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2013

Power

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Power

Some authors who write on spirituality praise the power of prayer, a helpful perspective. We could also consider power and prayer as almost mutually exclusive, which is a different concept, but also advantageous.

If power is associated with prayer, it certainly is not our power. Nothing we can do or say can bring God around to doing what we might want; no amount of words or depth of feelings can manipulate the creator of all that exists. But we have been invited by God to ask for what we need, as individuals and as communities who do not possess the capabilities for making everything right in our world or for bringing about all that we believe will be for everyone's good. So we ask God to do in us, with us and for us what we cannot do by ourselves alone. We are also invited to communicate with God about anything and everything that matters to us, which is another form of prayer in which power seems not at all present, yet which has significant benefits for us, as much as any of the major external events in our lives.

The power of prayer comes not from our having control of the outcomes, but from the positive focus of our desires and in our acts of trust. Prayer is a loving interaction, not a transaction where we give God what God wants in order to get what we want. God already wants what is best for us, so it is most reasonable and beneficial to go to the one who loves us in trust and to name or otherwise express our needs and our inspired desires.

Prayer is not a one-way, one-time interaction like putting money in a parking meter. We change, for the better, in the very act of becoming conscious of our desires and through the inner dialog with God which prayer is. If we want to receive something for ourselves or to be made capable of giving to others, the powerful effects of our prayer are primarily and most immediately within us. After that, we might or might not see perceptible consequences of our prayer in the world about us.

One of the hidden powers of prayer takes place in us in the very choice of what we bring to the relationship with God. For example, we will not find it within us to ask God, who is Love, to give us anything that is contrary to love. We cannot really pray in an open attitude to God for someone else's destruction. But we might well begin prayer with anger and hurt foremost in our thoughts and in our feelings. Praying, really praying, is not telling God what to do, as if we knew for certain what would be most helpful to us and to others. Rather, all prayer that is not just words, is a two-way communication between hearts – ours and God's – in which our wants, needs, desires, aspirations, hopes, doubts, fears and all that can take place

within us, become present to us and to God at the same time. Whether we understand or become aware of all that transpires in prayer, we always come out better than when we began, like a child going to a parent with whatever is on its mind, and always receiving the essential response to any and all needs: unconditional love.

“. . . when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:10)