

Why Prayer is Self-Righteous Selfishness

In brief

People seem to be okay with others praying for them in times of trouble.

People are lenient with religion even in the face of all the trouble it causes. They are softened up by the thought of people praying for them. It is harder to be against somebody if they present themselves as doing something for you. Prayer has done so much damage by creating such a perception that it outweighs any alleged benefit.

To say that people are not inherently/fundamentally good bad or neither is boasted as a way to invite and assist tolerance. It seems obvious that this guarantees tolerance and respect for it is about seeing a person just as a person. It's not about what they pray to or where they come from. All get equal justice and respect. That attitude is more important than billions of prayers. Thus prayer is never put first by anybody which makes it a mystery why religious people are claiming that God as in the being you need to pray to comes first.

Prayer is linked to and expressive of your values. As it is about giving worship to a value: God who naturally you hope reflects your values you are always implicitly praying for more than what you consciously pray for. If you would side with your country in war and not care that war is just terrorism with the appearance of a just cause that is there when you pray although at the back of your mind. When people say only prayer helps the helpless in time of war read between the lines. They are saying it empowers you - either personally or as part of your warring country - to kill the enemy. They are saying they will see any victories or mini-victories as a response to prayer. That is dangerous for it leads you to think God is on your side when he may not be. You are going to interpret things as evidences that he is on your side when these are not evidences at all but are just interpreted as evidences.

Is prayer using the pain and vulnerability of another person for you need to feel you deserve to have your prayer answered? Yes but why do you deserve the answer? Is it because you are righteous and deserve this reward of answered prayer? Then prayer is pompous. Because you prayed? Then prayer is even more pompous. Religion teaches that God cannot even hear prayer unless you deserve to be heard so prayer is self-righteous. It is not prayer unless it comes from a righteous person with a respectful attitude to God. To ask God to help another while you are bad to people would be hypocrisy. So deserving comes into it. Some would say their prayer should be answered for they FEEL they deserve it. That is dreadful arrogant and makes your feelings a condition on which God must help another!! What egotism!

Is prayer using the pain and vulnerability of another person for you need to feel you can have prayer answered?

Then you are worried about your feelings and not the person. The person is not your feelings so feeling you want them to be helped and for them to be helped BECAUSE you feel it is selfish.

Prayer could be one or both of those. And it is.

It makes out your loved one is special to God when all are special to God

If it is arrogant to pray for your loved one as if the dying baby down the street does not matter you are as good as telling God not to help. No wonder royals despite all the prayers said for them are never any holier or healthier than anybody else. People who pray for their own healing have the same recovery rates as those who do not pray or who pray to the "wrong" thing - maybe the Buddha statue. Prayer is not really about God - it is about using God.

Prayer and the quest to feel in control

Prayer expresses a low-grade narcissism where people think it gives them the power to get others to think and act a certain way. It comes from our incorrigible notion that we can control how others feel. We always act as if we can do that and we never learn.

God is important to believers as the alleged being who is pure love and on your side. If you cosy up to an entity who has great power you will feel power for you decide to accept his decisions and make them your own as well. To feel powerful it does not follow that you need to have vast power yourself. People who seek absolute power are corrupt. And getting the power or thinking they have it corrupts them more. But in reality there is no absolute power unless you have power over reality and truth to shape them according to your will. You have no such power so you make do with the sensation that you do have it. If you think the God of the universe hears and answers your prayers and is still working for you even if you

seem to get no answer hope for it being answered in a surprise way different to what you expected. That is the crave for power at its most extreme. It explains why religious believers are often nasty and dangerous. If somebody is nice just because they have a sense of having absolute power that niceness is a facade. A really good person will be good whether or not they feel powerful.

A gunman faces the couple, a young man and young woman. The young man throws himself on top of her when the gun is emptied at them and he prays that he will take the bullets and she will be okay. That seems noble doesn't it?

The decent person will want to believe that this goodness was all the man's and nobody else's. The man is the creator of his goodness.

God is not involved and should not be thought of as involved.

The man is only degrading himself and what he has done for her by praying.

Also, if he is such a big believer in God's will he is throwing himself in faith that he will get the bullets not her. He is using prayer in an attempt to change and control fate. If that is okay then why is it wrong for Islamists to blow themselves up in markets for God? It cannot be necessarily wrong. But the atheist believes it is necessarily wrong which is why the atheist should be wiser than the believer.

The person who cares about you will only give you evidence based information and urge you to learn for yourself. Cheap care for others is not care. Those who say they get support and results from prayer are selfishly counting the hits and leaving out the misses. When a woman prays that she will not hit her child next week and she hits the child she will forget that. She will see the week in which she refrains from hitting as a result. She is attributing too much significance to luck. Also, like everybody else, she will make mistakes in trying to judge what good things or bad things can happen and how and when they will happen. Do an experiment. Try to foresee all the results of some action and you will see how often you are wrong about the probabilities.

Christians say that counting hits is important. They say that if you refuse to count the hits that is no good. There is no point in counting the misses only. That is biased and unfair. That is what they do. Both hits and misses have to be looked at to see if it makes sense to think that some power helped. And many of the hits are not really hits. For example, Lucia makes a speedy recovery from flu after somebody prays for her and its amazing - until she falls down the stairs the next day and ends up crippled for life.

If you start to feel lucky with prayer that could get dangerous. People do not encourage feeling lucky. And for good reason! It leads to arrogance and wrecklessness. Even if you think luck is down to chance that can happen. If you think you are manipulating luck with prayer or magic it can happen even faster.

Believers look at miracles and dramatic and seemingly supernatural answers to prayer - eg when somebody who is dying rises from the bed healthy. They say that these things are not likely to happen. Perhaps at times they are nearly impossible. So they are improbable. But then they contradict this by saying they probably happened after all! You cannot have it two ways - it makes no sense to say that an event is too unlikely to have happened and then that it likely did happen. Believers are actually saying more than that! "Jesus probably did not rise from the dead and because that is unlikely he therefore probably did rise from the dead." That is insane. It is more extreme than saying, "Jesus probably did not rise from the dead." In spite of that, he therefore probably did rise from the dead."

Let us make a list of the other reasons why prayer is self-centred and selfish and arrogant.

#It feels good for you feel and think you are above error - who do you think you are? Belief in prayer is made infallible. There is more infallibility in putting your proposition outside of examination than simply saying, "This is true because I say so." It becomes, "This is true because I say there is no way to refute it." Prayer is an idol. Even if there is a God, God cannot accept it. Prayer paradoxically is anti-God and is an idol. It disrespects truth for you try to avoid refutation so prayer is a lie and thus seems to think that God and everybody else is stupid and cannot see it.

#If you regard praying as mattering more than good works if there is a choice then praying is fanatical and twisted. And you must for Jesus said that prayer is an expression of a relationship with God so to love God totally means to pray totally. He commanded total love so that means total prayer.

Human nature cannot mean it when it pretends it wants strangers and acquaintances etc to be say cancer free as much as it does your loved ones and close friend and family. In reality, if Ann is evil and Mary is good, if you could do some magic to make sure if one of them gets cancer that it is going to be Ann you would. If that attitude is not explicit in the believer it is still there. The believer does not need to be aware of it.

Saying that you trust God above everyone and everything and that you express this by prayer sounds humble. But is it? In fact it is self-righteous arrogance posing as humility. It is a boast. And it is nothing to boast about. If there is a choice between God/prayer and doing good for others then do good for them. If there is a choice between trusting God most and trusting only God then choose the first. It is less extreme. Yet religion following Christ demands that you do the latter! Another reason the trust thing is a boast is that you don't see God and many people lack faith for they think God is not the great being people say he is. So you have every reason not to trust or to think that the trust of God is the trust of a God you have made up in your head. If you trust that is quite an amazing achievement! But do you really trust against such big odds? It is too good to be real! The trust you say you have is a boast and is arrogant.

Nobody knows if it is really prayer that motivates good deeds, if you do good better after praying it does not prove that God is motivating you. If prayer motivates, then it is possible that prayer motivates you even if there is no God. A need for prayer need not necessarily imply a need for God though prayer pretends to call on and need God.

Prayer is often just magical self-delusion in disguise. People like to believe that their thoughts and desires have a magical influence on reality so that if you wish for something it can come true or evil WILL come true. This lessens or takes away their fear of the future. Their notion is delusional for there are things we cannot control - we cannot control what other person thinks. We all know we cannot do it in small things so why do we think we can do it in major things? Thinking we control others and the universe leads to anger and disappointment and resentment. Thinking this is so common that many people who say they do not think it actually don't realise they think it. On balance, it is very very likely that the person who prays is trying to manipulate others.

Superstitious behaviour is a notorious and almost universal human trait and the appeal is that people want the smug glow that comes from thinking they have helped you when they have not. Even those who detest superstition engage in it. They may feel that if they get a red car that in some unexplainable way that they will be immune to accidents. They feel that if they sit in the right seat during a football match that it influences the outcome of the match and their favoured team will win. They feel they control what they in fact do not control at all. If the team wins, they feel they have caused their win. This trait is so strong that it is reasonable to suppose that whoever is praying for you when you are sick is not that interested in helping you but wants to feel they caused you to get better. Even if prayer is not in itself magical, the fact is that most (if not all) people who pray are treating it as magic and thus abusing it.

We tend to be grateful to things when they benefit us. We feel a sense of gratitude towards the car that gets us to hospital. We kick and curse the car and swear at it when it breaks down. We treat events and things as if they consciously bless us and curse us. It is no wonder then we so easily and too easily believe in God and pray to God. Our motivation is suspect - we are possibly idolaters nearly all the time anyway. Prayer is superstition. A person who gives you a rabbit's foot wants to feel he has helped you but without helping you. Prayer is the same thing except it can be made to look non-superstitious. If you don't want to help somebody, giving them some magical item or praying for them is the lazy way - you feel you have helped when you don't want to help them right.

Most people enjoy prayer and get a lift from it because it expresses and dwells on their desire to be better people or to see others better off. Simply thinking about how you would like to see others happier would do the same thing. But many people pray to help. They need to take steps to make what they pray for happen. Prayer itself will not do it. People like to feel sympathy for others but they should like helping others better. Feeling sympathy for somebody does no good if you are not interested in helping. Dwelling on how you feel can and will lead to you using the feelings to tell yourself how wonderful and compassionate you are when you in fact are doing nothing that counts. You are just a goody-goody navel gazer. You are indulging yourself.

Praying, it is said, gives us something to do when everything else fails. But you cannot really know if you have tried everything. Maybe an option you thought was out of the question was actually the best or the right answer. Nobody really uses prayer as a last resort for you would expect God to see through you.

Prayer like religion in general thrives on arguments from ignorance. They are based on the illogical reasoning, "I don't know how this happened and came about therefore a supernatural power was behind it." It is dangerous if we take such logic seriously - believers only adopt it when it suits which shows they do not believe in it as deeply as they may pretend. Prayer violates the fact that you do not explain an unknown by invoking or inventing another unknown. People guess that such and such was caused by prayer. It is a desecration of your reason.

Prayer motivated by evil is said to be ignored by God. People who sin and don't repent are asking God for a favour while refusing to repent so their prayer is just useless. And especially if they ask for the conversion of others. To try and fool God with prayer and expect results is magic. It would take huge magic to fool an all-seeing God. People engage in useless and hypocritical prayer and can spend ages at it and go on pilgrimages. They do this for they feel holy though they are not. And it does seem to them that even these prayers are answered. Even praying to the duck down at the park would seem to be

answered at times. They must know that even what they ask for happens, it does not mean that God accepted their prayer for they were pretending to connect with him and were not. Thus we can be sure that the more selfish you are, the more you pray for the sick and those who you cannot help, the more you are trying to feel good about doing nothing. Your praying only nurtures your smug selfishness.

#We cannot know how many people use prayer as an excuse for neglecting to help. If prayer works, then excuse is not the right word. The right word is reason. It would follow that you cannot be accused of neglect when you let your seriously ill child do without a doctor on the basis that you are praying for her. And what if she dies? But one thing is for sure, few people are strongly committed to improving society so clearly they are using prayer, if they are religious, as an excuse for doing little or nothing. You should be taken to court for neglect.

Even believers say that prayer can be an excuse for taking little or no action to solve problems. People may want to dump off the work on to God to let them live lazy and selfish and unfruitful lives and feel good about it.

#We would need to know how many pray because they don't want to do anything really productive for others. What if it is most or nearly all or actually all? We risk promoting evil if we promote prayer without knowing. Religion of course makes no effort to address this.