



Lay Pastors – The P in PACE

Greetings! Susan here again, former Lay Pastor and Lay Pastor International Board member and friend of Mel Steinbron, founder of Lay Pastors Ministry.

I'd like to focus on the P in PACE today. Prayer is the cornerstone of all ministry and is the foundation of our relationship with our Lord. Jesus Christ was crucified, died and resurrected so we could have a relationship with the one true God. I believe we often underestimate the amazing privilege and responsibility of prayer.

But what is prayer? Prayer is simply talking to God. Believers pray to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:17, John 14:13 and Ephesians 6:18). We only can know God through prayer. There is no special formula. Although I am a fan of the acronym ACTS. Adoration Confession Thanksgiving and Supplication. This acronym is thought to be first published in the late 1800s. Following this pattern keeps me on track so I do not wonder off course or forget anything. Prayer does not have to be loud, long or poetic. It needs to be authentic. God can read your mind and knows your most inner thoughts. There is nothing you can hide from him. He will know if you are humble with genuine repentance when you pray. Remember the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. This passage highlights that outward piety is meaningless without a sincere heart. The Pharisee was rejected, but the tax collector was forgiven.

How Does Prayer work? Prayer is one of God's great mysteries. How does God listen to our thoughts, spoken words, anguished cries, and joyful praise? How does it reach from earth to Heaven? We may never know the answer to this question, but He no doubt does! One of my sweetest prayers answered is this: I've been studying the Bible for many years through Bible Study Fellowship (bsfinternational.org). There are men and women groups all over the world. I prayed for years my husband would join a group. He gave lots of reasons why he couldn't go. Football was on Monday nights, he worked all day and didn't want to go out in evening, he didn't know anyone who was going etc. Every year I would ask him – for 10 years in a row. The 11th year I said a bit sarcastically – "Well guess you're not going to go this year too." He surprised me and said: "You know what, I think I will." He has not only gone for these past 5 years, but each year he invites more and more men to join him. This year he has 4 guys carpooling with him each week. Persistence in prayer pays off! Although God is not obligated to respond to any prayer – He will always respond in a way that is for our good and His glory.

How about the prayer of an unbeliever - does God hear them? Absolutely! God is sovereign and omniscient. He can answer any prayer any way he wants to. His mercy and love for all people is boundless. He hears the prayers of those who seek him. Those who seek him are rewarded with the gift of eternal life if they earnestly repent of their sins and turn to Jesus as Savior.

The amazing thing about prayer is also how it impacts our relationships with one another. When you pray for someone, it's impossible not to fall in love with them. I think that's why we are to pray for our enemies. It's difficult, if not impossible to continue to see someone as an enemy when you pray for them. I remember when I was assigned my flock. Some of the people that were in my flock I didn't know well. I started praying for them. On Church days I'd see them and it would bring such joy to my heart. I would run up to them and give a hearty greeting. They would look at me like – do I know you? I had to remember that I knew them through the lens of Christ, and they just knew me as the nice church lady.

To wrap this up, Prayer should always be our first line of defense, our first breath when we wake up in the morning and our last as we go to sleep at night. People fail to pray because people do not fully understand who God is and their need of His saving grace.