



10 Prayers That Changed My Life

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Introduction

The first prayer that changed my life was: "God, please let me go to that Christian conference!"

Although I had grown up in a Christian family and I had thought of Jesus as my "best friend" for as long as I could remember, I had lost interest in the faith by the time I was 21 and newly married. But Jesus had not lost interest in me. He sent a priest into my life and my home — and I wasn't even Catholic (yet)!

Father Ed came to Florida on vacation in the summer of 1977, and my husband Ralph and I hosted him. During his visit, I sensed something in him that was lacking from my own life: a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit in him touched the void in me, and I wanted more.

After his week with us, Father Ed was going to fly to Kansas City, Missouri, to attend an interdenominational Charismatic Conference. I didn't have a clue what that meant, but it was Christian and I realized that it could be the push I needed to get back into church and back into an active relationship with God.

However, I faced a few obstacles: (1) the deadline for registration and meal plans was past and all the hotels were full; (2) my job required me to show up on schedule; (3) we had little money and last-minute plane tickets would break our budget, and (4) Ralph and I were newlyweds who didn't want to spend the time apart.

So I begged God to "let me go" to the conference. As if he didn't want me to go!

Instead of reluctantly letting me have my way, God rejoiced that I was finally letting *him* have *his* way. I figured that out after I arrived at the conference.

Ralph had prayed with me about the conference and — surprising even himself — told me that I should splurge on the airfare and go. My employer allowed me to take time off from work. I could share a room with someone else at the conference. And at every mealtime, if I asked, God provided; sometimes Father Ed gave me half of his food, but often strangers came by wanting to give me their whole lunch, because they weren't using it.

My prayer of "Please let me" became "Thank you for letting me know about this conference!"

And so began a new life in Christ, alive in the Holy Spirit, who led me to the Eucharist and into the Catholic Faith and eventually into a global ministry and the writing of these reflections.

After my conversion, prayer became an important and influential part of each day. As I look back, a few prayers stand out as *most* influential. I'd like to share them with you, because they are not just *my* prayers. They are *key* prayers for anyone who wants to follow Jesus.

The commentaries on these prayers are pulled from the Good News Reflections that I send out daily, free of charge, to email subscribers, via Good News Ministries Online.

I pray that your prayers will change your life, too! That is, after all, the reason why God answers prayer.

1 Lord God, help me to hear your voice.

Mark 7:31-37

We all wish that we could hear God's voice audibly. If only he'd pick up a phone and call us! Or send us an email! But usually he speaks in a quiet, small voice that sounds like our own imaginations.

What is God telling you that you're too deaf to hear? I am not asking *if* you're deaf; we all have partial hearing losses.

In Mark 7:31-37, the deaf man started listening even before he could hear. He listened to God's inner voice inviting him to find new growth and healing. In the same way, God speaks to us in our consciences.

The problem is, we're living in a noisy world. It takes effort to hear what the Lord is saying. It requires spending time alone in prayer. It also requires spending time in community at Mass. I go to Mass daily, in part because it opens my ears. He speaks to us all the time through many different means, every moment of every day. He's actually quite chatty!

When was the last time you heard him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" I'm sure he has — today even. (Hey, sometimes just getting out of bed gains us a "well done!" from our Lord.)

When was the last time you heard him say, "I made this day for you! Isn't it wonderful? Sure we're sharing in some trials today, but listen to the birds singing! It's a song I taught them to sing for you!"

Sometimes, we're deaf because we don't believe he's saying what he's saying. Sometimes, we're deaf because we're too stubborn to accept his

message. He then tries to reach us through other methods, including the people around us.

Listen! He might use the least likely person you know to communicate himself to you; God's got a sense of humor like that — or maybe it's a sense of fairness.

God has guidance that he wants to give you today, but you'll need to work at keeping your ears open all day.

God is also trying to correct you about something, warning you about a sin you're vulnerable to today.

And he's giving you words of encouragement, hope, comfort, and rejoicing.

Will you be able to hear all of this? Are you willing to hear all of it?

His voice is waiting in the scriptures, in Christian music, in that spiritual book you've got sitting on your table, in your children or your spouse or the friend you "accidentally" bump into. His ways of communicating are as infinite and as creative as he is.

Give him your deafness each morning, and if you truly want to hear, you'll get more guidance, more comfort, more affirmation, and more "All right! Way to go, my child! Well done, good and faithful servant! Hooray for you! I love you!"

You might even hear the angels singing to God about what he has done in your life. They have a chorus going right now. Shhhh listen!

3 Lord, help me to be a pliable instrument in Your hands.

1 Samuel 3:1-10,19-20
Psalm 40

Did you get the email God sent you the other day, when he requested your services? Oh, it ended up in your junk mail folder? You thought it was spam? God couldn't possibly ask you to do something so different from what you're already doing that it would shake up everything. Right?

To be God's instrument of Good News, of his healing forgiveness and his unconditional love, we have to be pliable in his hands. We have to let him choose what kind of tool he needs us to be. We have to let him set our agenda.

Think of the last time you were asked to do a favor or a work that was so far outside the box of what you expect to be doing with your life that you said "no".

Sometimes people ask us to do more than what God's requesting of us, and we say "yes" out of guilt or a reward that we hope to receive. And sometimes it's God who's asking, and we say "no" out of fear or a reluctance to alter our plans. How can we become a pliable instrument that's handy for his use? How can we safely know when to say yes and when to say no?

In 1 Sam. 3:1-10,19-20 and Psalm 40 we see what our mental attitude should be: "Here I am, Lord, I come to do Your will." Then the "yes" or "no" becomes God's responsibility. If we're available, if we're willing to do whatever he asks of us, it's up to him to make his will clear. And he does! Our responsibility is to keep our ears clear, unmuffled by our own desires.

God's call is based upon the gifts that he's given us. How generous are you with your gifts? At

your funeral, will people talk about how God used you to make a difference in this world?

When you come face to face with Jesus at the time you enter eternal life, will you judge yourself as unworthy to enter heaven because you were stingy with your giftedness?

You are a gift because God created you to be a gift. You are unique; therefore your calling is unique. No one but you can accomplish what God wants to do through you. God has matched your calling to your talents and abilities.

We each have a calling to ministry. God's not only seeking pliable instruments to serve as priests and religious. The laity also have vocations of service. The Church was founded on the collaboration of laity and clergy working together. It wasn't until the 13th century that the laity lost awareness of their importance in mission and ministry.

Vatican Council II brought us back to the original understanding of every Christian's vocation. As we get used to this change, the clergy will increasingly encourage the ministries of laity, and the laity will increasingly discern how the Lord wants to use their giftedness in cooperation with the clergy.

We each need to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. Help me to be a pliable instrument in your hands."