

A pastor noticed a young boy praying really hard at church; but he listened to the boy's prayers, he was surprised to hear him repeat: "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo." So when the boy finished praying, the pastor approached him and said, "Son, I was very pleased to see you praying so devoutly, but tell me, why did you keep saying 'Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo?'" The boy replied, "Well, you see pastor, I just finished taking my geography test in school, and I have been praying for God to make Tokyo the Capital of France."

Many people pray, wanting God to better their lives, change their circumstances. Even non-religious people will turn to prayer in times of need to appeal to a higher power to intervene and change their lives.

There was an article on prayer in America in Newsweek on January 6, 1992 that quoted sociologist Andrew M. Greeley as saying that more than 3/4 (78 %) of all Americans prayed at least once a week. More than 1/2 (57%) reported praying at least once a day. Greeley found that nearly 1 in 5 of Americans who are atheists or agnostics, still prayed daily. The greatest reason people pray is to ask God to intervene in their lives.

We often go to God in prayer after everything has fallen apart and we have no idea on which way to turn. We are at a point of no hope and finally turn to God and say something on the order if you fix this, then I will do this. We want to make a deal with God as we try to get HIM to fix whatever is broken in our lives.

Prayer is an awesome tool. It allows us to unleash the mighty power of God and brings healing to our lives. But we have to be careful because some people believe that if God does not do what we ask or say in our prayers, then HE isn't listening or doesn't care.

God may not always answer our prayers when we'd like or in the way we'd like, but God does answer prayer. In my last church, I spent 9/11 in the hospital with a man who was dying. His grandson was in confirmation and a couple of weeks after his grandpa died, I asked him how he was doing.

He said he was angry at God because God didn't answer his prayers. I asked what he had prayed for and he said he prayed for his grandpa to get better. So we started talking about his grandpa and what his life was like. He could only walk a short distance before he had to stop and rest. He could never go anywhere without his oxygen tanks.

After talking about what his grandpa's life was like, we talked about what it was like in heaven. I asked if he thought his grandpa was stuck with an oxygen tank or if he thought his grandpa had to struggle to breathe to which he said no. So then I asked if God answered his prayers of healing and he had to admit that yes, his grandpa was healed.

Sometimes, or maybe more times than not, God answers our prayers in ways that we do not expect.

So when we pray, Paul gives us some advise. He says "First of all". Why first of all? BECAUSE, our tendency is to say: "I can't do anything else about this, so I'll pray. You know what that should tell us? When we pray that way, as a last resort, we are saying we are still in control of our lives. God is an afterthought. It is for this reason that prayer doesn't come "first of all" for many of us. It comes last, if at all.

What type of prayer pleases God? Verses 2&3 tell us: "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone,² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.³ This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,⁴ who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

On this thanksgiving, and every day for that matter, Paul would encourage us to go to God in prayer. Say thank you to God for all the ways that HE has touched your life. Say thank you for the support that you receive and the direction that he gives to your life. And then ask HIM to be a part of your life as well as the lives of all those in the world. You can ask HIM to help you overcome the challenges that are in your life. Lift up those throughout the world who are suffering and especially pray for those who have not yet experienced God or who do not believe that the Holy Spirit may touch their lives. And finally, thank God once again for giving us HIS Son who died for each one of us.