

Some Thoughts on Prayer

Introduction

Prayer isn't about asking God to do what I want.

Prayer is daring to talk to God.

Daring to Talk

If I dare to talk to God, this has implications. I think four of them are reasonably widely understood.

- It's daring to admit that there is someone more important than yourself.
- It's daring to allow this someone – whom you recognise is more important than yourself – to have a significant say in your affairs.
- It's revealing your most prominent thoughts and concerns to this someone – and, in the process, facing up to them yourself.
- It's risking facing whatever critique this someone might make of your most prominent thoughts and concerns.

I think there are two more implications we need to consider.

- It's authorising this someone to point to any particular part of what you have just requested and say, "Well, surely you can do *that* bit for yourself, can't you? I mean, if you really *try*?"
- And it's realising that this someone might, just possibly, then add, "Oh, and by the way, since we're on the subject, I've been thinking that X and Y and Z might also be useful things for someone to do to help prevent this sort of problem cropping up again in future. See what you can sort out, would you, and get back to me with the results? Ta, God."

If I can genuinely pray for something, believing it to be God's will, then I have no excuse in failing to take every opportunity presented to me to help that thing come to pass.

Of course, this 'every opportunity presented to me' is not simple – I can't do everything I could do because every action, every choice cuts off other possibilities. But I cannot, with integrity, pray and still refuse to participate.

To be straight with you, I do also talk to God and ask Him to do things I would like happen. After all, I'm only a young child in my faith, and it's okay to be honest with Him and with myself about what I want to happen.

But I do try not to confuse *what I want* with *what I believe He wants*. And, the more I grow, the less important *what I want* becomes.

Next steps

This contribution to the *Strong Foundations* exploration was co-written by Paul Bristow and Paul Hazelden (over a span of approximately 35 years). You are welcome to use it and distribute it how you like, but feedback would be appreciated.

- Is it helpful?
- Would you change anything?
- Would you like to talk about how we can learn from each other about how best to follow Jesus where we are?

You can contact me through the web form at mad-bristol or join the conversation on the *Strong Foundations* site.

- Web form: <http://mad-bristol.org.uk/contact/>
- Strong Foundations: <http://strongfoundations.pbworks.com>

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