

The magic of prayer

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When we were very young, we were enchanted by magical powers, by superheroes, wizards and fairies. We cheered as goodness waged war against evil and sometimes imagined ourselves on the front lines with the good guys. As we grew older, we saw our world differently, and the magic and wonder of our youth gave way to the reality of a far less than wonderful world.

But each of us is still connected to that magic. Prayer is that magical power that connects us to the source of energy and love in our world. Just as we receive love from that energy, we can receive guidance from that energy, too.

How is it possible that our silent prayers can affect what happens? How can our invisible thoughts cause actions in the visible world? It happens all the time: Many people start each day with a plan, what they need to do and how they need to do it. Our thoughts are carried out by our bodies each day. In a similar way, our thoughts can affect what happens on a larger scale as well. Our positive thoughts of confidence, love and hope can negate

thoughts of worry, hate and fear and can affect the outcome of whatever we are thinking about.

Prayer is a way to put out positive energy with hopeful, healing, loving thoughts. God is the source of positive energy in the universe, the origin of love and all things hopeful and positive. It is God's loving energy that inspires us to return that love and live for the sake of others. Selfish thinking is the source of fear, hate and all things negative. Prayer is our way to connect to God's positive energy and to feel part of something much bigger than just ourselves.

I recently faced a medical crisis, and at first, it was very difficult to understand how such a thing could happen to me. Some people in that situation might be angry with God and wonder why they were dealt such a bad hand. But this was not a time for negative thinking and negative energy. Only positive energy could save me. I have had an "ideal" life, which means that whatever comes my way I have confidence that I can "deal" with it with God's help. So I determined to deal with this hand in a positive way.

I found out very soon that there were many people praying for me all over the world. I could feel that positive energy and support, which gave me strength and courage. Instead of fearing the future, I was inspired instead by the positive energy coming from the prayers of others. I felt love instead of fear. And with the energy from this love, I gained the courage I needed.

Buoyed by my own positive attitude, my medical progress exceeded my doctors' expectations and helped me take the next step toward healing. My battle is just beginning, but I believe that God is with me, because I feel the prayers of so many who love me.

My mother-in-law, who we call Nana, has a wonderful relationship of prayer with God. She prays with confidence that God will listen and that God will act. Naturally, we all think we know what is best for us and we pray for that result. But Nana knows that God works differently. When asked about getting answers to our prayers, she tells us to expect answers but not always in the way we imagine or hope for. She says that God may not exactly give us what we want, but we can trust that He will give us what we need.

Sometimes I pray for something that is too big like the outcome of an election or the end to a conflict. I wonder if my small prayer could make a difference. Would the outcome be just what I as one person hoped for, even though millions of others are also affecting the energy? Perhaps my prayer is just one "vote" out of millions. There is great power in the prayers of many.

Group prayer brings people together and multiplies the effect of each prayer. We realize the common bond that we all share that we are all children of God's love and that we all want the same thing -- a return to love and peace. After a deep prayer with someone, how can we hate them? Muslims, Christians, Jews all pray to the same God. Yet our distrust and fear of one another tears us apart as we seek a world on our own terms. What if we could pray together for peace, not on our terms but on God's terms and as Nana says, God will give us what we need.

Mr. Keith Cooperrider recently retired after more than 30 years as the chief financial officer of The Washington Times.