

The last couple of times that I've gotten up in front of you guys to speak, I've been led in certain directions by different things. By the lessons I've learned this year, or by music, or by things that happened to be going on. But last night I had a prayer answered, and- as Billy has been complaining *all day*- I changed my plan for tonight.

I think that's an important part of prayer: being open to God. We ask Him for things constantly, but do we pay attention when He answers?

"Prayer is a powerful thing." We hear that said when people are hoping for or maybe just received a miracle. But it's a powerful thing in more ways than just its answer. I think that God bothers to answer prayers is a pretty powerful idea.

The song Steve sang, "Who Am I," reminds me that in the grand scheme of things I'm just about nothing. A flower quickly fading. A wave tossed in the ocean. A vapor in the wind. But God listens to me when I call to him, when I ask for something, when I need His help, when I just need to talk. And most importantly, He talks back.

I've said I've never been one to literally hear God's voice in my ear. And we don't always just magically get the things we ask for. In the discussion group a while back we talked about the error of thinking of God as a cosmic genie in a bottle or like Santa Claus. But I've learned that prayer is more than just a verbalized wish-list or a one-sided conversation. In fact, when I need an answer to something I'm wondering about, probably my most-used phrase in prayer is "Please God, just smack me in the face with this," so I can figure out what to do. I can be pretty dense sometimes, but God can use the people we know or the situations that arise around us to help us see the answer our prayers.

Being a twenty-one-year-old college student, I ask for understanding pretty often. Whether it's for my Sociology notes or where I'm going with my entire life. Through paying attention to the world around me and through a lot of Grace, I've started to figure some of that out with God's help. I ask for healing, sometimes for some of the people closest to me, and sometimes you actually get to see that. Sometimes we don't. I was discussing with someone this morning about something he'd been asking God for and hadn't received. But that doesn't mean that God was ignoring him, just that he might be trying to tell him it's not something he needs.

When I first got out of high school I prayed about my music school audition. I practiced those pieces more than I've probably practiced any music in my life and I played it for several band directors around town. I asked God to make me calm when I auditioned and to let the professors in Greensboro think I should be studying with them. They didn't. At the time I was pretty disappointed and I thought God was trying to tell me I didn't practice hard and long enough. I pretty much thought He hadn't helped me. But over the course of that year, and the last two since I've come home, I've realized that God did help me. He helped me to get and be where I was really supposed to be. Where He wanted me to be. Which wasn't where I was or where I was asking to be. But He answered my request and He helped me see that.

What do you pray for? Healing? Understanding? Forgiveness? And what does God say to you? I just want to take a couple minutes for anyone to share a prayer that God answered for them, maybe in a way you were expecting, and maybe in a way you weren't.

Prayer is an important thing in the life of Believers. Christianity is about a relationship with our Lord, and how can we have a relationship without talking to Him? And what kind of relationship would it be if He didn't speak back. We just have to listen to God and to remember to trust Him to answer our prayers.