

A People of the Book
A Topical Study

A Study of

Prayer

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Introductory Remarks

1. How seriously do Christians take the subject of prayer?

a. As a brotherhood

- 1) Told there has never been a whole semester in our schools teaching about prayer
- 2) Only lectureship I'm aware of is one done by Calhoun school of prayer
None of Christian colleges devoted lectureships to subject
- 3) Even attended group saying have 24 hr. prayer & worship services
More a contemporary music concert than worship – no prayer
- 4) Of all the Christian disciplines - prayer & Bible reading are the most neglected

b. As a congregation

- 1) How much time & emphasis do we devote to prayer?
- 2) Do have prayer list – ½ dozen men meet 2X month for prayer breakfast
Women meet monthly for luncheon

c. Individually

- 1) Most if not all of us be humiliated (168 hrs. week – few minutes pray)
- 2) Ask self – do we find it easy (natural & routine) to pray
Do we find our prayer times rewarding?
Do we find ourselves looking forward to times in prayer?

2. Why Christians spend so little time in prayer?

a. Fervent prayer is hard work

- 1) Requires commitment, concentration & discipline
- 2) No immediate feedback (hard to pinpoint results)
- 3) Easier to take the path of least resistance - See prayer as boring & too time consuming – hard retain our interest; nothing to say – spiritual apathy

b. Most don't see their prayers as being that important

- 1) Feel insignificant & unworthy
- 2) Consider others can do it better – not seek grow
- 3) Don't believe that prayer changes things

c. God acts when the faithful pray

- 1) 2 Chron.7:14 – humble selves & pray = heal land
- 2) James 4:3 – have not because you ask not
- 3) Mk.9:29 – this kind comes out only by prayer

3. Satan takes the subject of prayer very seriously

a. He knows the power available in prayer

- 1) James 5:16-18 – avails much
- 2) Jn.14:12-14 – do whatever you ask
- 3) Jn.16:24 – ask & you will receive
- 4) Mk.9:29 – removes his control in peoples lives

- b. Will do anything to keep us from praying**
 - 1) Never really be a threat to him or his cause unless we pray
 - 2) Satan trembles when even the weakest Christian prays
 - 3) In one congregation the elders were upset because some of the men gathered to pray on their own – all invited, but some objected
 - 4) Wants us too busy to pray regularly & consistently
 - c. Seeks to get us to doubt or discount its benefits**
 - 1) James 1:5-8 – doubt means receive nothing
 - 2) See prayers effectiveness for only the spiritually great – we unworthy or inadequate spiritually
 - 3) Wants us to remain on surface in prayer – just repeat certain phrases or go through the motions with no serious attention put on praying
- 4. Failing to consistently pray hinders the kingdom of God**
- a. Disciples unable to help Jesus – Mt.26:37-46**
 - 1) Jesus in great need – overwhelmed with sorrow – asks for help
 - 2) Wants them to watch with Him
 - a) Watch = present imperative (very important)
 - b) Means – be alert & attentive – constant vigil
 - 3) Satan’s attacks were extremely fierce – facing death & suffering
 - a) Disciples about to be sifted like wheat
 - b) Satan’s forces focused on destroying all Jesus has accomplished
 - 4) Disciples not sense earnestness & seriousness of task
 - a) Slept instead of praying
 - b) Only help Jesus received was from an angel God sent
 - c) Spiritually speaking the disciples were defenseless – scattered
 - b. Disciples unable to drive out demon – Mk.9:29**
 - 1) Relied on Jesus to pray not a personal responsibility
 - 2) Unprepared for spiritual battle (take on tasks in their own strength)
 - c. Disciples tempted to focus attention in wrong areas – Acts 6:1-4**
 - 1) Physical needs urgent – division occurring
 - 2) Where apostles emphasis needed to be – prayer & ministry of word
 - 3) Because focus right = tremendous growth
 - d. Need be prepared for challenges Satan will send**

Understanding Prayer

1. Definition of the Greek word

- a. *proseuchee* – a wish, a vow, a desire uttered toward God
- b. Prayer is seeking to communicate with & drawing close to God
- c. In 1 Tim.2:1,2 – Paul lists several types of prayer
 - 1) **Supplication** – expressing a need or want – to beg
(root word expresses necessity – an imperative)
 - 2) **Prayer** – to draw near & express a need
 - 3) **Intercession** – to fall in with or join another in asking
 - 4) **Thanksgiving** – grateful expressions & cheerful mindset

2. Various definitions to prayer

- a. **Prayer is a state of meditation of God & His will = Listening**
 - 1) Involves studying the scriptures & conversing with God
 - a) Reflecting on His thoughts – He speaking to us
 - b) Seeking to understand how this applies to us personally
 - 2) Examples in scripture – be still before the Lord
 - a) Moses at Red Sea – be still & see deliverance (stop worrying)
 - b) 1 Sam.12:6-12 – reminds them of God's past activity
 - c) 1 Kings 19:1-18 – God reminds prophet (still voice)
 - d) 2 Chron.20:13-26 – take up position & be still
 - e) Ps.4:4 – search heart & be silent
 - f) Ps.46:8-11 – be still & know I am God
 - 3) Doing this changes us – come to know Him – yield to His will
- b. **Prayer is allowing God to Have His way**
 - 1) In prayer I express that submission – totally His
 - 2) See impact of prayer on Jesus' life – Mk.1:35-38
 - a) Busy day – healing; demons (power drain)
 - b) Early at prayer – renewed energy
 - c) Influenced by those we spend time with – values change
- c. **Prayer is speaking God's will upon the earth**
 - 1) Our purpose – to want what He wants
 - a) See Jesus in garden – knew His will & asks for it
 - b) We are the body of Jesus – carry out His desires on earth
 - 2) Prayer is not asking what we want – asking His will
 - a) Model prayer – thy will be done on earth as is in heaven
 - b) 1 Jn.5:14,15 – ask anything according to His will
 - c) Jn.15:5-8 – abide in Me & My words = ask & given
(Jn.8:32 – abide in words & know truth)
 - 3) We are to bind what God wants – Mt.18:15-20
 - a) Not bystanders – speak & act on His word (enact His will)
 - b) We are to bind what God has bound

- 4) Rev.12:11 – how overcome
(judgment based upon prayers of saints - Rev.6)
- 5) Church must cooperate with God for kingdom to flourish
 - a) Unless we cooperate – His will restricted
Wants all saved – to happen we must speak
 - b) God not force His will – must respond or face consequences
 - c) God works through His church – Eph.3:20; Phil.2:12,13
 - d) God purposely limits Himself – to work through believers
Eph.1:17-22

d. Prayer is our faith finding utterance

- 1) We believe God cares & desires to help – thus express our concerns
- 2) When struggle believing – we will struggle praying

3. Keys in Christian prayer

- a. **We believe** God cares & is merciful – will keep His promises = cry out
- b. **If we struggle believing** we will struggle praying = direct correlation
- c. Spiritually speaking - prayerless people are powerless people
 - 1) See how disciples hindered from helping Jesus – Mt.26:37-46
 - 2) Disciples unable to drive out demon – Mt.17:19-21
 - 3) Eph.6:10-18 – must put on whole armor to stand against spiritual evil
 - 4) Even in life weight lifters must prepare to lift heavy amounts –
spiritually we can't take on monumental tasks until prepare selves
- d. **See the seriousness in coming before God** – 1 Chron.21:1-30
 - 1) David is tempted & sins in numbering the fighting men (trust men)
 - 2) Leaders decision would affect all Israel
 - 3) God sends prophet to chasten David – David seeks God's mercy
(see concern for self personally – vs.13)
 - 4) God strikes down 70,000 men
 - 5) God stops the angel & allows David to see angel with sword drawn
 - 6) David pleads for the people – admits he the one needs be punished
 - 7) Angel has prophet tell David to build altar & call upon Lord
 - 8) **Notice** – not until after David calls on Lord that angel puts up sword
 - 9) James 4:3 – have not because ask not
- e. **God works through the church to affect the world**
 - 1) Eph.3:20,21 – is at work in us for His glory
 - 2) Church regulates the manifestation of God's power on earth
 - a) Like water line governs flow of water into house
 - b) Larger the line – the greater the flow
 - 3) God purposely limited Himself to work through believers

Prayers Purpose

Introduction

In Luke 18 Jesus encourages His disciples to pray & not give up. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul urges all Christians to pray unceasingly. In Romans 12, Paul urges us to be always faithful in prayer. Why does God give us such instruction in His word? Is there something about prayer that we ought to realize that makes it more than just a religious exercise? In this lesson we will consider the purpose of prayer.

1. God's desire to have fellowship with man

a. Seeking to comprehend God – far beyond our comprehension

1. Created us & sustains us – Gen.1; Heb.1:1-3
2. Sense the vastness of His creation
(6 Quadrillion miles to nearest star = 6,000,000,000,000,000)
3. He inhabits all this creation – everywhere
4. Skeptics say to pray to such a God is meaningless – futile
(we are to insignificant to mean anything to Him)

b. Understanding the revealed nature of God

1. Created us in His image
 - a. Only man is spoken of this way
 - b. Crowned man with glory & honor
 - 1) All creation to submit to man
 - 2) Ps.8:1-9
 - 3) Man to rule & care for God's creation – Gen.1:26-28
2. Desires to be close to us
 - a. Walked with Adam in garden
 - b. Acts 17:24-28 – not far from all of us
 - c. Ps.34:1-22 – David writes of His closeness & concern
3. Jesus speaks of His concern for us
 - a. Mt.6:7,8 – knows our needs even before we ask
 - b. Mt.6:25,26 – more valuable than birds
 - c. Mt.10:29-31 – not fear – even hair numbered
 - d. Jn.4:23,24 – seeks worshipers
4. Has a tremendous love for man
 - a. Eph.1:18 – we are His inheritance (what He gets from all effort)
 - b. Maintains concern that we saved
 - 1) Holy Spirit intercedes for us – Rom.8:26,27
 - 2) Jesus intercedes for us – Rom.8:34
 - c. Maintained relationship in spite of how man grieved Him
 - 1) Over & over man has disappointed God – Gen.6
 - 2) Mal.1 – thoroughly disgusted with Israel
 - d. Jn.3:16,17 – sent Son to save world
5. Made the 1st move in fellowship
 - a. In the garden – walked with man
 - b. Rom.5:6-8 – while we were still sinners

6. Even common sense says God cares for man – concerned with welfare
 - a. Made world for us to exist upon
(Only planet we know of that is suitable for life)
 - b. **Question** – If I invited you to dinner & you came & all prepared for you, would you be fearful or think that I would not want you to ask for your needs?
 - c. Why is it so hard to think that God would desire to hear from us?
- c. **Mans desire to communicate with God** – pray
 1. Gen.4:6 – Adam & Eve’s children begin to call upon God
 - a. Know are barred from garden – close fellowship
 - b. Yet desire to have fellowship – acknowledge Him
 2. **Today** – throughout world men call upon a god
 - a. Call Him different names & in different ways
 - b. Sense different characteristics – often perverted view
 - c. Yet still they see a god – pray; call out to a god

2. Prayer & God’s interactions with man

- a. **Man given a free will** – a right to choose his destiny
 - a. Given the capacity to decide & choose direction
 - b. God does not force His will on man
(has set into motion certain laws & principles)
 - c. Seeks mans cooperation – allows consequences for actions
- b. **Seeks to work through man** – man must decide to cooperate
 - a. Not overwhelm us – will pressure & prod us
 - b. But ultimately man has the choice
 - c. If we choose to cooperate God works in & through us
- c. **Illustrations of this concept**
 - a. Ex.17:8-16 – Moses & the defeat of the Amelekites
 - 1) **Question** – who decided victory or defeat?
(God or Moses or both)
 - 2) **Notice** – Moses **held up hands** = Israel wins
lowers hands & Israel loses
 - 3) God already promised deliverance, but Moses had to cooperate
 - 4) In heaven God decides Israel is to win; on earth Moses decided .
 - b. **See God wait in bringing deliverance**
 - 1) Num.13:1,2 – men sent to explore Promised Land
 - a) Faith being tested
 - b) God saw their hesitation as treating Him with contempt
(their decision closed doors – they decided)
 - 2) **Not Deliver Israel until they call out** – their decision
 - a) Judges 3:7-9 – slaves for 8 years
 - b) Judges 3:12-15 – slaves for 18 years
 - c) Judges 4:1-3 – slaves for 20 years
 - d) Judges 6:1-6 – slaves for 7 years
 - e) Judges 10:6-10 – slaves for 18 years

3) NT example

- a) James 4:3 – have not because ask not
- b) Man must answer the call of Jesus to be saved
(Acts 2:38,39 – promised to all who answer call)

3. God working in cooperation with man

- a. Col.1:29 – Paul worked with Christ's strength not his
(Phil.4:13 – do all through Christ who strengthens me)
- b. 1 Cor.2:1-5 – focus was their faith in the Spirit's power not his
- c. Acts 14:26,27 – spoke of God opening doors of opportunity
- d. Jn.6:44 – none come unless Father draw them
- e. Jn.16:8 – Spirit does the convicting
- f. Acts 16:6-10 – Paul had to cooperate with God in his ministry
 - 1) Desires to preach in Asia – Spirit resists him
 - 2) Given vision – Paul cooperate = great growth
- g. **Point** – we must call God into action = His will is done through the church

God's Will On Earth & Our Prayers

Introduction

Jesus taught us to pray – “thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven”. Our focus as Christians is to make sure the will of God is done in our lives. However, for God's will to be fully done, man must cooperate with God. We have been created with the freedom to choose & our choices greatly determine what happens here on earth. In this lesson we will consider the correlation between God's will being done on earth & our prayers.

1. Prayer moves the Lord into action.

- a. 1 kings 18 - Confrontation with Elijah & Baal prophets
 - 1) Vs. 1 – God tells Elijah He going to send rain
 - 2) Background – no rain for 3 ½ years
(1 Kings 17:1 – none except at Elijah's word)
 - 3) Vs.41-45 – Elijah announces rain (his word)
(Elijah spends time praying – calling God into action)
 - 4) **Point** – already knows God said would rain – why pray?
 - a) Deut.11:13-17 – God's promises
 - b) Elijah knew God's promises & called upon Him to keep them
(bind on earth what already bound in heaven)
- b. Dan.9:1-3 – Daniel understands scripture – God's judgment on Israel
 - 1) Pray & confesses the sins of the people & God's righteousness
(2 Chron.7:21 – if my people will humble themselves & pray)
 - 2) Vs.20-23 – as soon as Daniel started praying Gabriel sent
 - 3) **Point** – prayer motivates God into action
- c. **See this same sequence in the NT**
 - 1) Acts 1:12-14 – disciples continually in prayer
 - a) Acts 1:15-22 – Peter understands God's will about apostles
 - b) Tells the 120 of need to appoint another - credentials
 - c) Vs.24 – church prays asking God's will
 - d) Chose lots – Matthias chosen
 - e) **Point** – God waits for man to call Him into action
 - 2) Acts 2:1-4 – God sends the Holy Spirit
 - a) Acts 1:4,5 – told wait (not pray) for Him (God's will)
 - b) Acts 1:12-14 – continually in prayer
(Lk.11:13 – promised Spirit given to those who ask)
 - c) **Point** – prayer calls God into action
 - 3) Acts 2:42,43 – Church continually in prayer
 - a) Wonders being done by apostles
 - b) Are manifestations of the Holy Spirit
 - c) **Point** – church-calling God into action
 - 4) Acts 4:16-33 – Persecution breaks out against the church
 - a) **Promise** – gates of hell not prevail
 - b) Vs.23-30 – church calls for God to act on His promises

- c) God answers & they boldly speak – persecution subsides
- d) **Point** – church called God into action
- 5) Acts 8:14-17 – Samaritans accept Jesus
 - a) Peter & John sent – pray they receive Holy Spirit
(Spirit promised to all who baptized – Acts 2:38,39)
 - b) Was evident Spirit's presence not there – why?
 - c) Call on God to fulfill promise – lay on hands
 - d) **Point** – church calls God into action
- 6) Acts 9:1-19 – Saul of Tarsus conversion
 - a) Jesus reveals Himself to Saul – taught by Jesus (Gal.1:12)
 - b) Acts 9:11 – Saul is praying (God not convert against his will)
 - c) Ananias sent to restore sight & baptize Saul
 - d) Persecution stops – vs.31
 - e) **Point** – Saul praying calls God into action
- 7) Acts 9:36-42 – Dorcas raised when Peter prayed
- 8) Acts 10:1-7 – conversion of Cornelius
 - a) Cornelius praying – vs.30
 - b) Told – send for Peter (man must be involved)
 - c) Vs.9-20 – Peter praying & given a vision
(an understanding of God's will)
 - d) Peter told to cooperate – men were sent by God
 - e) Peter acknowledges God's will – Spirit comes on them
 - f) **Question** – what if Cornelius & Peter weren't praying?
(would the bringing in of the Gentiles be postponed?)
 - g) **Point** – prayer moved God into action
- 9) Acts 12:1-5 – Persecution arises against the church
 - a) Peter imprisoned – church earnestly prays for him
 - b) Angel sent & Peter released
 - c) Later Herod dies & persecution stops
 - d) **Point** – church called God into action
- 10) Acts 16:6-15 – conversion of Lydia
 - a) Paul struggles with Spirit – go to Macedonia
 - b) Finds people gathered to pray
 - c) Lydia's heart opened
(Jn.6:44 – not come unless Lord lead)
 - d) **Point** – prayer motivated God to send Paul to Macedonia
- 11) Acts 16:22-33 – Paul & Silas imprisoned
 - a) Praying & an earthquake happens
 - b) Are delivered from prison – everything changes
 - c) **Point** – prayer motivated God into action
- 12) Rev.6:9-17 – opening of seals 5 & 6
 - a) See souls under altar crying out to God
 - b) Told wait
 - c) Next scene – God's judgment on the wicked
 - d) **Point** – prayer called God into action

- 13) **See the emphasis put on our asking** – praying
- a) James 4:1-3 – have not - because ask not
 - b) Jn.14:12,13 – I will do - whatever you ask
 - c) 1 Jn.5:14,15 – if we ask - anything according to His will
 - d) Lk.18:1 – pray & not give up
 - d) Why must we ask - pray?
 - (1) He already knows what we need – Mt.6:8
 - (2) Knows can't do it by ourselves – Jn.15:5
 - e) He has willed to work His will through us – the body of Christ

2. **See the emphasis of Jesus on prayer & the work of God being done on earth**

- a. Lk.10:1-3 – Sends the 72 ahead of Him
 - 1) Tells them to pray to the Lord of harvest
 - 2) Mission not only to go & tell, but also to pray
 - 3) Bring the Lord of harvest into the picture
- b. Mt.9:35-38 – crowds overwhelming Jesus
 - 1) Able meet needs – fed 5,000 easily
 - 2) Tells disciples pray Lord send reapers
 - 3) Bring the lord of harvest into the picture
- c. Jn.4:34-38 – harvest white
 - 1) Tells disciples – others already done hard work
 - 2) They now the reapers
 - 3) **Question** – who went before? How did God already prepare the way!
(Remember Jesus had to go by way of Samaria)
 - 4) This meeting already arranged - prayer

Dealing With Excuses

Introduction

Hopefully all will agree that prayer is a vital aspect of the Christian life. However, how often do we fail in this important Christian discipline? Has this ever happened to you; you start to pray & then your mind wanders concerning all the events of the day & you find yourself saying, “forgive me Lord, I’m too tired & just too frazzled to pray”? Excuses get in the way of us praying, as we should. Excuses are a problem, but they can be overcome; & in this lesson we will discuss several excuses & what we can do to deal with these excuses successfully.

1. Prayer is boring

- a. Just like anything that is done over & over, prayer can become boring.
However it does not have to become boring. It’s up to us if this happens.
- b. To overcome this excuse try adding variety
 - 1) Try praying in a new place & at a new time
(Outside, at sunrise or sunset, enjoy the creation etc.)
 - 2) Open your eyes & try praising God for 10 things around you
 - 3) Become sensitive concerning God’s gifts that are given to you
 - 4) Picture those who you are praying for – see them get well, see them coming to Jesus, see them overcoming temptations etc.
- c. Find new reasons for prayer – God’s promises; kingdom advancement etc.

2. I don’t have anything to say

- a. Everyone has times when there are just no words that come to mind. We are tired, apathetic, & despair has overwhelmed us to the point that we feel far from God.
- b. **To overcome** – realize that God isn’t concerned with our eloquence or the quality of our words – (Mt.6:5-11 - not heard because of many words)
- c. Content is what is important, not the length of the prayer.
 - 1) Instead of feeling guilty turn to the prayers of the Bible & pray them.
 - 2) Remember the Holy Spirit is interceding for you – Rom.8:26,27
- d. Turn your prayers into conversations with God & communicate with Him as with one who truly cares for you = like a best friend

3. I don’t have time

- a. Most of us are busy, perhaps too busy for our good. However, busyness should not keep us from praying. It’s not necessary for us to make prayer a big production.
- b. Take quick time outs throughout the day; when pressed for time, try praying for the person ahead of you; your boss, the cashier etc.
 - 1) These short prayers can have a tremendous effect on both you & the recipient.
 - 2) Try making prayer a delightful part of your day by noticing the change in the lives of those for whom you are praying.

4. I can't keep my mind on my prayers

- a. It's human to have your mind wander – so many things left undone; an exciting event that is planned for the next day; worries & family problems.
- b. Establish certain disciplines
 - 1) Make prayer a continual thing – not just when we feel like it
1 Thess.5:17-19
 - 2) Make a list of all the things that might interfere with your praying & give those things over to the Lord & pray for a mind that is centered on Him alone.
 - 3) When your mind wanders – rather than giving up, say a quick prayer asking God to bring your thoughts back to Him.
- c. Realize how important prayer is – Amos 5:4 – “seek me & live”. Without prayer our communication with God is cut off.

5. I need a new way to pray

- a. Look at the Psalms & see David
 - 1) He cries out loud – Ps.77:1
 - 2) At times he was silent – Ps. 46:10
(Silence allows the heart & all that fills it speak)
- b. Sing your prayer – allow yourself to express your gratitude & love to God
(Ps.92:1; 66:1)
- c. Bow; kneel; raise your hands, stand, lay prostrate, lift up your eyes to Lord etc.

6. God never listens

- a. James 4:3 – we have not because we ask not
- b. Many are too afraid to ask God & so they lose out on whatever blessings might be available to them.
- c. Because prayers are not answered as we would like them to be, doesn't mean that God is not listening.
 - 1) God's goal for us – Rom.8:28 – our good
(we might not know what is good for us, but God does)
 - 2) God may be answering our prayers in a way that we might not recognize days, weeks or even months.
 - 3) God's timing is perfect – He sees situations & circumstances working out for our good even when we don't – trust Him.

Does God Answer Prayer Today

Introduction

A prominent preacher of a large congregation in the churches of Christ made this comment. “Prayer doesn’t change anything, it is just a command for us to obey. We are not to expect God to intervene or influence our world. Prayer is just for us to express our feelings & devotion to God, not for us to ask God to work in our lives”. I for one do not believe the previous statement to be biblically correct. Prayer is not just an exercise, a religious command or something for us to do as worship & adoration toward God. Prayer changes things & advances the cause of the Lord & His kingdom. In this lesson we will consider the question – does God answer prayer.

1. Why some Christians struggle with the concept that God intervenes in our world?

A. All agree that in Bible times God answered prayer

1. Intervened with miraculous signs when Elijah prayed – 1 Kings 18
2. Confirmed the words of Jesus & His apostles

B. However, God’s miraculous intervention is to be temporary – 1 Cor.13:8

1. **It is reasoned** that for God to answer our prayers today, He must intervene in the natural laws & violate them & work miracles.
2. **Since miracles have ceased**, then prayer must just be a spiritual exercise designed to make us feel better by talking to God about our situations.

C. Another reason some struggle - scripture teaches that God is unchangeable

1. Scriptures
 - a. Mal.3:6 – I God change not
 - b. Num.23:19 – not a man who changes His mind
 - c. Heb.7:21 – He will not change His mind
 - d. James 1:17 – not change like shifting shadows
2. **Since God does not change**, prayer has no effect of the situation. God simply does His will & His will stands regardless of who might pray or how intensely one might pray.
3. **In addition**, God already knows our needs before we pray – Mt.6:8,32
 - a. His nature & purpose is always for our good & He will not withhold any good thing from His children.
 - b. Therefore, there is no real need to pray other than to fulfill a command of God.

D. Answers to these concepts

1. **God doesn’t change** – is totally dependable & doesn’t lie
 - a. His nature & character are always the same – depend on Him
 - b. Yet Moses appealed to Him & He changed His plans
 - c. Hezekiah pleaded for his life & 15 years was added to it
2. **God does know our needs before we ask**; yet He waits for us to ask
 - a. James 4:2,3 – have not because ask not
 - b. Mt.7:7 – ask & will be given
 - c. See Jesus’ emphasis on prayer – Lk.18:1

3. **The age of miracles has ceased** – designed to confirm the spoken word
 - a. Yet God doesn't have to work a miracle to answer a prayer
 - b. He can answer them through the natural course of things – providence

E. Survey – how much time do Christians spend in prayer each day

1. Average preacher – 7 minutes
2. Average member – 4 minutes

2. God cares about His creation

A. Not indifferent – just wound up world & walks away

1. Provided natural laws, now get along as best you can
2. Provided a plan, now it's up to us to work it out

B. Scriptures

1. Deut.4:7 – God is near to us when we pray
2. Ps.34:1-22 – see David's thoughts – faith
3. 1 Pet.3:8-12 – see Peter's faith
4. Jn.14:18 – Jesus promised never leave us as orphans
5. Acts 17:27 – not far from any of us

C. See God intervene to help His people

1. Joshua 10:7-14 – God intervened against the Amorites
2. 2 Kings 19:9-35 – Angel of Lord destroys 185,000

D. See God work providentially

1. **Means** – to see ahead & provide for
2. **Abraham** – Gen.22:7,8 – a sacrifice instead of Isaac
3. **Isaac** – Gen.24:7-14 – send angel before you
4. **Israel** – Ex.1 – not leave Egypt without hardship
5. **Church** – Acts 8 – not go until persecution
6. **Paul** – goes to Rome at Caesars' expense

3. Consequences when our faith in God wavers

A. See results of great faith

1. Mt.8:5-13 – be done as you believed
2. Mt.9:22 – woman's faith healed her
3. Mt.9:29 – be done according to your faith
4. Jn.6:28,29 – work God requires – believe one He sent

B. See results of doubt

1. Eve doubted (no longer trusted) God's word – lost daily fellowship
2. James 1:5-8 – doubt means receive nothing
3. Mt.13:58 – lack of faith hindered what Jesus could do
4. Mt.17:19-21 – lack of faith hindered apostles efforts
5. Mk.11:22-24 – to receive must believe & not doubt

C. All Satan has to do to stop God working in our lives – get us to doubt God

1. Doubt salvation = filled with depression, fear & worry
2. Doubt victory over sin – give up & live as slaves to sin
3. Doubt God answers prayer – stop praying & no longer answers

4. Challenge – James 5:17,18

A. **Elijah a man like us** – weak & struggled in his faith

1. Ran in fear when confronted by Jezebel – 1 Kings 19:1-4
2. Ready to give up & just die – no hope

B. **He prayed fervently** – God answered

1. **Fervent** = with zeal, strong emotions (refused to give up)
2. Pleaded God's promises (would stop rain & would send rain in season)
3. **Our promise** – Lk.11:5-8 – receive because bold, determined

C. **Reality** – we are in a spiritual war – Eph.6:10-12

1. **One of hardest things to do spiritually** – continue believing (especially when odds appear overwhelming)
2. **See Peter** – enough faith to step out but not to walk in waves
3. **See God's promises**
 - a. Jn.14:12-14 – do greater things if believe & ask
 - b. Jn.15:7 – give whatever you ask in my name
 - c. James 1:5 – gives to all who seek & not doubt
 - d. 1 Jn.5:14,15 – receive if ask according to His will

4. **Hard to believe at times**

- a. When God waits – not answer immediately (Rev.6:9-11)
- b. When others around us are skeptical – 1 Cor.15:33
- c. Satan accuses us – holding onto guilt (unworthy)

D. **Things for which to pray**

1. God send reapers – Mt.9:35-38
2. God bind Satan from blinding people to truth – 2 Cor.4:4
3. Hearts be prepared for God's message – Jn.6:44
4. We prepared to take advantage of opportunities
 - a. 1 Pet.3:15 – ready with answer
 - b. Be holy people - repent of wrong actions & attitudes
5. Names of those you want see saved
(George Mueller prayed 50 years for 6 friends – all converted)

Essential For Effective Prayer – Faith

Introduction

In the last lesson we ended by pointing out the attacks of Satan on us in our prayer life. He knows that if he can get us to doubt God & His promises that he will destroy our effectiveness in prayer. God has made it clear that we must believe & that the answers we receive will be in accordance with our faith. In this lesson we will take a look at faith from Hebrews chapter 11, often called the chapter of faith.

1. What is faith?

a. Vs.1 – being sure of what we hope for & certain of what is not seen

b. Examine differences in translations

- 1) Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen - KJV
- 2) Now faith is the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen - New American Standard
- 3) Now faith is the **assurance** of the things we hope for, **the proof** of the reality of the things we cannot see (Hebrews 11:1, Williams).
- 4) Faith is **being sure of** the things we hope for, **being convinced** of the things we can't see (Hebrews 11:1, Beck).
- 5) Now faith is the **assurance** (the **confirmation**, the title-deed) of the things [we] hope for, being **the proof** of things [we] do not see and **the conviction** of their reality—faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses - Amplified New Testament.
- 6) Now faith is **the title deed** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things which are not being seen (Kenneth Wuest).

c. Comments from commentaries

- 1) **Barclay** - Faith is a hope that is absolutely certain that what it believes is true, and that what it expects will come”
- 2) **Wycliffe Bible Commentary** - “Faith is trust in the unseen. It is not trust in the unknown, for we may know by faith what we cannot see with the eye”
- 3) **Marvin Vincent** - Faith apprehends as a real fact what is not revealed to the senses. It rests on the fact, acts upon it, and is upheld by it in the face of all that seems to contradict it. Faith is a real seeing”
- 4) **Oliver Greene** - Faith is the substance, the foundation, the title deed, the assurance of things hoped for.

d. Root words

- 1) **Being sure** – foundation, title deed, guarantee, assurance
- 2) **Being certain** – conviction
- 3) **Look closely at what is being said and notice** - faith is being described as an act, an act of the mind and heart. That is, our heart and mind believe something and we have assurance and conviction that it is true.
- 4) Yet scripture is clear – to be real faith must be acted upon

2. Examples of faith

a. Accepting as a fact God's creation

- 1) Accepting that God spoke the creation into existence
- 2) What we see came from what is unseen (not what is visible to us)
- 3) Faith is fully accepting God's word as truth

b. See faith in Abel

- 1) He offered an acceptable sacrifice
 - a) Both believed in God (else would not offer a sacrifice)
 - b) Cain chose to focus on himself, not God
 - (1) Felt could offer what he wanted – his way
 - (2) Expected God to be impressed & satisfied with whatever it was that he offered
 - c) Cain did not mind worshiping God as long as it was on his terms
- 2) Abel's offering was different
 - a) He offered the 1st & the best of his flock
 - b) Felt God was worthy of the 1st & the best
 - c) Willingly brought God what He deserved & expected
- 3) **Notice** – can't claim to have faith & focus on doing as you want

c. See faith in Enoch

- 1) Gen.5:21-24
- 2) His focus – to please God
 - a) He walked with God – to be in step or harmony with
 - b) He agreed to walk God's way without any resistance
- 3) Realize that this was not an easy time to live for God – Jude 14,15
(see what world became by time of Noah – Gen.6)
- 4) **Notice** – faith's focus is pleasing God

d. See faith in Noah

- 1) Gen.6-9
 - a) Warned about things not seen
(earth watered by mist – Gen.2:5,6)
 - b) Didn't argue, complain or question
(took over 100 years to build Ark)
- 2) Never seen flood or an Ark – yet obeyed
 - a) Imagine the ridicule he took
 - b) Was 500 when children born – flood when 600
(Gen.6 – God gave man 120 years to repent)
- 3) See Noah's life – Gen.6:9,10,22
 - a) Blameless among an ungodly world
 - b) Walked with God – in step with
 - c) Did everything God commanded
- 4) **Notice** – faith obeys even when it looks foolish or no one else believes

e. See faith in Abraham

- 1) Gen.12-22
- 2) Called at age 75
 - a) Not know where God taking him (600 miles across desert)
 - b) Live in a strange place – a foreigner (no permanence)
 - c) Got there & soon a famine
- 3) Faith demonstrations
 - a) Going to Promised Land
 - b) Become a father when too old & Sarah also too old
 - c) Age 99 changed name to Father of a multitude & circumcised
 - d) Offered Isaac as a sacrifice trusting be raised
 - e) Willingly offered God everything he had (held dear to him)
- 4) **His focus** – the future (promises about himself & future generations)
 - a) Things that are impossible to see or know – God said - I believe
 - b) Died believing even though most promises not fulfilled
 - c) Passed this faith on to future generations
- 5) **Notice** – Abraham trusted God’s word in spite of the circumstances

f. See faith in Isaac, Jacob & Joseph

- 1) Passed their faith on though not see promises fulfilled
- 2) Saw enough evidence in life of God to trust & obey
- 3) **Notice** – faith doesn’t have to see substantive evidence

g. See faith in Moses & his family

- 1) Parents resisted Pharaoh – believed Moses not ordinary
(God had purpose for him & he should live)
- 2) Moses saw self as God’s deliverer for His people
 - a) Refused to be known as son of Pharaoh’s daughter
 - b) Chose to be mistreated rather than enjoy pleasures of sin
- 3) **Moses focus** – the future not the present
 - a) Left Egypt without fear (greatest nation at time)
 - b) Kept 1st Passover (never seen what was about to happen)
- 4) **Notice** – Accepted God’s direction though not fully understand

h. See faith in God’s people

- 1) Crossed Red Sea – as on dry land (Egyptians couldn’t)
(Sea driven back only by wind – wall of water on both sides)
- 2) Marched around Jericho trusting the walls would fall down
(city was impregnable – no doubts or complaints recorded)
- 3) Rahab hides spies – (expected God to give Israel victory)
- 4) **Notice** – faith puts everything on the line – risks everything

3. See what faith accomplished over the centuries

- a. Conquered kingdoms; Administered justice when there was none
- b. Stopped enemies – lions; fire; sword; Saw weakness turned into strength
- c. Experienced awesome things - raising of the dead; powerful armies routed
- d. Given ability to endure terrible circumstances – torture, prison & death
- e. Willingly experienced hardship & expecting God’s blessings

Essentials For Effective Prayer - Seriousness

Introduction

Several years ago one of the Peanuts cartoons showed Patty at the front of her class trying to solve a math problem. As always, she doesn't know the answer so she starts to pray. The longer she stands there the more intense are her prayers. "It's the 2nd problem on page 12 Lord. Hurry"! Finally her friend Marcie interrupts her & says that she can sit down now. The teacher said she wasn't feeling well & had left the room. Victoriously Patty shouts, "School prayer works"! Many time we are like Patty – in desperation as we pray because we have never had a real relationship with God in prayer.

1. Effective prayer means truly (diligently) seeking God

a. Scripture emphasis

- 1) Heb.11:6 – rewards those who diligently seek Him
Seek = search out crave, diligently inquire or investigate
- 2) Prov.8:17 – those who diligently seek will find Him
Seek = diligently, early, earnestly
- 3) Jer.29:13 – will find Me when seek with all your heart
All heart = totality (every fiber of your being)
- 4) 1 Chron.28:9 - "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

b. See teachings of Jesus

- 1) Lk.11:1-13 – teaches disciples how to pray
 - a) Not only concepts, but also attitude (earnestness)
 - b) Man had no where else to turn (refuses to take no for an answer)
 - c) Reason – enemy stalks us & God alone has answers
- 2) Lk.18:1-8 – wants us to pray & not give up (be discouraged or tire of)
 - a) Even though it seems as if God is avoiding or ignoring you
 - b) Keep before Him your struggles
 - c) Rev.6:9-11 – struggled even unto death & still calling
(God's timing is not always ours)

2. Must be serious in our walk with Jesus

a. Seriously deal with sin

- 1) Ps.66:17,18 – cherish sin in heart Lord not listen
Cherish = give attention to, look intently, give attention to
- 2) If I approve of or joyously gaze at sin – if I make a place for it, or if sin finds a home in my heart, my prayers are hindered
- 3) Isa.1:15-20 - When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong,

learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

4) Isa.59:1,2 – not that God is unwilling, sin separates you from God

5) Jer.14:10-12 – Jeremiah told praying for them was useless

6) Illustrations

a) Deut.1:43-45 - But the LORD said to me, "Tell them, 'Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.'" So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the LORD'S command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you.

b) 1 Sam.8:18 - When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day." But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us.

c) Ezek.8:16-18 - He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD, and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east. He said to me, "Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually provoke me to anger? Look at them putting the branch to their nose! Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them."

b. How deal with sin?

1) Rom.12:9 – abhor & detest

2) 1 Jn.1:8-10 – acknowledge it & repent

3) 1 Cor.10:13 – look for a way to escape

4) Rom.13:14 – make no provision for the flesh

c. Seek to live in righteousness

- 1) Ps.34:15,16 – The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
- 2) Ps.145:18-20 - The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.
- 3) 1 Pet.3:10-12 - For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Prayer & Our Relationships To Others

Introduction

In the last few lessons we have been discussing certain essentials for answered prayer. They were faith & not doubting along with approaching God in seriousness that is, earnestly seeking Him, dealing with the sin in our lives & seeking to live righteously. In this lesson we will discuss how the relationship we maintain with one another effects our prayer life.

1. Our primary responsibility toward one another

- a. Jn.13:34,35 – love one another as Jesus has loved us
- b. 1 Cor.13:1-3 – without this religion useless
- c. 1 Jn.4:20 – not love brethren can't love God
- d. Unless we make loving others a primary responsibility (find ways to love them) we will never develop & achieve an effective prayer life.

2. How we know that we are growing in loving one another

a. Expressing real care & concern

- 1) **Not just words** – 1 Jn.3:17-19
- 2) **Helping others** deal with spiritual problems – Gal.6:1,2
(Restoring them not judging & ostracizing them)
- 3) **Carefulness in the exercise of our freedoms - opinions**
 - a) 1 Cor.8:9-13 – restricting self for the good of another
 - b) 1 Cor.9:19-23 – enslave self for benefit of another
 - c) Accepting others without condemning them or their opinions
Rom.14:1-15:7
- 4) Mt.25:31-46 – did for least of these did for me

b. Treating our spouse properly

- 1) **Men**
 - a) 1 Pet.3:7 – honor & respect her as a co-heir (precious to God)
 - b) Eph.5:25-31 – love her as Christ loves church
- 2) **Women**
 - a) Eph.5:21-24,33 – submit as to the Lord
 - b) 1 Pet.3:1-6 – live model life before him (focus on inner beauty)

c. Developing a forgiving attitude

- 1) **Taught** - we must be forgiving of one another
 - a) Mt.6:12-15 – as we forgive are forgiven
 - b) Mt.18:32-35 – tormented unless forgiving
 - c) Mk.11:25 – as pray forgive so can be forgiven
 - d) James 2:13 – unless merciful judgment on us be without mercy
- 2) **Attitude** - to be continually forgiving
 - a) Mt.18:21,22 – 70x7 - unlimited
 - b) Lk.17:1-4 – 7x in a day
 - c) Eph.4:32 – be as forgiving to others as God is to us in Christ

3) Growing in the grace of forgiving

a) Mature in your faith – Lk.17:5,6 – Jesus’ response

- (1) View your offender positively, not negatively
 - (a) As an instrument in God’s hand
 - 1 Cor.10:13 – controls temptations allowed
 - (b) God’s in charge – they are there for a purpose
 - (c) James 1:2-4 – allows trials for spiritual growth

(2) Examples

- (a) Gen.45:5 – sent Joseph ahead using their hatred
- (2) 2 Sam.16:11,12 – saw man as God’s instrument
- (3) 1 Sam.26:19 – Questioned God’s hand in Saul
- (3) God’s purpose – focus attention on offenders needs
 - (1) Acts 16:16-18 – Paul insensitive to her needs
 - (2) Acts 8 – persecution allowed to spread gospel
- (4) Realize I never have a right to be bitter – hold a grudge
 - (1) Rom.12:19 – vengeance belongs to God
 - (2) Rom.12:17,18 – seek be at peace with all

b) Develop a grateful spirit toward life

- (1) Grateful for what God plans
 - 1 Thess.5:18 – in everything
 - James 1:2 – count trials joy
- (2) Rom.8:28 – works all for our good spiritually

c) Seek to discern character qualities God trying to develop

- (1) Rom.8:29 – goal is conform us to image of Jesus
- (2) Negative reaction to offense – reveals character flaws

d) Have realistic expectations in life (suffering is normal)

- (1) 2 Tim.3:12 – all who live godly will suffer persecution
- (2) Phil.1:29 – believe & suffer for Him
- (3) 2 Tim.2:12 – if suffer for Him – will reign with Him

e) Commit self to being a blessing to others not a curse

- (1) Don’t have to be angry at offense – my choice
- (2) 1 Pet.3:8-14 – no evil for evil - be a blessing

Intercession

Introduction

In 2 Tim.2:1, Paul urged Timothy to make intercessory prayer a priority in his ministry. Paul spoke of interceding before God for another as one of the most powerful things one can do for another person. I wonder if we fully appreciate this ministry today? Intercession seems to have degenerated into just asking God to bring healing to the sick. In this lesson we will discuss intercession – its meaning & importance.

1. The concept of intercession

a. **Meaning** – to urge on behalf of another; to come between; a prayer offered on behalf of another.

b. **The Bible is full of references of intercession**

- 1) Jesus intercedes for Christians – Rom.8:34
- 2) The Holy Spirit intercedes for us – Rom.8:26,27
- 3) With so many examples, intercession must be important

c. **Scriptures**

- 1) Isa.62:6,7 – speaking of God’s people in the future (church)
I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. (NIV)
- 2) Eph.6:18 - And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (NIV)

d. **Over & over Paul emphasizes intercession for him & his ministry**

- 1) Rom.15:30 – join me in my struggles by praying for me
- 2) 2 Cor.1:10,11 – knew prayers were why God had delivered them
- 3) Phil.1:19 – knew prayers make a difference on outcome
- 4) Col.4:12 – spoke of Epaphras wrestling in prayer

2. The ministry of intercession

a. **For those in leadership** – 2 Tim.2:1-3

Governing bodies – local; state; national; world
Church leaders
Business leaders
School leaders

b. **For the unsaved**

- 1) Mt.9:38 - Lord send workers
- 2) Rom.10:1

c. **For an atmosphere where the gospel will flourish** – 2 Tim.2:3,4

Peace - so can live in holiness & godliness

d. For the spiritual needs of the saints

- 1) 3 John 2- Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.
- 2) 2 Cor.13:7 - Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong.
Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed.
- 3) Eph.1:15 - For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms
- 4) Phil.1:9-10 - And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ
- 5) Col.1:9-12 - For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

3. Examples of intercessory prayer

a. Abraham

- 1) Gen.18:16-33 – for the people of Sodom
 - a) Was Abraham aware of the situation in Sodom? Vs.20-23
 - b) Who was Abraham concerned about – Lot or the people?
 - c) What stands out to you about his requests?
 - d) To what in God, did Abraham appeal to in his request?
 - e) Did Abraham see himself as worthy to make such requests?
 - f) What can we learn about God in this passage?

- 2) Gen.20:1-18 – Abimelech king of Gerar
 - a) Was God concerned with the welfare of Abimelech & his people
 - b) What would have happened if Abemilech had not repented?
 - c) What would have happened if Abraham had not prayed for them
 - d) Was Abraham free from guilt in this situation? Worthy to pray?

b. Moses

- 1) Ex.32:9-14 – Israel & the golden calf
 - a) Imagine the temptation set before Moses
 - b) What was the basis of Moses’ appeal?
 - c) What can we learn about the character of Moses?
 - d) What lesson can we learn about appealing to God for sinners?
- 2) Num.14:1-34 – Israel & their fear to enter the Promised Land
 - a) Notice Moses’ basis of appeal
 - b) Vs.28 – what can we learn about being afraid to obey God?
 - c) Did Moses’ prayers remove the consequences of Israel’s sin?
 - d) Does God’s forgiveness mean we are free from the consequences of our sin?

c. Other examples

- 1) Num.16:46-50 – over sin of Korah
 - a) What was the purpose of the incense?
 - b) Why was Aaron sent & not Moses?
 - c) Do we as Priests in God’s kingdom have a responsibility to stand between the living & the dead?
- 2) 1 Sam.12:23 – Samuel & the nation
 - a) How did Samuel view intercession?
 - b) Why was it a sin for him not to pray for his people?
- 3) Job 42:7-9 – Job & his friends
 - a) Why was God angry with Job’s friends?
 - b) Why was a sacrifice necessary?
 - c) Why could they not just pray for themselves?
- 4) Jer.29:4-7 – Captives & their new homes
 - a) Notice what they were to pray about.
 - b) Why was this important?
- 5) 2 Chron.30:15-20 – Hezekiah & those unclean
 - a) Why did the priests have to stand in for the people?
 - b) What basis did Hezekiah have to pray for his people?
- 6) 2 Sam.24:10-17 – David’s sin & his people
 - a) Notice how the sin of the leader affected the nation
 - b) Notice the sensitivity of David (conscious stricken)
 - c) What did David have to acknowledge before the plague stopped
- 7) 1 Chron.29:10-19 – David for his people
 - a) What was David’s desire for his people?
 - b) Do you suppose that David’s prayer had anything to do with Solomon’s faith?

4. When is intercessory prayer useless

a. Samuel's reaction to King Saul – 1 Sam.15:24-30

- 1) Previously had said not stop praying for people – 1 Sam.12:23
- 2) Now refusing to give assistance to Saul (not go see Saul again)
- 3) Why angry? (Saul's attitude toward sin)
- 4) Why did Samuel agree to return with Saul? Vs.25-30

b. Jer.7:14-26 – about the nation of Judah

- 1) Why was praying for these people useless?
- 2) Why was God so angry?
- 3) What were the people doing to themselves by their actions?

c. Jer.15:1-9 – concerning Judah

- 1) Notice even those considered the most righteous have no hearing
- 2) What had to happen before God would listen?

d. 1 Jn.5:16-18 – sin unto death

- 1) Should we pray for people in sin?
- 2) When is it useless to pray for sinners?
- 3) What can we learn about the Christian lifestyle?

The Model Prayer

Introduction

Jesus taught His disciples many things in regard to God & living faithfully. One of those things was how to pray. Several times in the gospels we find recorded what is often referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer”. In it we find a model showing us the details of rightly praying to God. Today many people just memorize it or recite it as if there is some magical power in reciting the words. In this lesson we will examine the principles taught in this model.

1. Mt.6:1-15 – **Approaching God properly**

a. **Problem** – man doing religious things to gain the attention & honor of men

1) **Giving to the needy**

a) Drawing attention to their generosity

b) Result - God is not impressed

2) **Hypocritical praying**

a) Focus is to receive the praise of men

b) Repetitive words & phrases

b. **The remedy** – get motives right

1) Giving – don’t draw attention to what you are doing

2) Praying – do it secretly with you & God alone

c. **Jesus teaches us to pray with a different spirit – attitude**

1) Focus is God’s glory & man’s humility

2) Emphasizes reverence, loyalty, submission, dependency & humility

3) We are God’s servants; His children & need to pray that way

2. **Primary focus – God’s desires**

a. **Our Father** – new picture of God & man’s relationship

1) Before referred to as God almighty; most high God; Jehovah

2) Jesus introduces us to concept He is our Father

a) 2 major philosophies in religion

1) **Stoics** – saw God as emotionless, unable to feel, indifferent & apathetic

2) **Epicureans** – saw God as detached & uninterested, isolated from man’s problems, living in perfect peace & calmness – to care about man upset peace

b) Jesus introduces us to intimacy with God

1) Speaks of God as a loving personality - involved

2) Teaches us to come with the eagerness of a child - approaching a father who loves him dearly

c) Other scriptures

1) Rom.8:15 – spirit of adoption = abba father

2) Gal.4:5 – Spirit of His Son in heart cries abba father

b. Hallowed be thy name

- 1) **Hallowed** – to be counted & treated as holy (separate, different)
 - a) God's name is to counted & treated differently = set apart from all other names
 - b) There is nothing common or ordinary about God's name
 - c) God's name is to be honored & adored
 - d) God's name is holy, righteous & pure
 - e) 1st thing in prayer is praise & glory to God – we owe all to Him
- 2) **God should be praised for His holiness & righteousness**
 - a) Men praise and honor each other among themselves. Men glorify men, even make idols of them (Matt.6:2).
 - b) Some are more loyal to the names of the famous - athletes, stars & politicians than they are to the name of God.
 - c) Some are more disturbed when the name of their idol is spoken of disrespectfully than when the name of God is cursed.
 - d) God says that the man who curses His name is to be judged severely (Exodus 20:7).
- 3) **How does one hallow the name of God?**
 - a) Lifestyle – 1 Pet.1:15,16
 - b) Speech – Ps.19:14
 - c) Obedience to His word – Lk.10:16; Titus 2:5; 2 Sam.12:14

c. Thy kingdom come

- 1) The kingdom of God is to be the focus of our requests
 - a) Allow Jesus to rule & reign in our hearts & lives
 - b) Our desire is your sovereignty & rule
 - c) Saying – God do whatever advances your rule & reign on earth
 - d) In the NT - the church is God's kingdom on earth
(where God rules & reigns in the hearts of man)
- 2) Reasons for this focus
 - a) It was the very message of Jesus & His apostles
 - b) It is the very thing for which God longs - the day when God will rule and reign in the hearts of all men, perfectly—the day when all men will willingly submit and serve Him—the day when all thoughts, all words, all behavior will be exactly what they should be.
 - c) God's kingdom is available now & is desperately needed. So much just eats and gnaws away at man—so much rebellion, wickedness, evil, enmity, bitterness, hatred, murder, injustice, deprivation, and hunger. God's rule and reign are needed now. Believers need to see the urgency to pray and to pray consistently, “Thy kingdom come,” and to live like God's kingdom has already come.
- 3) So many act like screaming babies – demanding God to bless them
 - a) I need; I want; I can't wait
 - b) Our cause is the only valid cause

d. Thy will be done

- 1) Statement assumes God's will is not what always happens on earth
 - a) Much of what goes on is not God's will
 - b) God allows things to happen, but they are not what He wants
 - c) Much of what many say is God's will isn't (James 1:17)
- 2) Our focus is God's will not ours
 - a) He can do with us as He pleases; we are at His disposal
 - b) We will not be displeased with what God does, even if we do not understand His actions or they make no sense to us.
 - c) Many call God King, but they do not honor Him as a King.
 - 1) They do not do His will.
 - 2) Because their profession is false, it tragically creates the image of a false and meaningless King to the world.
- 3) What is God's will?
 - a) 1 Tim.2:4 – all be saved (none perish – 2 Pet.3:9)
 - b) 1 Thess.4:3 – Christians be sanctified
 - c) 1 Pet.2:15 – Christians live righteously & silence critics
 - d) 1 Pet.2:17 – Christians suffer for doing good not evil
 - e) It's not God's will that people get sick & die & that calamity happens to them
 - (1) Man & the earth are under the curse (Satan's rule)
 - (2) We make wrong choices = consequences – Ex.34:6,7
 - (3) God uses these circumstances to mature us (James 1:2); discipline us (Heb.12:7); to make us fit for service to Him (2 Cor.1:3-7)
- 4) Why does God want us to pray for His will to be done on earth?
 - a) This earth was given to man to rule & keep – Gen.2
 - b) Man chose to follow Satan & Satan gained control
 - c) Now man must choose for God to rule

(Is a struggle because Satan refuses to let go)
 - d) God works His plan through His people – Phil.2:12,13
 - e) Unless we choose to obey & seek His will – not accomplished

3. Secondary focus – our needs

a. Give us this day our daily bread

- 1) **Give** – recognizing our physical needs are met by God's graciousness
 - a) Acknowledging our dependence upon God
 - b) Glorify yourself in providing our needs
- 2) **This day** – Focus is now, not the distant future
 - a) Each day we live by faith
 - b) This eliminates worry about tomorrow & distant future
- 3) **Bread** – basic necessities, not the deserts of life

b. Forgive us our trespasses

- 1) **Trespasses** – means debts, what we owe; that which is legally due
 - a) God has given every person certain responsibilities.

- b) Everyone has failed at some point to do what they should.
Certainly no man would ever claim he has fulfilled his duty perfectly—without any failure, without any shortcoming.
 - c) Sin is universal. Everyone fails in his duty at some point to some degree. Everyone needs to pray “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”
- 2) **As we forgive others** = This is asking God to forgive one exactly as he forgives others.
- a) If one forgives, God forgives. If one does not forgive, God does not forgive.
 - b) Therefore, any person who holds anything against another person is not forgiven his sins, no matter what he may think or has been told by another person.
 - c) I hold nothing within. O’ God, if there is anything within my heart against anyone, help me to forgive....”
 - d) Jesus says we must not react nor be harsh toward those who sin severely against us, but we must forgive. We must forgive if we wish to be forgiven.
 - e) See also Mk.11:25; Lk.17:4; Eph.4:32; Col.3:13; 1 Cor.13:1-8

3) **Lessons**

- a) An unforgiving spirit causes pain and hurt and tragedy—both to oneself and others. It can ruin lives, especially the lives of those closest and dearest to oneself.
- b) We curse ourselves by refusing to forgive. We are in trouble when praying the Lord’s prayer if we are angry and do not forgive those who sin against us: “Father...forgive us...as we forgive our debtors.” We pronounce the very same judgment upon ourselves that we hold for others.
- c) Forgiveness is conditional. The reason is simply explained. We have sinned against God, and others have sinned against us.
 - (1) If we want God to forgive us, we must forgive those who have sinned against us.
 - (2) How can we expect God to forgive us, if we do not forgive those who have sinned against us? We can expect no better treatment than we give.
- d) Our forgiving attitude is evidence that we have been forgiven.

c. **Lead us not into temptation**

1) **God does not lead man into temptation** – James 1:13

- a) Are drawn away by own lusts (not sinner by birth)
- b) 1 Cor.10:13 – tempers temptations & provides way of escape
- c) Purpose is not to defeat or destroy, but to strengthen
- d) Mt.4 - Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit *to be tested*. The Spirit did not seduce or entice Jesus to do evil, but He led Jesus into circumstances whereby He could learn obedience and discipline.

- 2) **Means** - to test, to try, to prove; not to seduce
- a) Temptation has its root in passion and appetite. It comes directly from within, from man's heart, not from without.
(Mark 7:20-23; James 1:14)
 - b) How temptation is overcome
 - (1) by submitting to God and resisting the devil
(James 4:7-8; 1 Peter 5:8-9)
 - (2) By using and obeying Scripture to combat temptation
(Lk4:4; Deut. 4:8,12; 6:13, 16; 8:3; 10:20)
- 3) **Bad feelings against others is proof one is not right with God**
- a) The believer who prays for forgiveness and holds feelings against another person is hypocritical. He is asking God to do something he himself is unwilling to do.
 - b) Bad feelings show that a person walks and lives in self-righteousness (thinks he is acceptable to God by deeds). He thinks he is better than others, and judges himself able to talk about and look suspiciously at the sins of others.
 - c) Bad feelings show that a person is living by the standards of society and not by God's Word. God's Word is clear:
"there is none that doeth good, no, not one" Rom.10:12
 - d) The man who holds bad feelings against others has not looked realistically at himself and his own sins. He does not know himself, not his real self, not the inner selfishness and motives that plague the depravity of man.

Prayer In The Name Of Jesus

Introduction

The phrase “in the name of Jesus” is a common phrase in Christian circles. Perhaps it is heard so often that many fail to realize its importance. Some may even see it as just a saying that one adds at the end of their prayers, kind of like a “yours truly” at the end of a letter to a friend. However, names have great significance in scripture & as we will discuss in this lesson, there is also great significance in the name of Jesus.

1. The significance of names in scripture

- a. Many times in scripture we find that the name of the person was given to characterize the one who bore it.
 - 1) Parents named their children, and contemporaries dubbed people, from physical and spiritual traits. (Manasseh means making to forget)
 - 2) Sometimes children were named after memorial events. (Isaac means laughter)
 - 3) Often a name was given to acknowledge God's grace & to be constant reminder of His goodness.
 - a) Isaac called the name of the well, Contention, because the herdsmen of Gerar "contended" with him (Gen.26:20)
 - b) Another well Isaac called Broad Places (roomy places), because Yahweh had "made room" for him (Gen.26:22)
 - c) Hagar was directed to name the son that she was about to bear "God doth hear," because Yahweh had "heard" her affliction. (Gen.16:11)
 - 4) Biblical names were also often prophetic (Mt.1:21)
- b. Names were given to God to represent His character, personality & work
 - 1) Adonis = my Lord
 - 2) Yahweh – personal name of God (I am)
 - 3) Rock = 5X in song of Moses God called rock (Deut.32:4,15,18,30,31)
 - 4) Holy one of Israel = to be separate; above all beings
 - 5) El Shadday = God almighty
- c. Other reasons behind the use of names
 - 1) To “speak or write” in a name **signified authority**
 - 2) To “call one’s name over a people” **indicated possession or ownership**
 - 3) To “act in another’s name” was to **represent them**
 - 4) To be “called or known” by a name indicated **special individual notice**
 - 5) To “call on God’s name” was **to worship & adore Him**
 - 6) To be “called by the name” implied **protection**
 - 7) To “confess God’s name” was **to acknowledge Him**
 - 8) To “forget God’s name” was **to depart from Him**

2. The significance of the name of Jesus

- a. Mt.1:21 – called Him Jesus because He would save His people from their sins
- b. Phil.2:9-11 – given a name that is above all names
- c. Acts 4:12 – no other name by which man can be saved
- d. Jn.14:12-14 – do even greater things than Jesus did – ask in His name
- e. Disciples taught to ask for needs in Jesus’ name – Jn.14:13,14; 15:16,23,24
 - 1) To call upon Him to intercede – Rom.8:34
 - 2) To expect Him to work through them to accomplish His will on earth
 - 3) Col.3:17 – do all in name of Jesus (representing Him; His authority)
- f. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and men
 - 1) Mediator means bridge builder
 - 2) Therefore, the believer approaches God in the name of Jesus
- g. Jesus is the only Intercessor before God, the only Person perfect enough to approach God
- h. To pray “in His name” means that the believer asks only those things that will...
 - 1) Honor His name
 - 2) Praise His name.
 - 3) Bring glory to His name.
 - 4) Lead to His name being lifted up.
 - 5) It means that the believer will ask nothing that would detract, lower or lead away from His name.

3. Some of the names given to Jesus

- a. Advocate – 1 Jn.2:1 (pleads the cause of another before a judge)
- b. Alpha & Omega – Rev.1:8
- c. Author & finisher of our faith – Heb.12:2
- d. Beginning of the creation of God – Rev.3:14
- e. Bread of life – Jn.6:48
- f. Bridegroom – Mt.9:15
- g. Bright & Morning star – Rev.22:16
- h. Chief Shepherd – 1 Pet.5:4 (Good Shepherd – Jn.10:11)
- i. Christ – Mt.16:20 (Messiah – Jn.1:41)
- j. The Son of God – Acts 9:20
- k. Cornerstone – Eph.2:20
- l. God – Jn.1:1
- m. God with us – Mt.1:23
- n. I Am – Jn.8:58
- o. Lamb of God – Jn.1:29
- p. Lion of the tribe of Judah – Rev.5:5
- q. Lord of all – Acts 10:36

4. Using the name of Jesus gives us instant access to God

- a. No right to come any other way – Jn.14:6
- b. Without Jesus we are enemies of God – Col.1:21
- c. Jn.8:44 – our desire to do Satan’s will (Eph.2:1-3)

5. Asking “in His name” is to pray as Jesus would pray.

- a. 1 Jn.5:14,15 – ask according to His will
- b. We know His will through the word of God
 - 1) 1 Cor.2:16 – we have the mind of Christ
 - 2) 2 Tim.3:16,17 – inspired of God
- c. Focusing on doing God’s will
 - 1) Phil.2:12,13 – works in us to know & do His will
 - 2) Phil.3:15,16 – do as know to – think differently He make it clear
 - 3) Prov.3:5,6 – trust; all ways acknowledge Him; make paths straight

6. Praying “in Jesus’ name” gives us authority

- a. Coming before God as Jesus’ representative
 - 1) For His sake not ours
 - 2) Heard because we represent Jesus (no right insist God do our will)
- b. Jesus gave disciples right to use His name (power of attorney)
- c. All beings (angels & demons) recognize authority of Jesus name – Mt.28:18
- d. Not to be used flippantly (magical power in words etc) – Acts 19:14-16

7. To pray in His name means our lives need to be in harmony with His character

- a. Our desire – bring Him glory & honor – Jn.14:13
- b. Submission to His Lordship – Rom.12:1,2; Gal.2:20

Fasting & Prayer

Introduction

Anytime the subject of fasting is mentioned there are always several different types of responses. Some easily see the significance of fasting as it relates to spiritual development & others see it in a legalistic & negative way. Fasting is a subject that was practiced in scripture & often associated with prayer. Therefore in our study of prayer we will look at this practice of fasting to see it's benefits & application to us today.

1. Persistent prayer is often difficult

- a. Lk.18:1-8 – teaching of Jesus – knew it would be difficult
 - 1) “Should always” = idea of necessity
 - 2) Develop a constant spirit of prayer; maintain an unbroken consciousness of God's presence
 - 3) Not give up; Give in to evil (judge was evil – wrong actions)
 - 4) Greatest evidence of faith is persevering prayer
- b. Some reasons being persistent in prayer is difficult
 - 1) Not always in the mood – preoccupied; takes time & effort (easily go through motions – not really in tune with God)
 - 2) Overcome by disappointment & discouragement
 - a) Prayers not answered quickly (want instant results)
 - b) Prayers not answered in the manner we wanted
- c. One problem we have – in scripture praying seems easy – little effort
 - 1) Elijah – 1 Kings 18:36-39
 - a) Only spoke a few words – fire comes from heaven
 - b) All did was call on God to act for His glory = fire
 - 2) Acts 4:23-31 – church prayed & building shook
 - 3) What we often miss is the preparation that goes into such prayer
 - a) Elijah went through much for the Lord before situation (3 years in hiding – fed by ravens & widow)
 - b) Church being faithful in persecution & hardships
 - c. Mt.17:21 – disciples struggle & fail (only by fasting & prayer)
 - 4) Persistent prayer always hard
 - a) Daniel – Dan.10:1-14 (21 days of fasting & prayer)
 - b) Elijah - James 5:16-18 –prayed 7X for rain
- d. Where fasting comes in – expressing our resolve – willingness to sacrifice

2. Jesus expected His disciples to fast

- a. Throughout scripture God's people fasted
 - 1) Judges 20:20-26 – after losing 40,000 men in battle
 - 2) 2 Chron.20:3,4 – when Syria came against Israel
 - 3) Joel 1:14 – when day of Lord came upon the people
 - 4) Ester 4:16 – before going before the king with her request
 - 5) Dan.9:3 – when seeking answers about Israel's future
 - 6) Lev.23:17 – associated with day of Atonement (Acts 27:9 = the fast)

- b. Jesus' positive comments on fasting
 - 1) Mt.6:16-18 – “when” you fast (not “if” you fast)
 - 2) Mt.9:14-17 – when bridegroom gone = “will fast”
(see also Mk.2:18-22; Lk.5:33-38)
 - 3) See the preparation for Jesus' ministry – 40 days – Mt.4
- c. Early church placed emphasis on fasting & prayer
 - 1) Acts 13:1-3 – worship & fasted
 - 2) Acts 14:21-23 – when appointed elders
 - 3) History says – church fasted 2 days a week for over 400 years
Epiphanius = wrote in 1st Christian encyclopedia “who does know that the fasts on the 4th & 6th days of the week were observed by Christians throughout the world”

3. Discussion of fasting as it relates to prayer

- a. **Definition** – abstaining from food or anything good & right in an effort to achieve something better.
 - 1) May include normal activities such as sleep, recreation or other special things one enjoys
 - 2) Abstaining for the purpose of spiritual growth or to serve God more effectively
 - 3) A voluntary separation from anything to express hunger for God
- b. **Purpose** – to subject the physical & enhance the spiritual
 - 1) 1 Cor.7:5 – so attention be focused upon God
 - 2) Integral part of a life deeply devoted to God
 - a) Anna the prophetess – Lk.2:27
 - b) Antioch church leaders – Acts 13:1,2
 - 3) Used by people to strengthen & discipline their prayer habits
- c. **Satan does not want Christians fasting & praying**
 - 1) Mt.4 – tried get Jesus ignore commitment (stones into bread)
 - 2) Mt.16:24 – part of following Jesus – denying self
 - 3) Knows it will endanger his work
 - 4) Illustration in life of Jehoshaphat – 2 Chron.20:1-30
- d. **Fasting is to be voluntary not forced**
 - 1) A deliberate choice one makes to humble themselves
 - 2) Never to be forced
- e. **Many ways one can practice fasting**
 - 1) Dan.1:11,12 – gave up kings dainties (ate vegetables & water)
 - 2) Dan.10:2,3 – used no lotions
 - 3) Skip a meal & spend time praying
- f. **Spiritual benefits from fasting**
 - 1) Deepens our humility – Ps.35:13; Ezra 8:21
 - 2) Helps us focus upon God's work – Jn.4:31,32
 - 3) Increases our concentration & meditation (triumph over senses)
(1 Cor.9:27 – buffet body & make it my slave)
 - 4) Helps us express our resolve to God – willing sacrifice anything

- g. Dangers that surround fasting (how Satan uses it against us)**
- 1) Doing it with the wrong motives
 - a) A ritual to earn God's blessings – Zechariah 7:1-7
 - b) Practicing thinking there some magic in the practice
 - c) To parade our humility – Mt.6:16-18
 - 2) Fasting & then failing to follow through with obedience – Isa.58:1-14
- 4. Practical suggestions concerning the practice of fasting**
- a. Do it for short periods to get body used to it
 - 1) Consult physician about health risks (Diabetes etc)
 - 2) Do it for a few hours (skip a meal)
 - 3) Drink plenty of fluids
 - b. Spend the first part of your fast feasting upon God's word
 - 1) Worship & praise God
 - 2) Look for insights in His word
 - c. Be flexible
 - 1) Avoid the temptation to be legalistic (Vows you can't keep)
 - 2) Circumstances change – choose another time (safety of others)
 - 3) Medical reasons hinder – make a fast of choice foods as Daniel did
 - 4) Always keep your fast between you & God
5. Joel 2:12-14 - 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing-- grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. (NIV)

The Sin Of Prayerlessness

Introduction

This title may seem strange to you, but perhaps the sin of prayerlessness is the single most ignored sin in the lives of most Christians. Never in the history of the church have her congregations & leaders been busier or more organized than they are today. But where is the power of God that attracts the unsaved; where is the awe & trembling in the presence of God that moves Christians to repent & live holy lives? Apathy is everywhere because we have ignored spiritual priorities. In this lesson we will discuss prayerlessness as a sin.

1. Greatest need in church – Christians sincerely praying & never giving up.

- a. Lk.18:1-8 – when Son of Man comes will He find faith?
 - 1) How many will endure the hardships – insults, injustice & keep asking?
 - 2) Sadly most give up in despair & become unbelievers
(go to church, but no longer really believe God cares)
 - 3) Many content to say few words in prayer as a devotional – never really see prayer as something that gets meaningful results
 - 4) We say we believe – not trust that prayer really has any meaningful effect in our lives.
- b. Those who have been great in God’s kingdom have always been those who prevail in prayer
 - 1) Whatever we allow to make us too busy or too distracted to pray robs us of any real power in God’s kingdom.
 - 2) Jn15:5 – without Me you can do nothing
 - 3) All our goal setting & organizational techniques will accomplish little without serious prayer.
 - 4) In prayer is where we find the power to accomplish the work God has for us to do in His kingdom

2. Prayerlessness – A sin of neglect

- a. 1 Sam.12:23 – sin against the Lord in failing to pray for them
 - 1) Samuel was a priest – duty to pray for the people
 - 2) Priests are those who go before the Lord on behalf of Israel
- b. We are priests in God’s kingdom
 - 1) 1 Pet.2:9, 10 – royal priesthood
 - 2) Part of our calling is to intercede in prayer – 1 Tim.2:1-4
- c. James 4:17 – to know to do good & not do it = sin
- d. Lk.12:47 – know masters will & not do = beaten with many stripes
- e. Willful sin shows disrespect for God & His word
 - 1) Weakens us spiritually – robs us of rewards God has for us
 - 2) Warnings
 - Heb.6:4-8 – produce no fruit = in danger of being cursed
 - Heb.10:26-31 – deliberately keep on sinning – no hope

3. Prayerlessness shows we have little love for God

- a. Jn.14:15 – if love me will obey me
 - 1) Never hard to spend time with those we really love
 - 2) Not praying shows selfishness & spiritual shortsightedness
- b. Jesus longs for the salvation of all men – gave up heaven & died for this
 - 1) Mt.9:38 – ask Lord of harvest to send forth workers
 - 2) Lk.10:1,2 – admonition to those sending out – pray Lord of harvest

4. We will regret the sin of prayerlessness

- a. Stunts our growth spiritually
 - 1) Never develop a close relationship with the Lord – Jn.15:5
 - 2) Lk.14:25-33 – everything else must be expendable (can't be disciple)
 - 3) Satan will always be able to keep us weak & helpless
 - a) Be full of fear & negativity – doubt & hopelessness
 - b) Never see the big picture – the real possibilities
 - c) When calamity & hardships come – falter & quit
 - d) Many Christians in a prison camp without walls – fearful
- b. God is looking to use those who are serious about Him
 - 1) Jer.29:13 – will find me if seek with whole heart
 - 2) Heb.11:6 – must believe He is & diligently seek Him
 - 3) Lk.11:1-10 – boldness gets results
 - a) Shamelessness – refuses to take no for an answer
 - b) Knows he has what needed & keeps asking
 - 4) James 5:17,18 – Elijah prayed 7X before rain came (1 Kings 18:42-44)
 - 5) Mt.15:21-28 – Canaanite woman kept pleading
 - a) She had no rights to ask
 - b) Saw Him as her only hope – refused to stop asking
- c. Many are eternally lost because we refused to be diligent in prayer

Preparing Ourselves To Be A Prayer Warrior

Introduction

Jn.14:12-14 – is a fascinating Text. Look carefully at the words & ponder the truths that are stated. Jesus says He is not joking, but telling us the truth, something that we can count on. Those who believe in Him will do greater works that Jesus did because He is going to His Father. Anything that we ask in His name will be done; the only limitation is that God be glorified. Here lies the secret to a powerful Christian life, yet so basic that many overlook it.

1. We must have complete confidence in God & His word

a. So many people struggle truly believing

- 1) We believe in theory - struggle with reality - practicality
 - a) James 2:17,18 - just saying we believe isn't enough
 - b) Unless it is seen in reality of life - no better than demons
 - c) Must be lived, not just spoken

2. See us struggle

- a) Told to worry about nothing - all in hands of God
Mt.6:25; Phil.4:4-6
- b) Lay up treasures in heaven - 1Tim.6:17-19
(by being rich in good deeds, generosity, sharing)
- c) 1 Jn.5:13 – believing have eternal life - I an a son; heaven bound

b. Praise God there is hope - man great people in scripture struggled believing

- 1) **Abraham & Sarah** - believing have child in old age
- 2) **Moses** - made excuses why God ought send another
 - a) Constantly complaining Num.11:10-15,21-23
 - b) He learned to take God at His word
- 3) **Apostles** – Notice how many times Jesus speaks of their little faith

c. Mk.11:22-24 - will we take God at His word ? (No Doubts)

2. Must seriously deal with our sin

a. Sin separates us from God

- 1) Isa.59:1,2 – sins have separated you
- 2) Ps.66:18 – cherish sin God not listen
- 3) Josh.7:1-12 – sin of Achan – only battle lost (36 die)

b. We are at war

- 1) Eph.6:10-12 - Enemy is struggling against us
 - a) Our requests infringe on Satan's territory
 - b) Dan.10:12,13 - angel had to fight his way to Daniel
- 2) James 1:5-8 – ask nothing doubting
- 3) 2 Cor.4:4 – Satan blinds the minds of the unbelieving

3. Must becoming people of perseverance

a. Effective prayer takes perseverance

- 1) Lk.18:1-8 - pray & not give up
- 2) **Illus.** James 5:17-18 - Elijah had to pray 7 X
 - a) Yet knew God's promise
 - b) Why have to wait so long ?
- 3) **Question** - When God seems slow - do we quit
 - a) Guess it's not God's will
 - b) Realize - God tests determination - how bad do we want answer
 - c) Daniel prayed & fasted 21 days before answer – Dan.10
- 4) **Prayer changes lives**
 - a) Rom.15:30-32 - join in my struggle for victory
 - b) 2 Cor.1:8-11 - trust God send deliverance as you pray

b. How grow in perseverance ?

- 1) James 1:2-4 - proper attitude toward struggles
(so many think life should have no struggles)
- 2) Heb.12:1-3 - fix eyes upon Jesus
Consider - repetition - go over again & again (where find strength)
- 3) Be willing to exert great energy & effort
 - a) Col.4:12,13 - Epaphras worked at prayer
 - (1) Wrestling - struggling, laboring fervently
(contend with an adversary)
 - (2) Laodemia was very materialistic
 - b) What oppositions do we face ?
 - (1). **From within yourself**
 - (a) **Procrastination** - put off till last minute
 - (b) **Pride** - Mt.6:5 - 8 - pray to be seen of men
(many words - meaningless phrases)
 - (c) **Desires** - independent spirit - selfishness –
demanding of God
 - (d) **Our flesh** is a constant enemy - always will be
 - (2) **From my lifestyle - allowing sin to reign**
 - (a) Ps.66:18 - harbor in heart - no hear
 - (b) **Guilt** - feel so unworthy - undeserving
(I am, but not a prerequisite to praying)
 - (3) **From Satan** - wants to silence the Church
 - (a) Knows more we pray - his kingdom suffers
 - (b) Knows our greatest work is from our knees
 - (c) 1 Cor.3:6 - only plant & water - gives increase
 - (d) Only God moves mountains - Prayer moves God

Why There Are Delays In Answered Prayer

Introduction

In Luke 18 we find the parable of the persistent widow that Jesus used to make the point of praying & not giving up. In the parable, the widow did not receive her request right away. She had to be resilient & not allow delays or the apparent indifference of the unjust judge to deter her. In the same way we will meet obstacle when we pray – times that it seems that God is indifferent to our pleading or ignoring our needs. There are several reasons why this might be happening & in this lesson we will discuss some of them.

1. God may be testing us

a. Our resolve

- 1) Luke warmth irritates God – Rev.3:15,16
 - a) Sometimes we have a passing fantasy – an impulse
 - b) Ask & soon forget
 - c) Attention span is short – soon focused on other things
- 2) God rewards persistence
 - a) Heb.11:6 – rewards those who diligently seek Him
 - b) Lk.14:25-33 – count the cost – discipleship hard
 - c) Heb.5:7 – though a Son – learned obedience
 - d) Mt.15:21-28 – woman refused to stop pleading
 - e) Gen.32:22-30 – Jacob refused to let go

b. Our desires

- 1) Focus needs to be God's will not our will – 1 Jn.5:14,15
- 2) James 4:3 – ask selfishly to spend on selves
- 3) Often physical comforts are detrimental to us spiritually
 - a) Ps.106:14,15 – leanness to soul
 - b) Mt.13:22 – thorns choke out word
 - c) Gal.5:17 – flesh wars against the Spirit
 - d) 1 Pet.2:11 – fleshly desires war against the soul
- 4) Focus to be a spiritual sacrifice – Rom.12:1,2
- 5) Phil.3:12-16 – focus on doing right = God make His will clear to you

c. Our motives

- 1) Deut.3:23-28 – God put a limit on what Moses could ask for himself
(no limit on what he might ask for others)
- 2) James 4:3 – selfishness hinders us
- 3) Ps.66:18 – cherish sin in heart not answer
- 4) 1 Jn.5:16 – not pray for one sin unto death
- 5) Unforgiving spirit - Mk.11:25; Mt.6:23,24

2. Our focus is not God's will

- a. 1 Jn.5:14,15 – ask according to His will
- b. 2 Cor.12:7-12 – Paul struggling with pride
- c. A spiritual battle is going on around us – Eph.6:10-12
 - 1) Rev.12:13-17 – Satan wants destroy faith
 - 2) Uses our flesh against us – Rom.7
 - 3) Must learn to resist – James 4:7

3. The timing may not be right

- a. Israel had to wait for the right time to enter the Promised Land
(iniquity of the Amorite not yet full – Gen.15)
- b. Jesus had a timetable – Lk.2 – He was ready & The Father wasn't

Conclusion

- A. Always remember that God works through His church
 - 1. Our intercession is important
 - 2. We must persist in prayer – regardless the hardship
 - 3. Prepare yourself – Eph.6:11-18 – whole armor & prayer
- B. True faith will never give up – regardless the hardship

A People of the Book

Where Truth and Love Abound



Our Service Schedule

Sunday:	10:00 a.m.	Bible Study (classes for all ages)
	11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.	Worship
Wednesday:	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study (classes for all ages)

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