

## Do Our Prayers Really Make a Difference?

[Hebrews 13:18-19](#)

Hebrews, Day 56

*Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

- Hebrews 13:18-19. ESV

Do you ever wonder why we need to pray? After all, if God is truly sovereign and He knows all and has everything planned out from before the foundation of the earth. what difference could our prayers make?

One way to think about and respond to these kinds of questions is to realize how much prayer changes us when we pray. We need to pray, because we need our hearts to be changed, and as we pray, our hearts are shaped profoundly. When we pray for someone, we come to love them more. When we pray about an issue or problem, we learn to trust God more for the outcome of the situation.

In [one my favorite scenes of one of my favorite movies, \*Shadowlands\*](#), C.S. Lewis (played by Sir Anthony Hopkins) explains why he prays in these terms. Lewis' wife, Joy Davidman, is suffering from cancer, and Jack (as C.S. Lewis was known to his friends) has been praying earnestly for her. She begins to get better, as the cancer heads into remission, and his friend affirm that God is answering his prayers. Lewis responds, "That's not why I pray. I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me."

C.S. Lewis never said or wrote those words, as far as we know. But it does seem to capture well what he might have said. It's a great thought, really. Of course our prayers don't change God. What a horrible thought that would be. Imagine if I, by my thoughts or words, could change God? How would God change? Would I be telling Him something He doesn't already know? Could I convince Him to change His mind and give in to my superior wisdom? Not!

So, if prayer doesn't change God, does that mean that all prayer does is change us? Is prayer entirely a matter of growing us in love, humility and trust? No. At least, not if we're going to take verses 18-19 of Hebrews 13 seriously. Here the author of Hebrews is asking for prayer, and is even earnestly urging the readers of his letter to pray for him. Why? "*in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.*"

He doesn't say, "Pray for me, so that you'll come to love me more." He doesn't say, "Pray for me, so that you'll learn to trust God more during our separation." No, he believes, and it's in God's inerrant word, that their prayers can speed his return to them. So, do our prayers make a difference? Yes. How? We can't say exactly and fully, can we?

We know our prayers don't change God, but it does seem our prayers can affect the timing of God's work and can shape other things in important ways. We pray for people's salvation because we believe God alone can save, and we believe God will answer prayer and save them. How is this possible? Because God ordained it that way. God's plans for the world include us. Our prayers, our preaching,

our sharing the Gospel, our service and love, and our obedience to God all are part of the plan of God and are genuinely used by Him for His glory and the fulfillment of His plan for the world and His people.

So, yes, our prayers really matter. We are called to pray, and even eagerly urged to pray, because "*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*" (James 5:16) So keep praying. Pray for me, and pray for one another.