

What is Prayer, Exactly?

From *The Power of Praying(TM) Together*
by Stormie Omartian with Jack Hayford

Prayer is communicating with God. Each time we pray, we come in contact with God in a profound and life changing way.

When we face hopeless situations in our relationships, businesses, work, finances, health, emotions, or children, praying to the God of hope can change the situation. When we struggle with such things as unrealized dreams, an unfulfilling life, lack of mental clarity, or emotional pain, we have access to the God who can touch every area of our lives to transform them and bring about wholeness. He wants to reach down and touch us, but first we have to reach up and touch Him in prayer. When we pray, we're saying, "I know You are real, Lord, and I want to spend time with You."

Prayer is praising and worshiping God for who He is. This takes our focus off of ourselves and places it on Him. It positions Him first in our hearts and allows Him full access to our lives. Pastor Jack taught us that there are two sides to prayer. There is the fellowship side and the partnership side.

"The fellowship side of prayer is when we come just to be with God in the intimacy of relationship," he explained. "The partnership side is when we exercise the responsibilities of partnering with Him to see the reintroduction of His rule into our circumstances. Worship, praise, adoration, and exaltation are an important part of fellowship with God, but it is also a means of partnering with Him to drive back the darkness."

When we pray we're saying, "Lord, You are wonderful almighty, all-powerful, the God and Creator of all things. I exalt You above everything, and I worship You for who You are."

Prayer is telling God we love and adore Him. It's coming humbly before God and speaking to Him the way we would to someone we dearly love. Prayer is telling God how grateful we are that He loved us before we were even aware He existed. When we pray, we're saying, "I love You, Lord, and I thank You for loving me."

Prayer is telling God we need Him. When we don't pray, it implies that we think we can handle everything on our own. But the truth is we can't handle anything on our own. We need God for everything. We need Him to save us, forgive us, heal us, deliver us, fill us, restore us, redeem us, free us, guide us, protect us, lift us above our limitations, and move us into the plans and purposes He has for us. We can't get there without Him. When we pray we're saying, "I can't live without You, Lord. If you don't intervene in my life, nothing good is going to happen."

Prayer is making our requests known to God. It's sharing with Him all that is on our hearts, knowing that He cares about each one of those things. God promises to give us all we need, but we still have to ask. Just as He instructs us to ask for our daily bread, we are to come before Him and ask for whatever else we need too.

Prayer is not a last resort, something we turn to when all else fails, a stab at something in the dark, or an exercise in positive thinking to try and make ourselves feel better. Prayer changes things. But we have to talk to God about the

things that need to be changed. Prayer is acknowledging that, even though what we are praying for may seem impossible to us, with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). When we pray, we're saying, "Lord, I have these needs, and I know You care about them and will hear my requests."

Prayer is serving God His way. It's not just about us getting our needs met, although that's an important part of prayer. God's plan is to rule earth through His delegated authority. That's us—we who believe in Him. God wants us to bring His kingdom to bear upon the issues of the earth. God has things for each of us to do, and they start with prayer.

Pastor Jack said, "If we think that a future in heaven is the sum of Christ's gift to us, we will live out a spiritually immature existence, pointed toward heaven, but pointless on earth."

Pastor Jack was never one to be vague about the truth.

"People need to understand why God doesn't just do everything on His own initiative," he said. "It goes back to God giving the responsibility for governing earth's affairs to humankind (Genesis 1:26,28). He ordained that everything on earth would be determined by human choice. 'The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men' (Psalm 115:16). But it only works when man keeps in relationship with God. The will of God and the works and power of God do not simply flow without an invitation into earth's scene. The Lord has transmitted to His people the responsibility of inviting the presence of the kingdom. It's not because God can't do something without us, but because He won't do it without us."

Some people believe that God is going to do whatever He is going to do no matter what, so there is no reason to pray. But the truth is there are things God will not do on earth except in answer to prayer.

"There are people who don't like this idea because they don't want the responsibility that it carries with it," said Pastor Jack. "They just want God to do what He's going to do. But God wants to grow up His sons and daughters, and He waits to move where they invite Him to move. That's what He wants to do! His decree is clear about this. But we need to be equally clear: This emphasis does not minimize the sovereignty of God. The power is all His! But views of God's sovereignty can overlook His will to involve His children in advancing His redemptive purposes. The Sovereign God Almighty has decreed that what takes place on earth shall be realized through the willing activities of people who submit to His will and invoke His presence and power."

This explains why the earth is in the mess it's in. God has delegated everything to man, and we have reaped what we've sown. God has determined, and chosen to abide by, this sovereign decree: He works on earth in answer to our prayers, and we have neglected to pray.

The good news is that it's never too late to sow the seeds of prayer and gain a different harvest than the seeds of sin and death we have produced in our world. We can invite God's power to enter specific situations right now. When we pray, we're saying "Lord, I want to be Your instrument through which You do what You want to do on this planet. Help me to pray according to Your will, so that Your will is done on earth." This is what it means to pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done."

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Stormie Omartian says that upon first meeting Jack Hayford more than two decades ago, she explained her New Age beliefs to him, and he told her she was "ignorant." Not stupid, but *unknowing of what it was she needed*. Eventually, the faith of a friend brought her to sit under Pastor Jack's teaching. Today, 23 years later, the strength and transparency of Stormie's message to others has made her a bestselling author and earned many prestigious awards. Hers is an incredible testimony of *multiplication* of the ministry imparted by Pastor Jack Hayford. More than six million copies of *The Power of a Praying*® series of books have been sold, and Omartian sits on the Board of Trustees of The King's College and Seminary. Stormie and her husband, Michael, have also written hundreds of songs, including the Christian musical, *Child of the Promise*. They have been married 29 years and have three grown children.

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