

# Prayer Changes Things

Read [Matthew 6:9-13](#)

Let's look at the next thing Jesus told us to pray in the Model Prayer:

<sup>10</sup>“**Your kingdom come.**

**Your will be done,**

**On earth as it is in heaven.”**

[MATTHEW 6:10](#)

Many people assume that this is a prayer asking Jesus to return and set up His eternal “*kingdom*.” Though there would be no harm in praying for the Lord to return (and every Christian should certainly be looking forward to his return), I don't see how it would do any good—praying for His return, that is. His return is going to happen, and happen at a time already set, whether you or I or anyone prays about it.

Right before His return to heaven after his resurrection, the disciples asked Jesus, “*Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?*” In other words, “Lord, is your kingdom coming now?” Jesus answered them, “*It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.*” ([Acts 1:6-7](#), emphasis added). Jesus told them that they didn't need to worry about when His kingdom would come; the Father had already “*set*” that date and He would take care of it.

So the Lord's return is going to happen, and happen at its appointed time. It's not something we need to pray about. We should be looking forward to it, and serving the Lord in light of it, but it's not something we need to pray about.

What did Jesus mean, then, when he told us to pray “*your kingdom come*” if He wasn't telling us to pray for Him to return and set up His eternal kingdom? He was telling us to pray for the power of His kingdom to come right now in the present age and change things!

This is a very exciting verse if you keep in mind that Jesus would not have told us to pray a prayer that didn't work, and if you understand that He is telling us to pray for the power of His kingdom to come right now. It means that every time we ask for His kingdom to come, it must come in some form or fashion! Isn't that amazing?

## **PRAYER CHANGES THINGS!**

*Why does prayer change things? What kind of prayer do you have to pray to change things? In what ways does prayer change things? Let's address these questions.*

### ***Why does prayer change things?***

Have you ever wondered why prayer is necessary? If God is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving, why doesn't He just do what He wants to do without us praying about it? Why does He expect us to pray? The answer is, God is keeping His word.

In the beginning, when God created man, He said to him, “**Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground**” ([Genesis 1:28](#), emphasis added). He told the man to “*subdue*” and “*Rule over*” the earth. In other words, He gave man authority over the earth. He has never taken that authority back, never gone back on his word.

God took this word so seriously that He even allowed Adam to hand over his authority to the devil when Adam chose to—which is what he was doing when he rebelled against God and ate of the forbidden tree ([Genesis 2:17](#); [Genesis 3:1–7](#)). The reason for all the evil and suffering in the world is because mankind, through our sin, gave the devil the authority—the legal right, if you will—to work here.

God took his word so seriously that even when it came time to visit the earth through the Virgin Mary, and redeem mankind, He first got Mary’s consent. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her of God’s plan to bring His Son into the world through her. Mary asked how this could be since she was a virgin. Gabriel said it would happen miraculously, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary replied: “***I am the Lord’s servant.... May it be to me as you have said***” ([Luke 1:38](#)). What I want you to notice is that God did not involve Mary against her will. He waited until she said, “***May it be to me as you have said.***” God refused to enter the world that He had given to human beings until He received a human being’s permission!

That’s how seriously God takes the delegated authority He has given mankind.

That is why prayer is necessary. It gives God the “**legal**” right to come and work here. A man or woman, a member of the species to whom God has given the earth, is inviting God in through prayer. Now He is free to come and help us.

<sup>16</sup>“**The heavens are the heavens of the LORD,  
But the earth He has given to the sons of men.**”

[PSALM 115:16](#)

God *could* come and do anything He wants without us praying for it. But He won’t. He has given the earth to man (as the above verse states) and He’s never taken His word back. He waits to be invited before He works here. We invite Him through prayer.

So why does prayer change things? It gives God the invitation He needs to work on earth on our behalf. The devil is a criminal, and will lie or pressure his way in “***to steal and kill and destroy***” ([John 10:10](#)). God is a gentleman, and always waits to be invited: “**Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in....**” ([Revelation 3:20](#), emphasis added). He is knocking. We open the door and invite Him in through prayer.

***What kind of prayer do you have to pray to change things?***

A prayer that is according to His will. Jesus told us to pray, “**your kingdom come, your will be done**” (emphasis added). It is prayer according to God’s will that changes things.

So it is important when we pray to find God’s heart on a matter. What is it His will to do? What does He want us to pray? This may mean that we should listen first, to discern what God is saying. When we let the Holy Spirit lead our prayers, we’ll see things changing.

God can’t be manipulated into doing things against His will. There’s the story of a boy who wanted a new bike. He decided to pray about it. He paced in his living room, thinking what to pray, and said, “God, if you get me the new bike, I’ll be good the rest of my life.” He thought, *God will never believe that*. He tried again, “God, if you get me that new bike, I’ll be good for three weeks.” He thought, *God won’t believe that either*. He spotted a statue of the Virgin Mary on the mantle and got an idea. He took the statue to his room, tucked it in a drawer, and returned to the living room. Then he prayed, “God, if you ever want to see your mother again....”

We may laugh at that story, but it’s pretty common for people to try to manipulate God into answering prayer. Perhaps by how many words we use in our prayer, by how much faith we claim to have, by the Scriptures we quote, and so on. There may be some validity to some of these “prayer formulas,” but the bottom line—if we want results in our prayer—is to find God’s heart on a matter and pray according to His will.

<sup>14</sup> **“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

<sup>15</sup> **And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”**

**[1 JOHN 5:14-15](#)**

A prayer that changes things must be according to his will.

***In what ways does prayer change things?***

As we’ve learned, every time we pray for God’s kingdom to come, it *does* come in some form or fashion—in some way His power comes and changes things. But His kingdom does not always come in the same way. It has a few different ways of coming:

**Sometimes His kingdom comes with obvious power.** Listen to the following testimony from a fellow pastor friend of mine: “At the first church where I served as full-time pastor, the church prayed for a man who was deathly ill in a local hospital, a man named Don Bandy. The church didn’t know Don personally at the time (he was a friend of one of the members), but the church prayed for him during the Wednesday night prayer meeting. Don later told us what happened in his hospital room.

He was in the bed, near death, when a cloud began to come in the room's window. In the Bible, God sometimes appeared in a cloud ([Exodus 13:21](#); [1 Kings 8:10](#); [Matthew 17:5](#)), but Don wasn't a believer at the time and had no idea what was happening. Until a voice spoke to him from the cloud—about his need to turn his life over to God, and promising to heal him. Then the cloud left.

Don did give his life to God, and he did recover. He later became a member of our church. He said that the miraculous occurrences in his hospital room that night were all because our church prayed for him. The power of God's kingdom had come in the room that night and *changed things* for Don."

Sometimes His kingdom comes with obvious power when we pray.

**Sometimes His kingdom comes behind-the-scenes.** That is, it may not be obvious for a while that the kingdom came and changed anything when we prayed. We may have to go down the road some before we see any results. But our prayer *did* work—Jesus said it would. It's just not obvious this time. It's behind-the-scenes.

An acquaintance of mine told me about an interesting day he had early in his Christian life. He woke up one morning excited about a worship concert he was going to attend that night, praying, "Lord, use me today," and visualizing God using him in worship as he raised his voice with the crowd of people. Things didn't turn out like David expected.

First, he was late for the concert. He took the wrong route, and then realized he needed to get gas, and so he had to pull into a service station. At the station, he looked over and saw a guy about to break his car window with a rock—the man had locked himself out of his car. David said, "Don't break your window. I can help you get in your car." David opened his trunk, pulled out a slim jim, and opened the man's car for him ("Some of my pre-Christian skills came into use there," David told me).

Now, frustrated and angry—and later than ever—David drove to the concert. But there was no place to park, so he pulled over into a dirt field, which was muddy from rain. When he stepped out of the car, he stepped on a Bible laying there in the mud. He picked it up, and inside it he saw \$240 in cash! There was a lady's name in it, so he took the Bible and the cash to the information desk in the lobby, and they said they would get them to the lady.

He was finally at the concert, but now there were no seats left. He had to stand in the back for the concert. No one greeted him. He stood there upset, wondering what had happened to this day that had started off so well.

It didn't dawn on him until the next day that what had happened to him was his prayer! He had asked God to use him, expecting a great worship experience. God had used him all right, but in a different way: to keep one man from breaking his car window,

and to return a Bible and \$240 to a woman! God's kingdom had come when David prayed, but not in the obvious way. God had worked behind-the-scenes to use him.

Sometimes His kingdom comes with obvious power. Sometimes his kingdom comes behind-the-scenes. But....

**Always His kingdom comes with His presence.** We may not see His kingdom come with obvious power to change things when we pray. We may have to wait a long time to see how our prayer worked behind-the-scenes—maybe even until we get to heaven. But we can always enjoy the presence of His kingdom when we pray. The Bible says:

<sup>17</sup>“**For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**”

**[ROMANS 14:17](#)**

No matter what we see or don't see when we pray, we can always enjoy the presence of His kingdom—His peace and joy.

In fact, this is one of the secret ways God changes things: by changing us. Things may be unraveling around us, but He gives us His peace and joy, and we are able to make it through. We are able to keep our heads and make the right decisions. And we find everything working out in the end.

The 1998 movie *Ruby Bridges* tells the story of the six-year-old girl who, in 1960, became the first black person to attend an all-white school in Louisiana. The movie shows Ruby, escorted by four federal agents, walking through an angry crowd outside the school in New Orleans. As they go up the steps, she suddenly turns around, walks back down the steps, and appears to say something to the crowd. The agents motion for her to come back up the steps, but she stays a moment, her lips still moving. Then she turns and goes in the school.

A psychiatrist who's offered to help the family is looking on. In the next scene, the psychiatrist and Ruby are sitting alone at her kitchen table, where she is coloring.

He says, “But honey, I saw you talking to them. Did you finally get angry with them? Did you tell them to just leave you alone?”

“I didn't talk to them,” she said.

“I saw your lips moving,” he said.

“I wasn't talking to them,” she said. “I was praying for them.”

“Praying for them?”

“Yes, I pray for them every day in the car. But I forgot that day.”

“Oh. What prayer did you say?”

She put her crayons down, folded her hands, and said, “Please God, forgive these people, because even if they say these mean things, they don't know what they're doing, so you can forgive them, just like you did those folks a long time ago, when they said terrible things about you.”

One of the ways God changes things is by changing us. His presence comes and gives us the peace and love we need to make it through difficult situations.

Always his kingdom comes with His presence.

Prayer changes things by bringing the power of God's kingdom on the scene—sometimes obviously, sometimes in a behind-the-scenes way, always with his presence.

### **SUMMARY**

Jesus would not have told us to pray a prayer that didn't work. Therefore, when we pray, "*your kingdom come,*" it must always come in some form or fashion! The power of His kingdom comes and changes things. *Why does prayer change things?* Because it gives God the invitation He needs to come to earth and work on our behalf. *What kind of a prayer changes things?* A prayer that is according to God's will. *In what ways does prayer change things?* Sometimes obviously, sometimes behind-the-scenes, but always with his presence.