THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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THE POTENT POWER OF PRAYER

Sam Woody

How often are you talking to God? Consider this: If you pray five times a day for just two minutes each time, that's only ten minutes a day. Over a week, that adds up to 70 minutes. Throw in another 30 minutes (to make it easy math) for church services or miscellaneous gatherings, and you're at 100 minutes a week.

With 10,080 minutes in a calendar week, 100 minutes is less than 1% of your time dedicated to prayer. Is that enough? Does that strengthen our relationship with God, or are we drifting apart due to a lack of communication with the Almighty?

Imagine if you only spoke to your best friend for ten minutes a day. Would that friendship thrive, or would it quietly fade from neglect? Now, consider that God isn't simply a friend; he's so much more than that. He's our Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. He made us, He gives us everything good & perfect, and He wants to save us. If 10 minutes a day feels skimpy for a human relationship, how much more so for the One who knit us together?

If anyone understood the power of prayer, it was Jesus. Despite being the Son of God, He made prayer a cornerstone of His life. The Gospels record at least twenty instances of Jesus praying: after His baptism, before choosing His disciples, during miracles, and even in His final moments on the cross.

Take **Mark 1:35** for example: "*Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.*" Jesus didn't only pray when the mood struck; He carved out time, even before the rooster crowed. Why did Jesus, who held the universe in His hands, need to pray? The answer lies in His humanity. He felt the same exhaustion, sorrow, and hunger we do. He leaned on His heavenly Father for strength and direction, proving prayer's power isn't only for the weak. If Jesus needed it, shouldn't we be sprinting to our prayer closets?

The Bible encourages us in **Philippians 4:6**, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*" This isn't ancient wisdom; it's a survival kit for modern-day chaos. It's not about dumping your worries - it's handing them to the One who can untangle them. Think of it as outsourcing your stress to the ultimate problem-solver. And the bonus? **Philippians 4:7** promises, "*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" That's not simply calm; that's supernatural serenity.

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To grow closer to God through prayer, consider these five key points: 1) Quality over Quantity: Sure, time matters, but it's the heart behind the prayer that packs the punch. It's not about impressing God with your word count - it's about meaning every syllable. 2) Pray Without Ceasing: This isn't a call to live on your knees 24/7. It's about keeping God in your life. Stuck in traffic? Pray. Nailing a presentation? Thank Him. It's a running conversation with the Creator - less formal, more friend-like. 3) Remember Who You're Talking To: God's not

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a celestial vending machine where you punch in prayers, and blessings pop out. He's the King of Kings, worthy of awe. **Psalm 145:3** says, "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.*" Approach with humility, not a shopping list. 4) Make It a Habit: Prayer doesn't happen by accident. Set a timer, claim a corner, put it on your calendar, or pray while brewing your coffee. Multitasking for the soul never hurt anyone. Make it a habit & soon it'll feel as natural as scrolling on your phone. 5) Believe: **James 1:6** warns, "*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*" Doubt says, "Why bother?" Faith says, "He's listening!" Even a tiny spark of belief can shift mountains.

As **James 5:16** declares, "*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*" Your prayers aren't whispers; they're dynamite. Look at Elijah: "*He prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain*" (**James 5:17-18**). One guy's prayers flipped the weather forecast for years! If that's not power, what is? Your prayers might not stop storms, but they can move the One who does. Jesus taught in **Luke 11:9-10**: "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*"

This isn't a one-and-done deal. It's a persistent pounding on heaven's door. Picture a child begging for a snack; the parent caves because of love, not annoyance. God, our perfect Father, wants that tenacity & resilience. It shows we trust Him to deliver.

In a world where anxiety is an unwelcome houseguest, prayer offers the eviction notice. By giving God more than 1% of our time, we tap into a transformative force. So, next time stress knocks, pray. If it worked for Jesus, it will work for us.

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GOD IS GOOD

Richard Garbi

God is good—completely, consistently, and beyond human comprehension. This truth is affirmed repeatedly in Scripture (**Luke 18:19, Psalm 73:1, I Timothy 4:4, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 100:5, Psalm 135:3, Psalm 145:9, Jeremiah 33:11, Lamentations 3:25, Nahum 1:7, I Peter 2:3, Psalm 119:68, and Psalm 107:1,** etc.) God is not merely good in what He does—He is good in His very nature. God is so good to His creation because He is entirely without evil. (**Psalms 92:15, I John 1:5**) Not only is there no evil in Him, but He cannot tolerate evil. (**Psalm 5:4, Habakkuk 1:13**) Finally, God actively does good—He does not remain distant but takes action within His creation. Before the foundation of the world, God already knew the cost of creating humanity—that He would enter His creation, suffer, and ultimately die to redeem it. (**Hebrews 3:4, Genesis 1:1, Ephesians 1:3 - 4, I Peter 1:17 - 21**) David declares in **Psalm 145:9**, "*The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.*" When I consider the works of His hands and all that He has done, I must agree with David. The Lord is good to all! Yet when we look at the world around us, this truth raises a difficult question.

Darkness undeniably exists in the world. There is hate, anger, and pettiness—realities that are deeply troubling to witness. People harm themselves and others. Beyond this, there are also the harsh and impersonal realities of suffering in the natural world. Children contract terminal illnesses, people die on the freeway on their way home from work, in storms, in freak accidents, and in other natural disasters. In his 1995 book, River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life, Richard Dawkins wrote,

> *The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. During the minute that it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive, many others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear, others are slowly being devoured from within by rasping parasites, thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst, and disease. It must be so. If there is ever a time of plenty, this very fact will automatically lead to an increase in the population until the natural state of starvation and misery is restored.*

He concludes the thought with this striking summary of the universe: "*The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.*" This raises a pressing question: how can a good God allow all of this to exist?

If you have not yet wrestled with this question, you likely will. And I think it is important that we be able to have a defense for our hope in the Lord Jesus (**I Peter 3:15**). While a short article cannot fully explore this issue, we can consider

several key ideas that point toward an answer.

First, there is an argument that was originally proposed by Thomas Aquinas in his work "Five Ways" and popularized in modern times by C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity. People who assert that a good God cannot exist and allow evil are basing this on the axiomatic presence of Good and Evil. And this ultimately proves that God exists and is the source of all that is good. C.S. Lewis writes: *"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"*

If the universe is just a "blind, pitiless" process (as Dawkins suggests), then would we have any sense of good and evil at all? The fact that we feel a moral outrage suggests that we are comparing the world to a standard that exists outside of it. If there is such a thing as an objective evil, then there must be an objective good. And if objective good exists, it must have a source. That ultimate source is God.

Second, God created the world, and at the end of His creation, *"... God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good"* (**Genesis 1:31**). What God created was very good. What happened? How did things go so wrong? Creation was broken when Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of the Lord (**Genesis 3:1 - 24**). "*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.*" (**Romans 5:12**) God is not the source of what is wrong with this world—we are. Solomon says in **Ecclesiastes 7:29,** "*See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.*" God made us in His image, to carry out His good purpose for us. But we have all gone astray. (**Isaiah 53:6**) When prophesying to the people of Judah concerning the coming judgment of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah writes of this very principle,

> *The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish. The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.* (**Isaiah 24:4 - 6**)

Who was to blame for the suffering of the people of Judah during the siege and captivity? Was God to blame? No, God is not to blame. The people sinned and had to bear the consequences of their actions.

This brings me to the next point. Some of the suffering that we see in the world is the direct consequence of the choices people have made. (Ultimately, all of the evil in the world is the consequence of mankind breaking God's good creation.) If we ask God to prevent all evil, we must consider what that would require. Should God prevent every harmful action for every person? What about the consequences for our actions? Should God prevent punishment for criminals? For God to eliminate all evil, He would also have to eliminate our ability to choose. But without choice, love, obedience, and righteousness would be meaningless.

The good news is that God has already provided a solution to the evil in the world. Rather than preventing evil from occurring for all time, He loved the world so much that He entered His own creation as a man and paid the price for our sins: *"that the world might be saved through him"* (**John 3:16 - 17**). God did not remain distant from our suffering—He stepped into it. God provides the ultimate solution to repair His broken creation. No one can say God does not understand (**Hebrews 4:15**). He cared enough to personally remedy our mistakes, to fix what we have broken. (**Romans 5:6 - 8**)

The scriptures reveal that God knew before He created the world that mankind would fall short of His glory. And in sinning, we would break His good creation and put ourselves in a position we could not escape. God created the world anyway, with a plan to pay the ultimate price. Why create the world at all, knowing it would be broken, full of suffering, and need a Savior? God created the world so that He might bring "*many sons to glory*." (**Hebrews 2:10**) This means that life is an opportunity—an opportunity from God to know and live for Him. And finally, be with Him eternally after our earthly journey is done. And it is not as if this world is only suffering; there is so much of God's goodness for us to enjoy. God continues to pour out His blessings on His creation even now. (**Acts 14:17**) His ultimate blessing is the gift of eternal life through His Son. The Lord is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*." (**II Peter 3:9**) The presence of evil does not disprove the goodness of God—it reveals our need for Him. And in Jesus Christ, God has already begun the work of restoring everything that was broken.

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Here and There

The brethren in **Bakersfield, CA** rejoiced with the heavenly host when **Talen Monaco** was immersed for the remission of his sins on August 14, 2025.

The body meeting on Elms Blvd in **Excelsior Springs, MO** praised God when **Brett Anders Jones** confessed his faith and was baptized into Christ on March 7.

There was much to be thankful for at the **Gardner, KS** congregation when **Joshua Cates** placed his membership with them on March 22 and **Gary Coyer** had his membership restored on March 29.

Richard and Jeannie Owens celebrated 60 years of marriage on March 26. We congratulate this lovely couple for their godly example of faith and love.

Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love your salvation say continually, 'The Lord be Magnified!'

Psalm 40:16

Special Meetings

2026

April 25-26.....Summersville, MO
May 23-24.....Murray Rd, Lee's Summit, MO
June 13-14.....Vandalia, IA
June 29-July 3.....Midwest Bible Campout
July 26-31.....One-Week Meeting, Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO

Additional details for these and other upcoming meetings can be found by visitiong the Gospel Message website. You can use the QR code below to navigate to the relavent page.

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