

# New Hope Sermon - Living the Vision Prayer

Do you know this old saying: “Prayer is the key to the day and the lock to the night”? Or this one: “Prayer does not fit us for the great work. Prayer is the greater work (Oswald Chambers). Prayer is actually our oxygen that connects us to God. I knew about that as a young Christian but I didn’t understand the importance of praying WITH others for several years into my faith.



Community prayer is one of our core values as a church. So let me tell you how I backed into this area in my life. “As a young mother I still wanted to serve and be active in my church and so one summer I volunteered to co-lead a vacation Bible school class for 4<sup>th</sup> graders. My team teacher was another young mother, Mary Doerfer, whom I had led to faith a few years before each of us got married. We each had little ones who would be cared for to enable mothers to be on VBS staff. We had some curriculum and open, willing hearts but we were NOT prepared for the boisterousness apathy toward God the students in our group displayed. It was b-a-a-d!! Or, from our perspective, they were b-a-a-d – particularly one guy whose name I can’t even recall now – I just remember his actions and his attitudes. We tried some simple disciplinary tactics to no avail. As teachers we were concerned with his negative effect on the other kids. We had each prayed about him individually but it seemed something more was needed. So Mary and I decided to meet together to pray and pray fervently for God’s intervention.

That was our introduction to the power of “community prayer (even for 2 or 3 who are gathered in Jesus’ name (Mt. 28:19-20). God intervened alright and that class turned right around – the kids became attentive, they bonded with us, and they began to think seriously about Jesus. In fact, the dynamic was so good, they begged us to continue the group into the next school year – when they were still a year too young to be in youth group at the church. So we did – we met every week at our house and introduced those kids to the basics of Christian faith through C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* analogies. They loved it. We even wrote our own play, based on C.S. Lewis characters and made hand puppets (of a rather high quality☺) to use to tell the story. It was so good the local public elementary school allowed us to put the play on for the whole school! Amazing. And our kids made heart commitments to know and follow Christ. And thus my journey into the power of community prayer began.

Peter Kreeft, in his book *Prayer for beginners* says: “Some say that prayer... is an unaffordable luxury today, or an irresponsible withdrawal from the pressing public problems of our poor, hurting world. I say just the opposite: that *nothing*, nothing is more relevant and responsible; that nothing else can ever cure our sick world except saints, and saints are never made except by prayer. Nothing but saints can save our world because the deepest root of all the world's diseases is sin, and saints are the antibodies that fight sin. Nothing but prayer can make saints because nothing but God can make saints, and we meet God in prayer. **Prayer is the hospital for souls where we meet Doctor God.** Peter Kreeft, [Prayer for Beginners](#) (Ignatius Press, 2000), page 14

I believe that power multiplies when we are involved in group prayer. And that’s our key text for today. The promise in Mt. 18 is when 2 or 3 meet together in Jesus’ name, the Spirit can show us what to pray and God will answer!! This is the key. We come together to listen for God’s agenda – to ask the Spirit who knows that agenda – to communicate it to us as we are praying and worshipping God. All in the name and for the sake of Christ’s interests in the world. Often that happens when one prays

something outloud that was the very same thought another of us had at that time. Or there is a confirmation in our spirit that this is God speaking. This is the sense of agreement which is in the text. The Greek word for unity is *supheneo*. It's where we get the word symphony. In order to have harmony, there are a number of things we need to agree on...There is power in unity because God strengthens our faith as he joins our hearts together in one accord. (S. Omartian, *Praying together*, pp. 106, 109).

That has been Carol (a visiting pastor this Sunday and my prayer partner for 7 years) and my experience over the decades, and it is confirmed as we, and countless other Christians around the world and through the centuries, have seen God work in answer to prayer.

This week I read the book *The Power of Praying Together* by Stormie Omartian and Jack Hayford. Let me give you a couple of important principles from that book and then show you how it just worked for Carol and me. 1. The definition of intercession: Intercession is praying on behalf of another with the Holy Spirit's direction and enablement while recognizing all consequences depend on those prayers. Prayer is not guess work, superstition or an arrogant assumption that we ourselves are powerful. When people pray, things happen. But the power is God's (Omartian, p. 188).

2. We are the intercessors that God has called today. We are agents for his kingdom...and He wants us to become his instruments of redemption in every situation through Holy Spirit energized prayer. We just need to plug in with our lives and our time to this power source.

And #3. We must not underestimate the power of group prayer in straightening and clearing the path we are to travel and enabling us to walk on it. (Omartian, p. 110).

Now let me give you a practical example of how this works from the prayer time together Carol and I had yesterday. As Carol and I were praying, the Lord put on my heart a burden for professional women around the world. I began praying for the needs I know as a professional woman, and that I know any of my colleagues know as well. After we had finished our prayer time, Carol had said she had a word from the Lord she wanted to share with me. She told me, "I think you should start a daily email, which would include a Bible verse and a prayer that you could send out to these women for their encouragement and hope." I understood the great value of that suggestion, and I had been praying myself for more prayer partners. This would certainly be the answer to that need. But I was a bit daunted by the breadth and scope of this vision, so I kept lifting it up to the Lord. The next day, the Lord brought me to Isaiah 50:4. I hadn't been studying in Isaiah--it was just a time when the Spirit brought a scripture that was God's word in my situation. "The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears and I have not been rebellious" (Isaiah 50:4). That was God's assurance that from the vision that came in a corporate prayer time, He would make it possible in the coming months.

Let me close with this second example: "In the fall of 2005 a little 9-year-old boy named Austin had to have his tonsils removed. "Before the surgery, an anesthesiologist came in to start an IV. He was wearing a cool surgical cap covered in colorful frogs. Austin loved that "frog hat." When the doctor started to leave, Austin called out, "Hey, wait." The doctor turned. "Yeah, buddy, what do you need?" "Do you go to church?" "No," the doctor admitted. "I know I probably should, but I don't. Austin then asked, "Well, are you saved?" Chuckling nervously, the doctor said: "Nope. But after talking to you, maybe it's something I should consider." Pleased with his response, Austin answered, "Well you should, 'cause Jesus is great!" "I'm sure he is, little guy," the doctor said, and quickly made his exit.

When Austin's surgery was finished, the anesthesiologist came into the waiting room to talk to Austin's mother. He told her the surgery went well, then said, "Mrs. Blessit, I don't usually come down and talk to the parents after a surgery, but I just had to tell you what your son did." *Oh boy*, I thought. *What did that little rascal do now?* The doctor explained that he'd just put the mask on Austin when

my son signaled that he needed to say something. When the doctor removed the mask, Austin blurted, "Wait a minute, we have to pray!" The doctor told him to go ahead, and Austin prayed: "Dear Lord, please let all the doctors and nurses have a good day. And Jesus, please let the doctor with the frog hat get saved and start going to church. Amen."

The doctor admitted that this had touched him. "I was so sure he would pray that his surgery went well," he explained. "He didn't even mention his surgery. He prayed for me! Mrs. Blessit, I had to come down and let you know what a great little guy you have."

But listen to where the power of group prayer comes into the story: "A few minutes later, a nurse came to take the mother to post-op. She had a big smile on her face as we walked to the elevator. "There's something you should know," she said. "Some of the other nurses and I have been witnessing to and praying for that doctor for a long time. After your son's surgery, he tracked a few of us down to tell us about Austin's prayer. He said, 'Well girls, you got me. If that little boy could pray for me when he was about to have surgery, then I think maybe I need his Jesus, too.'" *Tina Blessit, "A Prayer Before Surgery," Today's Christian (July/August 2006), p. 27. Amen.*