

# LET THERE BE LIGHT

Week #1 of a 7-Week Series, "7 Prayers That Will Change Your Life"

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Okay; my question tonight is: Do you believe that prayer works? Maybe half the room ... [Congregation laughs] Alright; do you believe that prayer works? Okay; so if you believe it works, is it a regular part of your life? Or has it kind of been an emergency situation only? How many of you ...

See, I think there's three groups of people. I think there's the group of people that clearly do not believe that prayer works. And they tend to be kind of sometimes very smart people -- very well-educated people. And they just don't believe that there's an activity of prayer that is really helpful.

And then the second group is people who believe that prayer works, but they're busy people. Right? So they pray, and they tend to pray just before they hit the wall. You know, just before there's car damage or they get a diagnosis, or a family member gets a diagnosis. They're in the "911" prayer department. Right? [Congregation laughs] They're praying just as it hits the fan, right? That's the second group.

And this third group of people are people who believe in prayer and actually practice prayer on a regular basis. Like, it's now integrated into their daily practice -- their spiritual practice. But it's now more of a life practice; it's how they do life. They are in regular, constant communication with the presence and power of God within themselves. They breathe it in; they live it. Maybe they have a special time every day. But it's more integrated; it's a regular part. They're in a constant conversation with the Divine. They believe it.

And so what we're going to focus on is, for the next seven weeks, I'm going to share with you seven prayers that I believe will change your life.

How many of you -- maybe in the Sunday School you grew up in -- had to memorize long prayers? Anybody grow up? And you got little checks or little stars if you could memorize the whole prayer, right?

Every prayer that I'm going to give you over the next seven weeks is less than six words. So if you can't memorize it, we need to talk. Because each one of them is just ... I just want to get to the critical issue.

**But for prayer to be really effective, I think two things need to happen. The first one is that, when we pray, I believe that we need to have an experience of the presence of God.** That prayer just isn't a mental activity. That for prayer to really be effective -- for it to really change us; for it to really impact our life -- ideally prayer is like a door; it's like a gateway that leads us into a more transcended, or a bigger, experience of life. It leads us into more of ourselves. It leads us into more of life. And I believe it leads us into more of God.

So prayer has to be that thing that takes us wherever we are. Because for most of us, there's a time in our life -- where there's a situation often -- where we're fully in our ego. We're in control; we're in fear; we're in panic. And as we practice prayer over and over again, there's a connection that happens that we just move into that prayer space and it starts opening for us.

So the first thing is: It needs to take us into a greater experience of God.

**And the second: For prayer to be effective, we actually have to do it.** And the more we do it, the better we get at it. The more ... You know, it's like anything! Like, play golf; the more golf you play, hopefully the better you get. The more tennis you play, hopefully the better you get at tennis. Or pickleball, or whatever the thing is now. Right?

And the more you do it, the better you get. And prayer is like that! You learn how to do it. You actually practice it.

So over the next seven weeks, I'm going to invite you to increase the amount of time and energy you spend in prayer. If you're kind of a two-minute prayer -- if you're kind of shouting at God or as you're driving or maybe you read the Daily Word; whatever you do. If you kind of spend two minutes a day praying, I'm going to invite you to go to five. If you're already at five minutes of prayer a day, I'm going to invite you to go to 10. Like, I really just want to see if you can expand your prayer life.

Now, how do you know when you need ... What are the signs in your life that you know you need to spend more prayer time? How many of you have like a little yellow or red indicator light on the dashboard of your car? When your car is telling you there's a problem: "Mayday! Mayday!" Do not go out when it's 110 degrees in this car, because all the little lights are flashing and you should just go directly to the garage? Right?

So most of us have that. And I want you to see that I believe that your personality has some "tells." Do you know what a tell is when you're playing poker with somebody? A tell is when you can see something going on with them that they don't always want to see for themselves. And I think that we have "tells" that tell us that we need to spend more time in prayer.

And one of those things is that, when you're feeling burned out, you are not spending enough time in prayer. 100%. If you're feeling burned out, overwhelmed, you are not spending enough time in prayer. Because, for me, the whole thing is that you have to get filled up on the inside to be effective on the outside. And when you're feeling burned out "out here," you're not getting full enough on the inside. So if you're burned out, that's a sign that you're not getting enough.

If you're anxious or fearful, you are not spending enough time in prayer. One of the things that we just have to come back to is the realization that, if you're spending a lot of time being anxious and afraid of anything -- if you're afraid of what's going on in the world; if you're afraid of what's going on in your family; you're afraid of what's going on with the dollar, the Deutschmark, or whatever it is for you -- you are not spending enough time in prayer.

And not that anyone in this room would ever do it, but if you are quick to anger. If you notice that you're like, just, a fuse that is pretty short, and you're lit and you're ready to go, you are not spending enough time in prayer.

If you're feeling empty, afraid, overwhelmed, disconnected, sad, depressed -- if your emotional life feels hard -- you are not spending enough time in prayer.

And so over and over again, for these seven weeks I want you to really get connected. Because I think that, for most of us, we tend to do life from a more mental point of view. We think about it; we try to solve our problems mentally. We're doing life from pretty much a mental point of view, trying to solve the problems. Trying to figure it out; trying to understand why people do what they're doing or trying to understand what the best path is for us. And if we spend too much time just from that mental point of view, we don't always check in to make sure that our soul is full. And prayer is what we need. Prayer is the way that we transform thoughts.

You know, it's an incredible activity when we move from negative thinking to positive thinking. And I believe that the more we fill up our soul -- the more that we really allow our soul to expand, to feel more God. So that's what we're going to do. For the next seven weeks, I want your soul to be plump and happy. [Congregation laughs] I want your soul just to be the Pillsbury Dough-Boy of the universe, right? I want you to feel so full -- so much God in you -- that it's changing your life.

So, you ready for this first week's prayer? You ready? It's four words: Let there be light.

Let's say it with me: [with congregation] *"Let there be light."*

Now, let's say it one more time just so you can memorize it. [Congregation laughs]

Together: [with congregation] *"Let there be light."*

Four words: Let there be light! And it is the creative cause of the Universe. Let there be light.

Genesis 1:1-4 says this:

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of the Lord was moved over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was ..."*

[Congregation: "Light!"]

*"And God saw that the light was ..."*

[Congregation: "Good!"]

*"And God separated the light from the darkness."*

Now, here's what I really want you to see, because this is really important. So we have a belief in our culture that light is better than darkness. Right? And at some level, we were taught to fear the darkness. But from the highest spiritual point of view, what I want you to see is that, in this analogy that we use in the Old Testament, the darkness was just as much God as the light.

Like, when we say, *"Let there be light,"* we're not actually creating the light; we're actually illumining and seeing the God that was always present.

So every time you affirm, *"Let there be light,"* you're not actually creating God. You're actually seeing the fullness of God that's always been around you. You're actually activating the presence of God around you so that your life sparkles with goodness.

So over and over again, for this week, your prayer is simply: Let there be light.

One more time: [with congregation] *"Let there be light!"*

One more time: [with congregation] *"Let there be light!"*

How many of you ever saw the show that Oprah did when she gave the cars to everybody? Remember? You might have seen it, or you've probably seen a video of it. And it was ... I think it was Oprah at her most animated level! Like, she was so excited to give everybody in her audience a car! And if you saw it, or if you remember it -- you can go back on YouTube, because it's just delightful ... Like, if you go back and watch it again, it's Oprah saying, *"And YOU get a car; and YOU get a car; and YOU get a car!"* Like, she was so excited to give everybody in her audience a car!

And so this week, I want you to be that excited. And I want you to imagine that you have a spiritual wand. A magic wand, if you will! And your job this week, over and over again, is to say, [pantomimes holding a magic wand and raising and lowering his hand use the magic wand] *"Let there be light! Let there be light! Let there be light! Let there be light!"*

And your job is to call forth as much light as you can stand in every area of your life. Because the potential of God is ever-present. God is infinite! But God, for many of us, is kind of a dormant experience sometimes. That we're used to the level of light that we live in. And sometimes, if we tell ourselves the truth, we get kind of used to a level of darkness that is completely unnecessary.

And over and over again, this week I want you to simply say, *"Let there be light! Let there be light! Let there be light!"* in literally every area of your life: in your finances; in your health; in your relationships; in your work; in your family. If you go to school, or work in a school: *"Let there be light!"* For the government: *"Let there be light!"* Around the planet: *"Let there be light!"*

Over and over again, I want you to activate as much God around you as you can stand.

Now, if you get too happy, and you need to sit down for a moment, I understand! [Congregation laughs] But the whole job this week is: You are an activator of the infinite presence and power of God. And your job is to activate it over and over and over again in greater and greater ways. And it is infinite!

Like, you're not being a greedy piggy [congregation laughs] to say, "*Let there be light!*" Like, you're not taking the light away from anybody else! And, in fact, if you are a place of light, people are drawn to you. Like, if you're really activating the light of God around you, notice how people are going to be moving toward you, not away from you.

Remember Linus and Charlie Brown and Lucy? Remember Pig-Pen? You know, and he had that cloud of dirt that just kind of followed him around? Well, you know ... If you're carrying a lot of drama and pain and fear around you, do people tend to move toward you or away from you? People tend to -- even unaware; sometimes even unconsciously -- they tend to move away!

But if you're being the light -- if you're bringing the light into the people around you and to yourself ... And if you're praying, "*Let there be light!*" in situation after situation at work or at home; in your finances; in your health ... Over and over again, what I want you to see is that you actually -- you're transforming the world! And that statement is not too big! You are literally transforming the world by being a stand for light.

Now, I need to give you a little disclaimer. If you're being shaky with life ... You know what I'm saying? If you're not being completely honest with the people around you ... If you're kind of cheating on your taxes ... If you're not really being straight up with life, claiming, "*Let there be light!*" may not be the most fun for you this week. [Congregation laughs] Right? Because, as you're bringing more light in, everything's going to be revealed. So if there's areas in your life that you would rather have them not revealed, this is not your prayer! You need to pray for forgiveness, right? [Congregation laughs] That's your prayer! Right?

But if you're committed to being the light -- if you're committed to sharing your light -- then everything, as it's revealed, is going to bless you in greater and greater and greater ways.

Because how many of you know that you're on the spiritual path? You're on a spiritual path! If you go hiking, do you want to do it where there's light on the path? Or do you want to do it when there's darkness? How many of you ever stubbed your toe on the way to the bathroom in the middle of the night? Right? And it's not always helpful.

But the more light you bring into the world -- the more light you shine upon your path -- the more everything in your life gets better. And what also happens is that, of all the places -- your finances; your health; in your work; in your family; and all those places ... I want you to call forth the light! But the most important place I want you to call forth the light is where? Within! Within YOU! Right?

And say you've had a painful experience. Has everybody had at least one? Like, have you had an experience that was so painful that you just kind of pushed it down and just kept trying to move forward? Has everybody had that experience? Because our soul has this huge capacity. So for many of us, the way we were taught to do pain management is to shove it down and keep moving.

And what happens when you begin to affirm, "*Let there light,*" is those old, painful situations come bubbling up gently to the surface so that you can see them. So that you can relive them? No! So that you can release them, finally, to God and let them go!

So as you claim, "*Let there be light!*" -- as you bring the light into you and your soul; into your essence; as you bring more and more light within you -- those old, painful experiences come bubbling up so that you can release them; so that you can finally clear them out.

How many of you have ever held a hot pan for more than an hour? Right? Nobody can do that! Because your body is so smart that your body refuses to hold on to pain! But emotionally, we can hold on to pain for years!

And as we begin to affirm within ourselves, "*Let there be light! Let there be light!*", those old things begin to bubble up so that we can give them to God. So that we can release them. Because the good news is that, when you've got layers and layers of pain within yourself, you can't see the fullness of God within you. That you were created in the image and likeness of God. You were created in the image and likeness of God!!!

And as we allow the light to be the focus of who we are within, you actually see yourself the way God sees you! You see yourself in your greatness. You see yourself in your power. You see yourself in your wisdom. And as we claim, "*Let there be light!*", we see the light that is within us, and we see that it's God! That God is our essence!

One of my favorite Scriptures is 1 Corinthians 13. Now, 1 Corinthians 13 ... how many of you have ever heard that at a wedding? You know what I'm talking about? 1 Corinthians 13? Because it gets used a lot, right? It's lovely, right?

But I want to focus on 9, 10, 11 and Verse 12 that don't usually make it to wedding ceremonies. Because I think this is phenomenally powerful. This is the Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:

*"For now I know in part and we prophesize in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will be passed away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in the mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know in full, even as I have been known fully."*

So what does that mean? As you activate the light within you and all around you, you actually begin to see yourself in a brand new way. You begin to see yourself in the fullness, in the power, in the glory that you were created to express. And I love the line where Paul says, "*Now I look in the mirror, and I see myself dimly.*" Like, now when we look at ourselves -- when we think about ourselves, when we talk about ourselves ... We say it; we think about it; we see it in a way that is a reflection of the Divine, but kind of a distorted reflection of the Divine. We don't see ourselves as whole and complete and lacking in nothing. We kind of sometimes see ourselves as broken or "less than." Or we feel ashamed of ourselves. Or we feel like we're not quite all that.

But as we claim the light within us -- as we release all that is wounded or broken or "less than" -- we begin to see ourselves from the fullness of God. And, in fact, we get to the point where, when we look in the mirror, what we see is the face of God as our face. I want you to really hear that! We begin to see ourselves in the reflecting -- fully reflecting the fullness of God!

And that can only happen in the light! It really requires that you activate the full light of God within you!

So now you may see yourself, and see part of your spiritual essence; or part of your greatness; or part of your perfection; or part of your divinity; or part of your magnificence. But as you turn on the light, you will see yourself in totality. You will see the fullness of God looking back at you.

That is your spiritual path! That the more light you bring to your path, the more you see yourself the way that God sees you: whole and complete and lacking in nothing.

Whatever is going on in your life -- whatever the need; whatever the situation; whatever the condition; no matter what your past has been; no matter what the crazy beliefs that you've believed about yourself; no matter what people told you about yourself; no matter how broken or limited you've believed yourself to be -- the path of greater good for all of us is when we claim the light.

Ready? *"Let there be light."* [Congregation joins in as he says it]

One more time: [with congregation] *"Let there be light."*

And now this is your job! For seven days, your job is to claim the light over and over again, and to see if you can experience yourself as and through your divine self. To see yourself whole and complete. To see yourself created in the image and likeness of God. To bring so much light: if there's a challenge; if there's a problem; if there's a need, we're going to bring so much light to that situation that you're going to be transformed over and over and over again. And you're going to see yourself the way that God sees you. That you're going to see your magnificence. You're going to see your greatness. And you're going to be able to look in the mirror and see the fullness of God staring back at you.

*"Let there be light."* [Congregation joins in as he says it]

One more time: [with congregation] *"Let there be light."*

Will you pray with me?

And I invite you open your mind your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That tonight, we are here for God. We are here to be God's light in the world. We are here to be God's radiant center of good, of truth, of power. We are here to allow the goodness that we were created to be to be fully expressed. Let there be light! And there was light.

Jesus said, *"Let your light so shine that men see your good works and give glory to God."*

Tonight, be the light. Let your soul heal at every level. Let the old pain and wounds of the past just be released to God so that nothing blocks the light; nothing distorts the light. That the light is the power of God expressing as you. There is only light.

Tonight, be the light and set yourself free. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.