



What Are We Doing Here?

Week 4: Plugging In

Brian Mattson - 03/15/2026

Last week, we talked about personal prayers for our own lives. The answers, miracles, and deliverance we plead for in our times of distress and desperation. We discussed how we can augment those prayers to include our thankfulness for the ways our lives have already been blessed. The two simplistic prayers of asking for *help* and saying *thanks* can open our eyes to the good that has already happened in our lives, and the opportunities in the present to partner with God in changing our current circumstances.

Now we leave the “I” and “me” language of our personal prayers to use the “us” and “we” language associated with our prayers with and for other people. We’ll talk about what is happening when we pray on behalf of other people, those names on our prayer lists, and the groups that meet to pray for others. And going forward, I have no data or proof about my conclusions, but I believe these three things to be true. I may not understand how it happens, but I can just feel it happening. There’s a sort of magic or supernatural mystery to it. It’s the same way I feel about electricity. Now if you understand how electricity works, please don’t send me any emails or stop me to discuss the finer points of AC or DC current. I’m not interested. I just know that there are people who understand this stuff and I’m thankful for their kind of real-life magic. Because I have no clue how electricity works in any sort of real capacity.

Like, how do we make it and how does it work? We burn coal, to heat steam, to turn a turbine, which then moves some magnets around, and somehow after all that, I can plug my phone into the wall and charge up the battery. Does that make sense to you? I realize that the progression of those events—fire, steam, rotation, etc.—makes sense, but electricity itself is basically sorcery.

When I drive, I see all the power lines strung around the city, crisscrossing into each neighborhood, before one line runs down to each house. Then that electricity goes into the breaker panel, which is then sent around the house to each outlet. And somehow, after this electricity is sent across miles and miles of lines, I can plug something metal into the wall outlet and, amazingly, my TV or vacuum or microwave hums to life and I really have no clue how any of it really happened. I can see the results, but I don't understand how I got them.

I think our electrical grid offers a decent analogy for what is happening with our prayers, at least to the electrically uneducated like myself. We all see the wires lining our streets and along the highways, even down the country roads. I believe our prayers function in a similar way, connecting us, uniting each of us to a far greater source of energy in some other location.

First, let me explain how our prayer team functions here at the church. I want to be clear that the people who meet together nearly every Wednesday afternoon don't possess a special call or anointing greater than anyone else in this room. They simply showed an interest in praying with other people for the needs of our church and issues around the world. Sometimes it's as few as two people or as many as nine, depending on who has the availability in their schedule. There is no secret handshake or qualification to join the group. We take all comers.

Heather does a great job leading our prayers and discussion each week and Claire Cobb does her best to keep up with pages of private and public prayer

requests from people in our congregation. We take those lists, names, and issues and offer our updates on them. We pray for the staff, the youth, and the children. We pray for issues in our world. We chat about new requests that came from Sunday worship or things we heard in our conversations. And as we pore over these names, something amazing almost always happens. We find points of connection. Somebody knows somebody else who has dealt with that same issue, or one person heard about another person who might be able to offer some help or a new perspective.

We share the concerns and joys in our own lives as well. Through these weekly meetings, we become keenly aware of each other's stresses and burdens. There are tears of sadness and tears from laughter. It is a holy time. **Prayer connects us to each other.** It fosters authentic community. In essence, we have become another small group at this church. A place where we gather to pray for our congregation, the world, and each other. In our connection with God through prayer, we have become more deeply connected to each other. And we sense God during those hours together. I feel God when I hear about the lives of my friends and can empathize more deeply with them. Nearly every week, this group lives out Jesus's words from Matthew:

"...For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

- Matthew 18:20

To further our electricity metaphor, in a sense, that group becomes a little electrical substation—a smaller energy distribution point—that makes connections through prayers and conversation that go into the smaller spaces and relationships of life. Sometimes these connections stay in the supernatural realm of our prayers, but very often they manifest in actions.

As one example of this, not too long ago, a tough old gal from our church took a spill in her backyard. She ended up fracturing her femur. We have

taken away her aluminum can stomping privileges, rest assured. But while she was recovering from surgery at Elfindale, we continually kept tabs on her. The staff made visits to the hospital and recovery center, but at prayer team one week, we were discussing her progress in rehab, and Robbin Vigil, a former occupational therapist said, "You know what? I have the time and I love Ms. Ruth, so I'm going to go out and see her this week."

And that's exactly what she did. She called and made arrangements to visit and I know both of them were blessed because of that time. And because Robbin was involved in praying for the people of this church as part of the prayer team, she was aware of the need and then acted upon it.

You don't have to be part of our prayer team to pray or to act. We print our public prayer list in the bulletin every week. Those aren't a bunch of random names we decided on. These are your loved ones or acquaintances, friends and coworkers. Each name represents someone near and dear to someone in this congregation. If you see a name you recognize, there's a pretty good chance they want people to pray for them. In fact, consider it an impetus for your involvement. You can talk to them. Ask what's going on. Be a friend. Pray for them. And then look for ways to be involved in whatever they are going through. As I discussed last week, prayer offers us the very real opportunity to be the answer to prayers, ours or someone else's. We pray and then we work.

Another way prayer is like electricity is that it can give us a jolt. A buzz.

Prayer shocks us into awareness. It's amazing how many times over the past year I've found myself in a moment of unspoken prayer in my car and felt prodded or poked to reach out to someone. I'm not saying God speaks the loudest when I'm driving, but something about taking the same route over and over again allows my brain to go into autopilot mode and my thoughts wander. I think about people in this congregation, my friends, and family.

This has become a regular practice for me. I have been shocked into awareness that through my prayers and moments of quiet, God nudges me in directions that have proven serendipitous. When I feel those tugs or notice my mind focusing on one person or family, I take that as an invitation to reach out. Those text messages and phone calls are not just lip service. I understand them as my acts in answering prayers and being aware, as it says in Colossians:

**Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.
- Colossians 2:7**

Furthermore, I can say that my heightened awareness often results in strange coincidences. When I spend time praying for someone or at least have them on my mind, somehow or another, something happens in my life which directly connects with their situation. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, is usually cited as the author of this quote:

**"When I pray coincidences happen: when I don't pray they don't."
-William Temple**

Have you ever seen that bear out in your life? I hope so. Not only because it's faith-building, but it's also invigorating. We so often want to see giant miracles happen or unexplainable phenomena occur as the result of our prayers. But more often than not, small coincidences and acute awareness are the ways I see God moving in this world. I've mentioned this before, but it's long been a practice around here to stop and ask, "Where have you seen God lately?"

Yes, the sunrises and sunsets, beauty in creation, or the laughter of grandchildren cause us to be still and thank God. But I see God most often when I find myself praying for someone, or even just thinking about them after a prayer team meeting, and then I end up running into them the next afternoon at a coffee shop or the grocery store. These coincidences happen more often when I've found myself in a routine of regular prayer.

Another way prayer is like electricity is that it provides energy. **Prayer charges us.** I may not know how electricity works, but I know when I plug my phone in at night, its battery is full the next morning. That's all the proof I need that it works. But prayer lives in the supernatural realm, whereas electricity is a definable entity. It's basically impossible to quantify the effects of prayer in a scientific sense. That's not to say people haven't tried.

In the National Institutes of Health's National Library of Medicine, there's a peer-reviewed article from 2009 in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. The article, *Prayer and healing: A medical and scientific perspective on randomized controlled trials*, aims to take a hard look at prayer and its effect on healing. In the study, the authors note that prayer is associated with improved outcomes in several studies on prayer. It goes on further to say that other studies show that prayer offers no benefits, and still others show worse results than a control group. Basically, the data show prayer works, makes no difference, or actually makes outcomes worse.

One sentence that really struck me though was this: *Prayer is a special form of meditation and may therefore convey all the health benefits that have been associated with meditation.* Meditation has been shown to decrease blood pressure and heart rate. It reduces stress and anxiety, and even boosts our immune response, among other positive effects.

I wonder if the results of our prayers somehow provide similar benefits to people across time and space? If meditation offers real, tangible benefits, can I somehow transmit those benefits to other people? In some mystical, supernatural way, are the prayers I say for other people conveying my own strength, patience, comfort, and calmness to them? About a year ago, I got a new phone charger. It's the kind that you can just set your phone on and it charges wirelessly. I'm amazed by this! For my entire life, for electricity to work, I had to have a physical cable attached to the wall. Now I can just set my phone on a pad and it charges wirelessly. Is this another picture of how

prayer works? I like to think that through my earnest prayers, I am somehow giving something of myself to someone else.

I don't have any data on this either, but I can say, anecdotally, that people tell me they can feel our prayers. Ruth and Tom Blansett told me that. I have heard it from Katie Struckhoff. Our prayer team hasn't been with these people, laying our hands on their shoulders and praying for healing. We have been here at the church lifting their names and needs to God in earnest requests. *God, we want your healing and strength to come to these beloved people. If it's possible, give them some of our own strength for their recovery.* I believe that's one way our prayers for other people work.

Our prayers for other people do three things, at the very least.

1. Prayer creates connections
2. Prayer shocks us into awareness
3. Prayer charges us

Along with scripture, prayer is an essential tool in the life of faith. In Ephesians 6, Paul tells the people that life is hard to make it through alone. He had a habit of using military analogies common in the ancient near-east, but I've softened some of his words to help us better connect with their meaning.

God's Word is an indispensable ~~weapen~~ tool. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing ~~weapen~~ work. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

- Ephesians 6:18 MSG

And we pray for each other, because we are all one body, one electrical grid. We have one head and one power source, and to suffer a disconnection is detrimental to our health and power. Our prayers unite us, bind us, and change us to help better understand each other. Prayer is not optional, it is a

necessary partner on this journey of life. We know what happens when the power goes out at home. We are in the dark, disconnected from the source. Like electricity, prayer is something that needs to be in constant connection, without ceasing.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Please don't walk around, or especially drive around, with your eyes closed in prayer this week. But DO spend time with your spiritual eyes and ears open for the people around you, the people in your thoughts. Perhaps those whispers in your soul are there to make you aware and cause you to act.