

## NO MORE "ZAP ME WITH HOLINESS" PRAYERS

By Cynthia Hyle Bezek

Sometimes I wish God would just download faith and virtue into me. Wouldn't it be cool to be able to pray a simple prayer like, "Please make me humble, Lord" and in a flash, self-promotion, competition, and attention-seeking were things of the past?

But God doesn't operate like that. It's taken me a long time to figure this out, but He *really* values partnership and process. And a quick, impersonal download of humility wouldn't involve much of either.

I've prayed my share of "Give me faith, God!" and "Patience, oh Jesus, I really need You to give me patience!" kinds of prayers. But honestly, even though I know the desires for patience and faith line up with God's will, I haven't noticed much change as a result of those prayers. Which brings me back to partnership and process. Did I mention that God really likes them?

God likes to be with His kids. He loves relationship. He delights in conversation. He wants us to be holy far more than we do. But I'll go out on a limb and say this—He seems to want our company even more than our holiness.

So what does this mean when it comes to praying for matters of character? I'm learning that it means talking with God about what it is I want to see Him form in me—not just asking for microwave change.

For example, a while ago my small group collectively accepted a challenge to grow in generosity. For two weeks, we were all going to pray about and look for opportunities to be more generous. So I prayed along the lines of, "God, make me more generous" then went on about my day. At the end of the two weeks, I realized that not much had changed. I was no more or less generous than I'd been before we took on the challenge.

Bothered by this, I talked to God about it. This time, instead of just asking Him to make me more generous, I asked Him why it was hard, why nothing had changed. He responded with a question: *You're afraid of being more generous. What are you afraid of, Child?* As I reflected on His question, I realized there were fears I was barely aware of. Fears of not having enough. Fears of growing old alone. Fears of being taken advantage of. Fears that God would not really be there for me.

As we continued to talk about it, God showed me that my issue really wasn't about money and stuff. It was about trusting Him. About believing in His goodness and personal care. About having faith that He would protect me and care for me, come what may.

God wasn't interested in getting more money and stuff from me. He doesn't need my money and stuff. But He does want my trust. He wants me to really believe He is there for me so I can depend on Him with the faith of a child.

As you can imagine, my prayers changed quite a bit after that conversation. One day as we continued to sort through all this, God gave me a mental picture. I saw myself as a daughter of the King, His princess. All that He had was mine. He didn't give me an allowance—I didn't need one because the King gave me access to all that He had. Every



day we would take walks together in His Kingdom. When we would see people in need, He would encourage me to give something to them—out of His royal treasury. His joy was apparent. He loved giving, and He especially loved doing it with me. And for my part, I loved giving with Him, too. What I gave was not mine—it was His. He had a treasury that would never be exhausted. When I was giving in partnership with Him, I needed never fear scarcity. I could be as generous as I wanted—and I found that I wanted to be very generous!

Need I tell you the effect that conversation with God and the picture He gave have had on me? I don't ask God to make me generous now. Instead, I thank Him for sharing His riches with me. And then I ask Him, *King Papa, who shall we give to today? Help me to see people and their needs the way You do so that we can give to them from all that is Yours.*

That seems to be a prayer God loves to answer. Many days He shows me someone He wants to share with. And I'm amazed at the joy and freedom I feel to be able to do that with Him, trusting in Him to take care of me.

I'm still in process on this, of course, and the conversation is very much an ongoing one—but it helps me to see the difference between praying for God to zap me with instant holiness and inviting God to partner with me in the process of growing my character.