

SUNDAY August 24, 2025 “Understanding the Power of Prayer”

**James 5:16-18 Philippians 4:5-7 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
Matthew 6:5–8 and Matthew 7:7-14**

We continue our summer series “At Your Request” with our focus today on “Understanding the Power of Prayer”. Our summer series will conclude next week with the focus on “Purposeful Work” as it is Labour Day Sunday.

Just what is meant by the Power of Prayer? Praying is our means of communicating with God in order that we will have a deeper relationship with Him. The act of praying brings us opportunities to offer our praise, to confess what was done against the teachings, to give thanks for the blessings we receive and to ask God for support through petitions and supplications for oneself and others. When one prays there is a sense of guidance and often what is received is strength, inner peace and renewed hope. Prayer is personal yet can lead to spiritual and personal growth if practised regularly. The question we often ask though is what does the power of prayer mean and from where does it originate? Is prayer power-ful because of the people who share the words- or only becomes power filled because of God who receives it?

In 1924, R.A. Torrey wrote, “The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power” which first outlined the apostasy of the people of his time giving up on a religious faith or a previous loyalty. His book outlines what was needed then for revival in faith which seems ironic since this book is still a bestseller over 100 years later! This book is comprised of addresses Torrey delivered in areas around the world where people invited him to speak on this topic of what does the ‘power of prayer’ mean?

Many of his insights are still relevant to our time. For if I were to ask you who are faithful committed Christians, how many hours per day do each of you pray, you would get stuck on the word ‘hours’ instead of the fact for our need to pray at all! Praying has as much power today as it has ever had. God has not changed as God is quick to hear the voice of real prayer and prayers! Praying promotes our individuality to become like Jesus. But we must also study God’s Word as an open door that it is in order to grow. Prayer and studying the Bible are essential to each other!

Jesus was teaching his many followers in our reading from Matthew 6 when he was asked to teach them how to pray. This is what is known as the Lord’s Prayer which we will sing together soon, but as he spoke about prayer he taught about personal prayer. Jesus knew a lot about this kind of prayer- he was known to go and be alone for hours praying to God for direction and support and what would occur. So by this teaching to his followers, Jesus states

that it is important for His followers to take time to pray when alone and how to do so. Further into Matthew 7 he continues to teach about prayer but this time it is what to say- ask, seek and knock so that one may come to know God and learn more about His commandments and ways of righteous living.

But what must we do to understand praying and why it is so important in the Christian's life? Jesus taught his followers to pray as they followed his example. And through His, the disciples taught others the importance of prayer. We need to understand the words of *Acts 12:5* "*But prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for Peter (him).*" This verse recalls the time when Peter was imprisoned. It is in this verse that we learn to pray so we might receive what is asked. The key words 'unto God' help us to define to whom we are praying. Sometimes when we pray we kind of forget that we are addressing God. Our minds wander and our words may be tripped up because we lose focus when what we want to do is talk directly to the Creator.

"Without ceasing and with intense earnestness" is the manner in which we should be praying because God doesn't want us to just give words from our mouths- but from our hearts. Do we really want peace in the world? Do we desire healing for people? Do we wish climate change was not occurring at the rate that it is? Are these really what we want to happen? We might even ask are we really united as a church in what we ask through requests and petitions or is it only to make us feel better as we ask God? When we pray as a church family to bring about change we need to remember (Matthew 18:19-20) 'that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven'. There is power in the prayer of one true believer, there is far more power in the united prayer of two and greater still in more!

In this verse the prayers directed to God are from the people of the church as they pray for Peter in prison. This is an example of the prayer being used for change and challenge. For if we read this particular story, we learn that Peter was in jail when an angel appeared to him and lead him out of prison. This is because of the power of prayer being offered to God, for Peter by the believers in this church family.

Glenwood Church knows of the power of prayer and understands that reaching out to others begins with prayer. Prayer that calls us to be one with each other-- we could not do what we have been doing for 70 years in south Windsor without prayer and praying to be a place of comfort, care, refuge, strength, friendship, love..... But we need people to help us to fulfill and continue to fulfill this mission of praying without ceasing and with earnestness so that those

whom we lift up to God are changed, made whole or set free from the troubles of this world. And we need to remember that all of this is up to God!

Are all of your prayers answered? Or answered the way you want? Well maybe we need to figure out who is asking and how one must go about this! God answers the prayers of those who keep His commandments. I John 3:22 'we receive from God whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.' IF we are to understand this power of prayer, we need to do what God sees as pleasing to Him.

The world was a lot different in 1924 WWI had ended, things were opening up and enticing people to seek new ways of living and enjoying themselves. Today our world has not hidden the things which were once unacceptable to God in any form. We have gambling in many forms, consumption of alcohol in family restaurants, cannabis stores and these are seen by just walking down many streets. Online sources for entertainment bring what was once forbidden into the homes even more quickly. Today's standards also show us that we have choices and decisions that we need to make regularly. And these choices are what we each need God's guidance and strength to help us with as we strive to live according to his commandments. In many ways, people today need more time in prayer due to the options out there. And it is through the power of prayer that things can and do change. But we must be willing to put in the time, effort and energy to pray unto God for what is needed to bring hope for a better tomorrow.

In 1924- the church in the US and Canada was struggling to survive. Of course this is one reason the UCC came into existence because the people knew that if they worked together- - Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians- they would have a stronger presence in communities across the country. Over 100 years later many churches of all denominations are struggling again- churches are closing because there is a change in understanding of the purpose of the church or there is no understanding at all by those outside the walls.

As we look towards the future for Glenwood UC and what it means to be a part of the community and sharing in outreach and being a place of prayer and faith growth, we as committed Christians need to learn or learn again the power of prayer.

As pray-ers- we need to remember that when we pray to God the promise God makes to fulfill prayers is to those who believe and live for Him. That is, to those who believe in Jesus for what He has done as Saviour and Lord. He is God's Son who died and rose again for our sakes so we need to believe in Him. God does however answer prayers of non- believers but God's promise is that he will answer the prayers of those who live for Jesus. The power of prayer rides on this for many people-- does God answer prayer-- yes- if we live and believe in Christ.

Paul writes words of encouragement to the early churches by saying that the will of God in Jesus Christ is for them to pray without ceasing, rejoicing always and not letting the Spirit of God be stopped. Further praying instructions include the words from James- which call leaders to be praying over the sick, anointing them with oil for healing so that forgiveness may occur.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the Life: no one comes to the Father but by me. Often when we pray we share the words "in Jesus' name" at the end. Why do we say these words? We have no claims whatsoever on God, but Jesus does. As followers and believers in Jesus as Christ and God's Son, we are called by Him to draw near to God. And to do this we pray through Christ.

Understanding the Power of Prayer was essential to living a Christian life back in 1924 and even more so over 100 years later. To pray means to focus on God hearing your voice, thoughts and concerns. To pray earnestly, without ceasing and in Jesus' name, means to share with God your beliefs and unbeliefs and to be willing to receive God's answers to your prayers in faith and with hope. Understanding the power of prayer means joining with others for change and challenging the status quo and for the betterment of the community. And it also means praying, putting aside the differences and uniting our hearts to bring God's kingdom alive in the world today! It also means asking seeking knocking until answers are received and knowing that the peace and joy we will receive can only come from God.