

PRAYER

4 week series on prayer

Prayer – Lesson 1

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Prayer

Lesson 1: The Power of Prayer

Bible: James 5:14-16

Description: Most of the time, when we think about prayer, we think of it as asking God for something, or asking Him to do something. Really, though, prayer is just talking to God. Prayer isn't powerful because of who is praying; prayer is powerful because of who is being prayed to. Being able to talk to God is something that is incredibly powerful.

Supplies

- A jumbo puzzle (like a toddler puzzle with fewer, large pieces)
- A jump rope
- A hula-hoop
- Ice
- Two pieces of paper with "advantages" written on them. One that says, "You can skip the puzzle" and one that says, "You don't have to melt the ice." If you have more than two teams playing, make more advantages, such as, "You can pass the hula-hoop section."

Game: An Unfair Advantage

Divide the group into two (or more, if you have a big group) teams. Explain that this game is to see which team can work together the fastest. Each team will select someone to jump rope, someone to hula-hoop, someone to melt ice, and someone to put a puzzle together.

Tell the teams that they must complete the tasks in the following order while you time them:

1. Jump rope 20 times
2. Hula-hoop 30 times
3. Melt three pieces of ice only using their hands
4. Put the puzzle together.

Give each team an advantage. Have the piece of paper folded up where they can't see it. Explain that these are advantages that will help them in the game, but they can't open them until you say so.

Time the first team competing the challenge, and then allow the second team to go, and so on, if you have more than two teams. The team with the shortest time wins!

Teach

If I asked you what prayer was, what would you say? You don't have to answer out loud, but just think about it. What exactly is prayer? What's the point of it? Why do we pray, anyway?

If we're honest, there are times when we think that prayer is a way to ask God to do something for us. We only pray when we need something from God. We view prayer as a tool to tell God what we want Him to do.

If that's what popped into your head when I asked that question, that's okay! That's why we're here, so we can talk about prayer. But I want to go ahead and tell you guys that is not what prayer is. Actually, prayer is something much more powerful than just asking for things.

Prayer is talking to God.

That sounds pretty simple, right? It probably doesn't sound all that powerful.

But I have to tell you...being able to talk to God is one of the most powerful things in the world.

And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. – James 5:14-16

So let's get this straight...praying can make a sick person well, it can heal, and it can forgive sins? All because of you saying a few words?

Well, not exactly. You see, prayer isn't powerful because you're praying or because of the words that you are saying. Prayer is powerful because of who you're praying to.

See, if you believe in God - if you believe that He created the whole world, that He created you, and that He has a plan for your life - then you know just how powerful He is. So there's nothing magical about the words you are praying. It's the fact that you're having a conversation with God - same one who created everything you see, the same one who knows everything - that is what makes prayer powerful.

The Bible is full of powerful stories about prayer. Let's look at one about a woman named Tabitha. At the part of the story we're starting, Tabitha has become sick and just died. The disciples heard that Peter was in town, so they asked for him to come over.

Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. - Acts 9:40

Wait just a second! Tabitha was dead! It says so right there in the Bible!

So how was she able to come back to life? Was it because Peter was there? Was it because he was so holy and powerful? No! If that was the case, Peter would have just walked right into the room and told her to get up without doing anything else. But what does he do? He prays. It wasn't him that was powerful, it was the prayer that he prayed and who he prayed to.

That's kind of amazing, isn't it? So I have a question for you. If you have this power at your fingertips - the power to just sit and have a conversation with God, who is so powerful that He can raise people from the dead - why don't you use it?

Okay, do the teams from tonight still have their advantages that I gave them? Good. Go ahead and open them!

Have someone from each team open their advantage and read it out loud.

So you could have skipped the puzzle? And you could have passed over the hula-hoop portion? Wow, those are pretty powerful advantages. I think that whichever team would have used their advantage probably would have won, don't you agree?

But did those advantages help you in the game? Were they as powerful in the game as they seem now?

They weren't. Why? Because you didn't use them. You had the advantages, and they could have changed up the game, but you didn't use them, so they were worthless to you.

Prayer is extremely powerful. There are no rules to praying. You don't have to do anything specific. In fact, you can pray whenever, wherever you want. That's something pretty powerful to have on your side. So why don't you use it?

Sometimes, we don't pray because we feel like we're not close enough to God. Or maybe there are times when we don't pray because we know that there are things in our lives that shouldn't be there, and we know they're wrong, so we avoid talking to God.

I want to show you guys something. I need a volunteer.

Speaking to volunteer. Okay, so I'm going to have a leader tell you a couple of things. Then, I want you to tell them to me, okay? No matter what, your job is to make sure you tell me what they told you.

Have leader tell the volunteer a couple of sentences or silly facts. It doesn't matter what. While they are doing that, continue talking to the rest of the group.

Are you guys having a good night? This is pretty cool stuff we're talking about, isn't it?

At this point, the volunteer will be trying to talk to you.

Can you believe that prayer is powerful enough to actually - I'm sorry, (volunteer's name), I can't hear you. You're going to have to come closer.

Start moving around while you continue talking.

Anyway, can you guys believe that prayer is powerful enough to raise someone from the dead? That's crazy, right? I mean, can you even imagine?

Continue talking and moving around, but eventually stop and let the volunteer tell you what they needed to tell you.

Okay, I know that probably looked silly to all of you, but I wanted to show you something. What happened when he/she tried to tell me something? They had to get closer. Why? Well, when you're trying to talk to someone, the natural thing to do is to come close to them.

It didn't matter that I was moving around, or that I was talking, or that they had to walk in front of all of you during a message. They came close to me so they could say what they needed to say.

And that's what happens when you pray.

You see, you don't have to be close to God in order to pray. But prayer does make you closer to Him.

Just like *volunteer's name* naturally came closer to me when they were trying to talk to me, talking to God will naturally lead to being closer to Him. And that's a pretty good place to be, if I do say so myself.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. - 1 John 5:14

It's easy to read a story in the Bible about someone being raised from the dead and think, "Wow! That's powerful!" And then get to a verse like this one and not be as impressed. When compared to someone coming back to life, is there really anything powerful about this verse?

Yes. There absolutely is! Really think about this, guys. It says that we can be confident. That we can approach God, and that He hears us!

When you pray, you're not just aimlessly saying words into the air, hoping that maybe, just maybe your words will float around and eventually find their way to God, if He's not too busy. No! When you pray, you know for a fact that God hears you.

That's some powerful stuff, isn't it?

Small Group Questions

1. Before this lesson, would you say that you thought prayer was mostly about asking God for things?
2. Do you believe that prayer is powerful? Why or why not?
3. When you pray, are you usually thinking more about yourself or about God?
4. Do you ever pray just to talk to God, or do you mostly pray only when you're asking Him for something?
5. Do you think that God wants to talk to you? How does that make you feel?
6. Do you feel closer to God when you pray more? Why do you think that is?
7. Do you think that prayer is a tool that you should use more?
8. Have you prayed to accept Jesus into your life? If so, do you think that was a powerful prayer?
9. Did everything we talked about tonight change the way you look at prayer? Would you define prayer differently now?
10. How can you make the power of prayer a part of your daily life? Is that something you want to do?

Teach Closing

We've talked about several different ways that prayer is powerful. We learned that prayer can heal the sick, prayer can forgive sins, and prayer can even raise people from the grave! But it is all because of who those prayers are going to - they're going to God.

Those are all pretty powerful prayers. But the most powerful prayer that you will ever pray is the one where you pray to invite Jesus into your heart. The prayer where you give your life over to God.

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. – Romans 10:9

Jesus is Lord. Three little words. Such a simple prayer, isn't it? But I'm telling you, it is the most powerful prayer you will ever pray because what does the verse say next? It says that you will be saved.

If you've never prayed that prayer before, I would really love to talk to you about it. I would be honored to give you a chance to pray that powerful prayer, and I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have about it. Be sure to come find me after this.

If you have prayed that prayer before, and Jesus is the Lord of your life, then you know how powerful prayer really is! You know that praying is what saved your life!

So, start viewing it as the powerful tool that it is. Prayer is not just a way for you to ask God for things you want; it's a way for you to talk to Him. And that's an incredibly powerful thing to be able to do.

Prayer can raise the dead, heal the sick, and forgive sins. All because of the one you're praying to. Prayer is a powerful gift of being able to talk to the most powerful God. Use it!