

prayer & fasting

What Prayer Is—2 Chronicles 7:14 (Part One)

Prayer is a Choice

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Objective Sentence: Everyone should pray with results because of the principles of effective prayer outlined in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Introduction: On June 12, 1873, farmers in southwestern Minnesota saw what looked like a snowstorm coming towards their fields from the west. Then they heard a roar and soon saw that what seemed to be snowflakes were in fact grasshoppers. In a matter of hours knee-high fields of grass and wheat were eaten to the ground by the hungry hoppers. That dramatic descent was just the beginning. For five years, from 1873 to 1877, these bugs destroyed wheat, oats, corn and barley fields in Minnesota and surrounding states. In 1876 alone, they visited forty Minnesota counties and destroyed 500,000 acres of crops. In the spring of 1877, farmers were worried. They believed that the dreadful plague would once again visit them and again destroy the rich wheat crop, bringing ruin to thousands of people. The situation was so serious that Governor John S. Pillsbury proclaimed April 26 as a day prayer and fasting. He urged every man, woman and child to ask God to prevent the terrible scourge. On that April day all schools shops, stores and offices were closed. There was a reverent quiet hush over all the state. The next day dawned bright and clear. The temperature was warm the following day, which was very unusual for April. Minnesotans were devastated as they discovered billions of grasshopper larvae wiggling to life. It appeared that it wouldn't be long before they hatched and started feeding on the wheat crop. A couple of days passed and something wonderful happened. The temperature suddenly dropped, and a snowstorm followed, damaging the grasshopper eggs, just as if poison or fire had been used to exterminate them. Some eggs did hatch, but by August they had flown away. That day went down in history of Minnesota as the day God answered the prayers of the people.

#1. Prayer is a Choice (2 Chron. 7:14 If my people)

A. C.S. Lewis: *The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in.*

1. Call (Jer. 33:3 call unto me Jer. 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think towards you)

a. Pastor Dan: The Lord gave the promise in Jere. 29:11 when the Jews were in exile. The Babylonians had destroyed their temple and carried them off into

slavery. It was a dark time and appeared as though there was no hope for them. Into their despair and darkness the Lord promised them a future.

- b. *John Wesley*: It seems God is limited by our prayer life: that he can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him.
 - c. **Ps. 145:18** the Lord is near to all who call upon Him
 - d. **Dan. 6:10** Now when Daniel knew the writing was signed he went home. And in his upper room with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down three times that day and prayed. He thought it better, to spend a night in a den of man eating hungry lions rather than miss a day in prayer.
 - e. **Phil. 4:6; Matt. 26:41; Luke 18:1**
 - f. *Henry Ward Beecher*: Prayer covers the whole of life. There is no thought, feeling, yearning or desire, however low, trifling, or vulgar we may deem it, which, if it affects our real interest or happiness, we may not lay before God and be sure of sympathy. His nature is such that our often coming does not tire Him.
 - g. **Mark 11:23-24**
 - h. *Phillips Brooks*: Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness.
 - i. *William McGill*: The value of persistent prayer is not that He will hear us but that we will finally hear Him.
2. **Ask** (**Ja. 4:2** *you have not because you ask not*)
- a. **Is. 55:6-11** Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon while He is near ... for My does word will not return unto me void but it accomplishes that which I please.
 - b. **Luke 11:9-10** ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it ...
 - c. *Ruth Bell Graham*: Pray when you feel like it, for it is a sin to neglect such an opportunity. Pray when you don't feel like it, for it is dangerous to remain in such a condition
 - d. **1 Thess. 5:16-18**
 - e. *John Trap*: God never denied that soul anything that went as far as heaven to ask for it
 - f. **James 1:5** if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, but let him or her ask in faith nothing wavering.
 - g. *Thomas Watson; Acts 12:5-19*: The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.
 - h. *Watchman Nee*: Our prayers lay the track down on which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails.
 - i. **Psalms 91:15** Because he has set his love on me therefore I will deliver him. He will call on me and I [God] will answer him. I will be with him in trouble and deliver him.
 - j. *Billy Graham*: Heaven is full of answers to prayers for which no one ever bothered to ask.
 - k. *John Wesley*: God does nothing but by prayer, and everything with it.

Closing and Invitation: Tony Campolo was asked to speak at a Pentecostal college. Before the service, eight men had him kneel so they could place their hands on his head and pray. Tony was glad to have the prayer, but each of them prayed a long time, and the longer they prayed the more they pushed on Tony's head. And then they even seemed to wander in their prayers. One of the men didn't even pray for Tony, he prayed for some guy he was concerned about. He began to pray and said, "Dear Lord, you know Charlie Stoltzfus. He lives in that silver trailer down the road a mile. You know the trailer, Lord, just down the road on the right-hand side." Tony wanted to interrupt and tell him that God already knew where they guy lived and didn't need directions, but he just knelt there trying to keep his head upright. The prayer went on: "Lord, Charlie told me this morning he's going to leave his wife and three kids. Step in and do something, God. Bring that family back together." With that, the prayer time ended and Tony went on to preach at the college chapel. Things went well and he got in his car and began to drive home. As he drove onto the Pennsylvania Turnpike, he saw a hitchhiker and felt compelled to pick him up. Tony said this, "We drove a few minutes and I said: 'Hi, my name's Tony Campolo. What's yours?' He said, 'My name is Charlie Stoltzfus.' I couldn't believe it I got off the turnpike at the next exit and headed back. He got a bit uneasy with that and after a few minutes he said, 'Hey mister, where are you taking me?' I said, 'I'm taking you home.' He narrowed his eyes and asked, 'Why?' I said, 'Because you just left your wife and three kids, right?' That blew him away. 'Yeah Yeah, that's right.' With shock written all over his face, he plastered himself against the car door and never took his eyes off me. Then I really did him in as I drove right to his silver trailer. When I pulled up, his eyes seemed to bulge as he asked, 'How did you know that I lived here?' I said 'God told me.' (I believe God did tell me.) When he opened the trailer door his wife exclaimed, 'You're back You're back ' He whispered in her ear and the more he talked, the bigger her eyes got. I said with real authority, 'The two of you sit down. I'm going to talk and you two are going to listen ' Man, did they listen . . . That afternoon I led those two young people to Jesus Christ."