he used the word "Abba" for God or "Daddy." Imagine God's heart when we approach him prayer and say, "Daddy, I need to talk to you."

The message today is simple: ***Prayer changes things***.... In Acts we read that in God "we live and move and have our being." You see, we as human beings are not electrically powered, computer powered, hydraulically powered, or mechanically powered. We are prayer-powered! In Genesis it tells us that when God created us, He breathed his life-breath into us. Therefore, we must go to God as often as we can to receive power. Otherwise we drag through life.

Jesus knew the power of prayer. The Gospels demonstrate that prayer was the power source for Jesus' ministry. Luke 5:16 states that Jesus "would withdraw to deserted places and pray." The Greek word "withdraw" means "he withdrew and withdrew." In other words, withdrawing to pray was his habit. Indeed it was. In the gospel of Luke we find 15 different

references to Jesus praying. We find that Jesus prayed at every turn in his life. He prayed as he began his ministry. He prayed before choosing his disciples. He prayed as he served others. He prayed as he faced temptation and difficulty. He prayed at his death. He prayed after his resurrection. This begs the question: If Jesus, our Lord and Savior, believed prayer was this important for his own ministry, then shouldn't it be just as important to us?

The first thing Jesus commands his followers to do as he was sending the seventy out in pairs was to pray. He said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." The very first thing Jesus commands his disciples to do is to pray to God for support as we serve.

Now this may sound elementary, but how many Christians ask God for help before they do any kind of ministry. We plan and plan and do and do. And we are so proud. And then we pray as an afterthought: "Lord, by the way, I will be doing such and such a work, and I have figured everything out...I will be just fine on my own, but just in case, make sure you bless what I am doing." Then we wonder why folks burn out in the church and why ministries wither. They are not relying on God's power.

Instead, we ought to be getting in line with God wants to do with us and ask him to support us: "Lord, you have led us to this ministry, now we ask for all the power and support you can give us to do what you have called us. Without your guidance we are lost in the midst of this dangerous and evil world."

If the Church is going to be the Church that God has called us to be we must be a Church of Prayer! We must consistently go to our knees and open ourselves to the wisdom and power of Almighty God. I am convinced that a lack of prayer is one of the key issues keeping the church from revival.

The church in Asia has taught us this. You think we have big churches in America? Christianity in Asia is spreading like wildfire. There are churches with 20-30 thousand members. The church in Asia makes America look like a mission field. How? They are always praying. A representative of the Asian church was recently asked what the church in America could do to have the same revival that the church in Asia is having: "Get up every morning at 5 am and pray."

There is power in prayer! Prayer changes things. This experience also taught me that we need to take a second look at how we pray. Many of our prayers are simply anemic. We put caveats in them like, “Maybe Lord, if it be your will, then...” Too often our prayers sound like we are trying to give God an out or trying to prevent God from being embarrassed. Let me be clear: God almighty does not need for us to give Him an out or protect Him from embarrassment.

I’ve come to the place in my life where when I want something from God, I boldly ask God for it. Now, if God does not want me to have it, then God won’t give it to me. I won’t be upset. God knows what is best. But I still pray boldly. God likes bold prayers. The Bible is filled with bold prayers.

The book of James says that we “have not because we ask not.” Psalm 37:4 says, “Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Jesus tells us in John that if we “abide in him” he will give to us what we ask for. And we read these passages and believe in them, but then we just pray for our hangnail or the callus on our foot. We need to come to the place where we trust God to answer our prayers. We need to pray big, bold, Bible-filled prayers and understand there is risk in prayer. I believe we will be judged by the size of our prayers.

Perhaps you are struggling with how to pray. You know you need to pray, but really don’t know how. Well, you don’t need to read a book to learn how to pray or go to a seminar or a retreat. All you have to do is start praying! You see, deep inside we know how to pray. Romans tells us that the Holy Spirit within us intercedes for us as we approach God. You know how to pray. Just begin in a simple, natural way.

Let me share with you how I pray. You don’t have to do it this way. This is just the way I do it. I feel led to share this because it reveals how simple prayer should be.

Every morning before I start my day, I sit in my recliner in the living room. I visualize Jesus sitting on the couch next to me. I don’t close my eyes; I just have a conversation with Jesus. I share with him how I feel. I ask for his help with the day ahead. If I have a problem, I ask him to help me solve it. If I am concerned about others or the problems in the world, I talk to him about it and ask for his power and guidance. I don’t talk in holy tones. I just talk like Charley. Then I try to listen to Jesus.

During the rest of my day, I envision Jesus sitting next to me in my car, office, and anywhere I am. This simple prayer exercise has changed my life. When I don’t do this, I can tell the difference in my day.

Maybe you think you don’t have time to pray. Think again. Do you have time to look at your watch? An effective way to remember to pray is to pray when you check your watch or a clock for the time. If you are commuter and have long drives to work, pray whenever you are at stop light.

Prayer is not supposed to be complicated. God just wants to hear from us. We need to remember that the same God who created the universe is waiting to hear from us. The same God who parted the Red Sea is waiting to hear from us. The same God who enabled David to defeat Goliath is waiting to hear from us. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead is waiting to hear from us. The Bible tells us that faithful praying can move mountains!

I want to share with you how to get your prayers answered. We find the key in **Mark 11:24**. Jesus says, **“So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”** There are three things in this text that we must do to get our prayers answered.

First, we need to BE SPECIFIC. Jesus says, “Whatever you ask for...” Prayers need to have a target. If you need something, ask God for it. Don’t feel selfish or ashamed. Think of it this way. Often times we don’t discover what we really want until we begin to pray for what we want. God will work things out for us. If God does not want us to have what we are asking for, then God will not give it to us. God will give us something better.

Second, BE BOLD. Jesus says, “believe you have received it...” Wimpy prayers don’t move mountains. Be bold when you pray. The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God.

Third, BE CONFIDENT. Did you notice the verb endings in this verse? They are in the past tense. They have already happen! So often God is ready to give us something and God is just waiting for us to get ready for it and ask for it. As the old saying goes, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

Of course, there is one more thing we must do if we want God to answer our prayers. **It is in Mark 11:25,**

“Whenever you stand praying, FORGIVE, if you have anything against anyone...”

The biggest block to answered prayer is a resentful heart. If you are choosing not to forgive someone, remember you are poisoning your soul and preventing God to move in your life and answer your prayers. If you are having trouble forgiving someone, then try praying for them every day. It is difficult to stay angry at someone you are praying for every day. Soon, your attitude toward the person will change and the big mountain of resentment in your heart will dissolve. Prayer changes things!

Back in the mid 1800’s there lived a man by the name of Alfred Nobel. He invented a revolutionary new chemical. It was an explosive that could be kept safe until it was time to ignite it. Nobel was a Christian and

understood some biblical Greek. He decided to name his new chemical *dunamis* or *dynamite*. His vision came from Mark 11:23 where Jesus tells us that faithful praying can move mountains. Well, this is exactly what dynamite originally did. It removed mountains so highways could be built! Nobel became very wealthy, as you might imagine. He set up a foundation. Perhaps you have heard of it – The Nobel Prize.

We have our own spiritual dynamite. It is called prayer and it can move mountains. There is power in prayer. I dare you to pray!



11180 Medlock Bridge Road Johns Creek, GA 30097
770-497-8215 www.johnscreekumc.org