

# Reflections

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

by Alison Fiddian-Green

What is Prayer? Hopefully, your answer will be similar to mine – prayer is a gift that enables us to communicate with the gracious and loving Lord of the universe, made possible by Christ’s interceding on our behalf through dying on the cross. Prayer is a chance to draw close to God and learn more of His will for our lives. A chance to adore Him, to praise Him, to bring our sins before Him and beg for forgiveness and it’s a way to ask Him to intervene in our lives and the lives of others to His glory. Through prayer God graciously lavishes gifts on us that we don’t deserve, and He protects us from the things that we do deserve!

The gift of prayer is phenomenal. Think about it for a moment. It’s the gift of conversing with the Creator of the Universe. Jeff Lucas, in his book “How Not to Pray” says: “...as children of God we are freely invited to bring our requests without hesitation...this flies in the face of human experience, where we might have been scolded by our human parents because of our incessant begging for yet another chocolate bar, or another unneeded toy. And yet we serve a God whose only complaint in this respect seems to be about our not asking, or when our asking has an obsessive selfishness at heart”, and “...the Amen to conclude the chat will always come from you.” So

God is interested in our prayers, He is deeply interested in our lives and He longs for us to share them with him.

What joy then, to pray for ASLAN’s work with the homeless! To recognise that we are **all** in need of His grace, mercy and power, and to come before Him to humbly ask Him to lead us.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, we are told that by practising hospitality and demonstrating God’s love to people in need, we are in fact directly serving God and that by doing so we are blessed by Him and have a share in His eternal kingdom. However, this doesn’t mean that we can notch up spiritual brownie points by **just** doing the work! We have a God who sees into our hearts, and recognises our motives. The fruit of a faithful heart is the desire to serve selflessly.

Ephesians 2: 8-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

As most of you will know, ASLAN’s work can be tough. It can be emotionally draining, physically tiring and at times seem futile in the face of so many needs. To even **think** about doing

this work without God’s support would be crazy. None of the work we do would be sustainable in the long-term if it relied solely on human endeavour – the large majority of us would give up at the first hurdle. We need God.

And the great response to that is found in Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

We are truly blessed within ASLAN to have leaders and volunteers whose focus is on prayer. Many of you attend the monthly prayer meetings where all aspects of the work are prayed for. It would be great to see more of you at those meetings. They are held on the second Sunday of every month, in a meeting room at All Soul’s Church (see the notice-board in the entrance of the church for the specific room each time).

To quote Jeff Lucas again: “Distance from the heartbeat of God will cause a gradual erosion of enthusiasm for mission”. Prayer connects us with that heartbeat.

We’ve seen over the past 16 years that God guides, protects and nurtures ASLAN. We need to pray that this continues, and we need to give thanks to the God who provides so abundantly. A significant number of our homeless friends have

not yet come to Christ – we need to pray that they will. And we need to pray for a renewal of strength and commitment for each other.

But as we look back over the years, God has granted so many answers to prayer – He has been faithful. From daily survival needs, to long-term relational and social needs, God has provided.

When I was coordinating the prayer meetings, I found two books extremely helpful. You might like to have a look at them in a library or invest in your own copies. Jeff Lucas’s “How Not to Pray”, and “Too Busy Not to Pray – Slowing Down to be with God” by Bill Hybels. Both are easy reads and offer practical advice on how to kick-start your prayer life.

It is so important that we get this communication with God going. We wouldn’t expect to build any other close relationship on sporadic, irregular meetings or without wanting to find out about the other person - to ask them questions and to listen to what they have to say. Close relationships need regular contact to grow, they need honest conversation...and the relationship with God has to be the most important relationship we will ever cultivate!

We serve a God who has proved time and time again throughout the centuries that he answers prayer and can be trusted implicitly. We just have to ask and have faith!