

Prayer – A Call to Action

by
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Some years ago, I was talking with a missionary who had just returned from a third world country. During his ten years bringing villagers medicine, he had nearly died of a terrible disease, he was threatened at gun-point by a militia and he suffered ongoing attacks of malaria. As it happened, we were about to take the basketball court when a frenetic young man approached and asked us if we were "saved".

My friend did not understand what was being asked. "Saved? Saved from what?" was all he could respond. The young man then began stumbling through a series of Bible verses that pointed to sinfulness and the need for redemption. "Oh I see," my missionary friend said. "You do not think that I have found salvation. Hmm.. And if I don't confess precisely as you say then I am not truly a believer, is that it?" The young man nodded and said "that's right."

With the wisdom of Solomon, my missionary friend told the young man, "you mentioned that prayer changes things. I believe that prayer changes people and that people change things. Your life has to be more than words. You need to live what you believe. Now go out and preach the Gospel and only if your example fails - use words."

Today in my community, I draw guidance from that experience. The missionary's insight often rings through my mind. As we pray, our lives turn outward instead of inward. We become more keenly aware of the suffering of one another and our collective community. As we pray, we cannot help but become advocates of justice. We cannot help but become involved for the good of others. We cannot help but become outspoken against evil.

The answer to community problems like unemployment do not have simple solutions. God doesn't just rain down Allegheny Ludlum plants all over the valley if we pray real hard. But prayer is a powerful dynamic that naturally calls us to act. It is through prayer where God resonates and then integrates our thoughts, words and actions for the greatest good.

In school, students are taught that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

In the spiritual reality I believe that for every selfless prayer there is a God reaction. Likewise I believe that all evil results from the lack of prayer. This of course doesn't mean that people that do not pray cannot accomplish good things. They do. And it doesn't mean that terrible things don't happen to good prayerful people. Evil is indiscriminate. It's just that motivation and attitude transform radically when we put our hands together to pray and listen. When this occurs, people change and they in turn change things.

Last month the Apollo Area Economic Development Council was given a \$2,800 grant to help the Apollo library implement an ambitious Internet program so that people in the community could be empowered with the latest educational tools. The grant came from the Kiskiminetas Presbytery. There was a lot of thinking, effort and prayer involved in putting together that grant. The money is great but the result of people involving their spirituality with their work is greater.

I continue to believe that a critical component to economic development in our communities lies with our churches and synagogues because they call us to pray. The economic mess that Russia inherited from communism had nothing to do with God's wrath but it had everything to do with a society that enslaved the human spirit. When people are discouraged from faith, everything including work suffers. Our country is not inherently immune to the mistakes of Russia. Genuine faith should be revered, esteemed and honored in our schools and in our workplaces. Otherwise we may find that essential business qualities such as honesty are only concepts. If we fail to recognize that the future well-being of our communities and our nation begins with our prayers, missionaries might be coming here to save us all.



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