

# It's Friday but Sunday's Coming

By Tony Campolo  
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In the scriptures we read: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen. "This is what it's all about. To be people of faith, to be people of hope.

But they always ask the obvious question: "From whence comes this hope? Where do you get this faith? Is it part of your DNA? Or is it a gift of God?" I believe it's a gift of God, and I want to tell you how I access that gift. It's in my prayer life.

There are many ways of praying. I make my requests known to God. However, the praying of the Christian, the praying of anyone, has to be more than just reading off the list of non-negotiable demands to the Almighty. So often our prayers are nothing more than wish list requests, and though that's important, there's another dimension to prayer. It's a dimension that I encounter in the early morning.

I get up before I have to and I lie in bed in stillness and wait for the Holy Spirit to invade me. I wait for Christ to take possession of me. Your prayers have to go beyond requests.

Sometimes I think our prayers are like my boy when he was seven years old coming into the living room and saying, "I'm going to bed. I'm going to be praying. Anybody want anything?" Obviously, it's got to be more than that.

So, in the morning I center on Jesus. There's an old African American spiritual that goes, "Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus. "I say his name over and over again and focus on Jesus. I drive everything else out of my mind. I don't ask God for anything. They asked Mother Teresa once, "When you pray, what do you say to God?"

She replied, "I don't say anything. I listen."

So, the interviewer said, "All right, when you pray, what does God say to you?"

She said, "God doesn't say anything. God listens. And if you don't understand that, I can't explain it to you."

Well, I've got news for you I do understand it. I do understand that kind of praying where you say nothing and you hear nothing but in quietude and in stillness, you surrender and you wait for the Holy Spirit, for Christ himself to invade you. It's one thing to believe in Jesus. It's quite another to surrender and allow Jesus to become a living presence and to invite him into your life.

It says in Revelations, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens the door, I will come in. I will dwell with that person. "And Christ hopes that you will open yourself up and say, "Jesus, I not only believe in what you did for me on the cross two thousand years ago, I want to surrender so that you can become a living presence in my life here, creating within me hope and faith and the joy that spirituality is all about. "Isn't that what you want? Isn't that what you need?"

I have to tell you, I'm Baptist. Now you don't have to be Baptist to go to heaven. Amen? However, Baptist's are not allowed to read their prayers. I mean Episcopalians can read their prayers, Lutheran's can read their prayers, but Baptist's have to make them up with their eyes closed. And that's hard to do especially if you really get into Jesus and forget the congregation around you. One day I was really into Jesus and I wasn't thinking about the congregation at all and my street language from Philadelphia surfaced.

On the way out of church, a woman said to me, "Reverend, do you know how many grammatical errors you made in the prayer this morning?"

Before I could catch myself, I said, "I wasn't talking to you anyway. "There is a kind of praying where you ask nothing, you hear nothing, you surrender, and the Spirit of the living Christ the Christ who died on Calvary invades you and possesses you and transforms you from within. That's what gives hope and that's what creates faith - the Spirit of God creates faith. The Holy Spirit creates faith. Jesus entering into us creates faith.

I work with young people coming out of Eastern University in St. Davis, Pennsylvania. It's a Christian University and we have deployed so many of our young people to work in third world countries and in cities across the United States. It's important that we recognize that you don't have to go to the third world to go to the third world anymore. Sadly, the third world is right in our own back yard. You can find the third world in your neighborhood if you look for it. And these students are working in cities that are really in terrible condition.

In one particular city, they started this program where they took some thirty to thirty-five young people out of high school. We have a summer program that works with thousands of children, but these thirty young people were obviously special, obviously bright, superior in every way, and yet every one of them was flunking out of school. In this case, they were flunking out of school for the simple reason that they had missed more than half of all the school days the previous school year. None of them could read above a fifth grade level. All of them had come from single-parent homes, and none of them was living above the poverty level.

We put these young people in a church basement with volunteers, largely lovely elderly women from suburban communities who came in and sat around the table with these African American young men and young women. They home schooled them, five to a table. At the end of the first year, one student out of that group had missed one day of school and all the rest of them had perfect attendance. When I asked one of them why he always showed up at school now though he never used to do that. He said, "Well, man, you try to miss around here and Miss Jones, she gets in her car and she comes to get ya."

With that kind of personal attention, at the end of that school year, every one of these young people had a wonderful record. At the end of three years, all of them had graduated high school, and all of them went on to a college or university. One of them attained a free ride scholarship to an Ivy League school, not because she was African American, not because she was poor, but because her SAT scores were fourteen seventy five - close to genius!

You see, she had been living without hope, she had been living without faith, but when Christ is within us, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, and nothing is impossible. That's why they call it the Good News!

In my own life, I've had some experiences. We have some work down in Haiti, a literacy program where we're, at any given day, working with fifty-thousand adults teaching them how to read and write because that's their ticket to a better life in this most despairing nation. And I go down from time to time to check out the work to see that things are going well. I got out of the van in Port-au-Prince.

I'm looking across the sidewalk to go into the Holiday Inn where I always stay in Port-au-Prince when I was intercepted by three girls. I call them girls because the oldest could not have been more than seventeen. The one in the middle looked at me and said, "Mister, for ten dollars you can have me all night long." I was stunned.

I turned to the one next to her I said, "What about you? Do I get you for ten dollars? She nodded. I said to the other one, "What about you? "She tried to smile, but it's hard to look sexy when your mother and father are dead and you've got younger siblings who are on the verge of starvation. She said yes. I said, "Okay. I'm in room 210. I want you up there in a half hour. I'm I've got thirty dollars and I want to hire all three of you for the night." I rushed up to the room, I got on the telephone, called down to the concierge desk, and said, "I want every Walt Disney video you've got - every one of them. Send them to room 210." I called down to the

restaurant I said, "Banana splits, but I want them extra large. I want whip cream and lots of nuts and cherries. I want them huge and I want four of them.

When the girls came, and the videos came, and the banana splits came, we sat on the edge of the bed and until about one o'clock in the morning. We watched Disney and laughed together and had a good time. It was about one o'clock when the last of them fell asleep across the bed. And, as I sat there in that stuffed chair, I thought to myself, nothing's changed. Nothing's changed. I didn't know enough Creole, their language, to lead them to Christ. I thought to myself, tomorrow they will be back on the streets selling themselves to dirty filthy Johns because there are always dirty filthy men who, for ten dollars, will destroy a little girl. Nothing's changed. But a voice within me said, but for one night, you let them be children again. For one night, you let them be little girls again. You did what you could.

And that's all that God ever asks of any of us - that we do what we can. Are you doing what you can? Have you allowed Christ to come into you and work through you to do the loving and gracious things that God would want to do through you if you'd just give God the chance?

I was in Farmington New Mexico at a speaking engagement and I was to catch a little commuter plane that would take me on to Denver. I was in this little tiny air terminal. As I looked around, there was this woman that was elderly, very old as a matter of fact, but worse than that, she had a mean look on her face. I didn't have anything else to do, so I decided I would go over and try and see if I could get her to smile. Well, I got her not only smiling, I got her laughing. And once I got her laughing, the other eight guys in the air terminal gathered around and we all worked on this woman and she was just laughing and convulsing. She said, "Stop, please stop. I'm an old lady. You've got me laughing to hard. You have no idea what's going to happen." Then the airplane landed, her friend got off the airplane, she hugged her friend, and she left.

I was waiting for them to call us to go through the metal detector and get on the plane when I looked out the glass doors and here was this car, her car coming back up the lane. She got out of the car she came back into the air terminal. This elderly woman shuffled up to me and she said, "Mister, you could not have known this, but it was two years ago today that my husband of sixty-four years died. You didn't know that. But on the way home I realized today was the first day since then that I've been able to laugh and I wanted to come back and thank you."

Jesus said, "The work that I do, ye shall do, and greater works than these shall ye do because I go unto my Father." And you're saying, wait a minute Campolo, you're not going to compare getting an old lady to laugh with Jesus walking on the water, are you? I ask you, if Jesus had a choice between making an old lady laugh again, a brokenhearted woman laugh again, and walking on water, which do you think he would call the greater work? That's why he looks at this congregation and all of you out there in the television audience, saying, "I wanted to do great works through you and because there are so many of you, you will be able to do even more than I was able to do when I was only incarnated in one man, Jesus Christ." Do what you can.

In an interview for Time Magazine, they asked Mother Teresa once, "You're old, you're sick, and it's not long before you're going to die. You've been the one who raised the money, you've been the one who recruits those who work for the sisters of charity. What will happen to this ministry after your dead?"

Her answer was brilliant. She answered, "It's none of my business." What a good answer. You do what you can and you leave the results in the hands of Jesus. Amen?

Now, people of God, it's been a joy to be with you today. Dr. Schuller you have good people here today and it's a good congregation to preach to considering it is predominantly white. Nothing against white people, some of my best friends are white. But, white people are hard. You would have come to my church. It's an African American church. I belong to this small Baptist church in Philadelphia that closed down and we moved to the nearest Baptist church which is Mt. Carmel Baptist church and it's a wonderful church and it's easy to preach there. Very easy because the deacons sit right up front right underneath the pulpit and every time you say something good my deacons yell, "Preach! Preach brother preach!" I would have done much better today if I'd had my deacons here. And the women in my church, when you are delivering the word, they'll put one hand

in the air, and they'll go, "Well." Just like that. Well? Doesn't sound like much to you, but you get fifty, sixty women going, "Well," your hormones bubble. And the men in my church, when you are pumping on all cylinders, they'll actually stand up and yell, "Keep going. Keep going, baby, keep going, keep going. I don't get that from white people in the Crystal Cathedral. They don't yell, "Keep going." They yell, "Stop. Stop!"

Once a year in our church, we have a preach-off. Now you folks for the most part don't even know what that is. That's when you get about five, six, seven preachers and you preach back to back to see who's best. You say that it's for the glory of God. But we know what it's about. (And it was my turn. And I don't want to brag, people, I really don't want to brag. I was good. I mean I know I was good because the deacons were yelling, "Preach!" And the women were going, "Well." And men were standing up and yelling, "Keep going keep going, keep going." And I feed on that stuff. The more they did it, the better I got. The better I got, the more they did it. People, I kept getting better and better and better. I got so good, I wanted to take notes on me. When I finished, that place went ballistic, it went wild. I sat down, my pastor hit my knee, and said, "you did all right. You did all right."

I said, "You're next pastor. Are you going to be able to top that?"

He said, "Son, sit back, because the old man is going to do you in. "I don't want to brag, but I was so hot that day, I didn't think that anybody could do me in. People, hear me. But that sucker got up, and for the next hour, he did me in. He did me in with one line over and over again: "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming. "It doesn't sound like much, but you weren't there. He started nice and soft with, "It was Friday. It was Friday and my Jesus was dead on the cross, but that's because it was Friday. Sunday's coming."

Somebody yelled, "Keep going, keep going."

That's all he needed. He took off. "Friday. Friday people are saying you can't change things in this world, but they didn't know it was only Friday. Sunday's coming. "See, now, I thought I'd get something from this crowd by now. We got to de-honkytize the Crystal Cathedral. So I'll give you one more shot.

"It's Friday and they're saying a bunch of middle class folks in the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove cannot impact the community, cannot change things in the world, but I'm here to give you the good news; it's only Friday. Sunday's coming!"

He went on like that for an hour. By the time he was finished, I was exhausted. He just yelled at the top of his lungs, "Friday!"

Without hesitation, that whole congregation yelled back, "Sunday's coming!" People of God, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. You can have it all, and all you have to do is say is Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me. Enter into my life. Christ, I not only believe in you, I'm not only going to be a believer, I'm going to be a disciple. I'm going to be filled with your presence, used by you to bring hope and faith to the rest of the world and then the world will get the Good News. Are you ready? Are you ready? The Good News is, it's Friday, but... (Audience response:) SUNDAY'S COMING!

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