

Introduction: It almost got thrown away...

¹It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ²He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. ⁴After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying unto God for him.

⁶The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

¹²When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" ¹⁵"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there a while.

Four keys to powerful praying:

Acts 12:5

1. We must pray "unto" God -

- The basis of our assurance before God's throne -

"Therefore, brothers, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus."

Hebrews 10:19

- The means of access into God's presence 24 hours a day -

"For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

Ephesians 2:18

2. We must pray "earnestly" -

3. We must pray corporately... "The Church" -

4. We must pray specifically... "for him" [the person] -

Discussion Questions:

1. Share your journey with regard to your prayer life. When has it been strongest? The most intimate? The most joyful?
2. Share some vivid answers to prayer from your own experience that have strengthened your faith.
3. Which of the 4 Key Elements to powerful praying are you growing in the most?
4. Which of the 4 Key Elements of prayer do you need to focus on this week? How specifically will you do that?

A prayer of a man after God's own heart: Psalm 101

¹I will sing of lovingkindness and justice to You, O LORD, I will sing praises.

²I will give heed to the blameless way when will You come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.

³I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.

⁴A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.

Psalm 101:1-4

⁵ I will get rid of anyone who whispers evil things about someone else; I will not tolerate anyone who is proud and arrogant.

⁶ I will approve of those who are faithful to God and will let them live in my palace. Those who are completely honest will be allowed to serve me.

⁷ No liar will live in my palace; no hypocrite will remain in my presence.

⁸ Day after day I will destroy the wicked in our land; I will expel all who are evil from the city of the Lord.

Psalm 101:5-8

¹⁶*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

¹⁷*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*

¹⁸*Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

¹⁹*This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence*

²⁰*whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.*

²¹***Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God***

²²***and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him.***

²³*And this is His command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us.*

²⁴*Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.*

1 John 3:16-24

Condition #1: A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

A clear conscience gives us boldness and confidence before God in prayer.

1 John 3:21

Condition #2: AN OBEDIENT LIFESTYLE

God answers the prayers of those who keep His commands.

1 John 3:22

Condition #3: A YEARNING HEART

God answers the prayers of those who do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

1 John 3:22

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Psalm 101 reflect about David's personal obedience and desire to please God?
2. How does verse 21 reassure us as we come to God with an accusing, troubled heart?
3. What is the relationship between a "habitual, obedient lifestyle" and God answering our prayers?
4. What is at the "core" of this concept of "pleasing God," not merely obeying?
5. Are there areas of disobedience, or failure to please God, that could be hindering your prayers? What do you need to do to address these? When will you do that?

Introduction: “Roadblocks” are anything (known or unknown) that hinder our prayers from being answered.

Roadblock #1: Prayerlessness – we fail to **ASK**.

² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

James 4:2

Roadblock #2: Wrong motives – we ask **SELFISHLY**.

³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:3

¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:13

Roadblock #3: Sin in the heart or life.

¹ Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear.

² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

³ For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.

Isaiah 59:1-3

¹⁸ If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear;

Psalms 66:18

Roadblock #4: An UNFORGIVING spirit.

²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

²⁵ And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Mark 11:24-25

Roadblock #5: A wrong treatment of our MATE.

⁷Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

⁸Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:7-9

Roadblock #6: STINGINESS in our giving.

¹³ If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

Proverbs 21:13

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Discussion Questions:

1. What do we mean by a “Roadblock” to answered prayer?
2. Why do you think God’s power and answers are withheld when one of these “Roadblocks” is present in our lives?
3. Do any of these “Roadblocks” represent a “kink” in your spiritual hose? Are you missing out on God’s greatest blessing because of one of these Roadblocks?
4. What would you need to do to remove this “Roadblock” from your life? Do you need help or support in taking this step? Where could you get that help, if needed?

Introduction:

²² "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³ "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴ **Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**

Mark 11:22-24

- An outrageous claim?
- A misunderstood promise?
- An obvious observation...

"Faith":

- **Definition =**

¹ Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1

- **Importance =**

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

- Faith, therefore, is having **ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE** that whatever God says, He **WILL** do.

Question: When you pray, are you going to God with absolute certainty and confidence that what you are asking for will be given?

You can pray with absolute confidence:

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.

1 John 5:13-15

How?

1. To whom is this promise made?

1 John 5:13

2. How must we pray to know God hears our prayers? 1 John 5:14

3. How can we know the will of God? 1 John 5:14

➤ **By the promises of His Word:**

• For Wisdom - James 1:5-7

• For Deliverance - 1 Corinthians 10:13

• For Rest / Peace - Matthew 11:28-30

• For Financial Provision - Philippians 4:19

4. How can we know God's will when we have no promise for a particular situation?

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Romans 8:26, 27

Conclusion: “We must pray in faith. That is, we must pray with confident expectation of getting the very thing we ask.”

George Mueller

Discussion Questions:

1. What new insight did you gain about what it means to pray in faith?
2. On what basis can we come before God with absolute confidence?
3. What role does God's Word play in effective, confident praying?
4. What need do you have, or are you aware of, that God promises to meet?
5. What would it look like for you to claim God's promise and pray accordingly?

Resource: Magnificent Prayer by Nick Harrison