

Lord, Teach Us to Pray – Part 1

Foundations for Prayer

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 24th, 2022

Introduction

- This morning we are starting our new series on prayer. Over the course of this series, we will be looking at all kinds of different prayers from the Bible to help encourage and equip us for prayer.
- Every Christian I know believes prayer is important, and also, every Christian I know would like to grow in this area. So this is what we intend to do through this series. My hope is that through this series, your prayer life will grow and take off in ways that you have only hoped it would, and that together, we will reap the benefits of seeing more of God's work within us, among us, and through us.
- I am going to start this series on a personal note, laying out for us the principles that have helped me in my own prayer life. I imagine if these five things have helped me, that they may help you as well.

Apart from Him, I can do nothing

John 15:5b NIV

Apart from me, you can do nothing.

- This verse is found in Jesus' teaching of the vine and the branches. We are told that "whoever abides in me and I in him, He is that bears much fruit" (John 15:5a). The truth is that we cannot produce the fruit of God without being connected to the Son of God through the Spirit of God. I cannot see God change me and work through my life without Him. I cannot change myself, and I need His work in my life to see it done.
- Spiritual work is done by spiritual means. I can't force myself into spiritual life and growth. I need a spiritual blood transfusion and connection to the one who gives life. The lives of people around me will not change without God working. I cannot force it to happen, but I can be connected to God and ask Him for this work in me and those around me.
- Apart from Him, I can do nothing, period. I know I can't do anything that will have a significant impact without His doing it, so I ask Him and rely on Him to do so.
- I have a quote up in my office and now under my glass said by a guy who was called the "prince of preachers." He was one of the most powerful preachers of all time. He authored sermons, an autobiography, commentaries, books on prayer, devotionals, magazines, poetry, and hymns. Many sermons were transcribed as he spoke and were translated into many languages during his lifetime. He is said to have produced powerful sermons of penetrating thought and precise exposition. His oratory skills are said to have held his listeners spellbound in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and many Christians hold his writings in exceptionally high regard among devotional literature. (Wikipedia) His name is Charles Spurgeon (1834- 1892). Here is the quote:

"I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach." – Charles Spurgeon

- You would think that the “prince of preachers” would be more effective by training preachers. But he knew that one man trained in prayer would be more powerful and effective than ten men that he trained to preach. This is a profound statement.
- The sad truth is that in our ministry training schools, they don’t teach us to pray. They teach us to preach, and to counsel, and to lead and to handle the Bible, etc., but they don’t teach us to pray. In all my classes, I have never had a class on prayer. I asked many of my pastor friends the same question, and none of them have ever taken a class on prayer.
- The apostles wrote in the book of Acts that they “devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.” Our schools do a fairly good job in the ministry of the word but a very poor job in teaching on prayer. It is like training half your body, and the truth is that the true power of the pulpit comes from a place of prayer.
- Your spiritual growth and development will only come from your connection and help from Christ. Prayer keeps us abiding in Him.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble

1 Peter 5:5 NIV

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

- I need all the help from God that I can get. Pride says that I can handle it. The truth is, I can’t, and neither can you. So why does God oppose the proud? Because the proud think that they can handle it on their own. Pride says I don’t need you, and I don’t need anyone. The truth is that God says, okay, go for it.
- The truth is that we are finite creatures. There is only one infinite one, and it is not you. There is only one who is self-sufficient. Everyone else is dependent. If you have a belly button, you are dependent.
- Humility is the key to receiving the grace of God. Humility says that we need help, that we are finite, that we are dependent, and that we are in need of help and grace. And God delights to give grace to the humble. Life is hard enough. I don’t need God to oppose me, and I need His help. So humility in recognizing my needs allows me to connect to God’s grace. Recognizing my insufficiency allows me to connect to His sufficiency.
- Those who are humble realize their needs and then are quick to ask God for His help and His grace.

If I draw near to God, He will draw near to me.

James 4:8 NIV

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

- This has caused me to pray because I want to be near to God, and in order to do so, I must first draw near to Him. In drawing near to Him, I go to Him through prayer and through His word. It is scandalous that we have this kind of access to Him.
- It is very hard to get access to “very important or powerful” people. But God gives us access to Himself. This is really mind-blowing. The maker of all things, the creator of the universe. The most powerful, wisest, wealthiest being of all gives us access to Him. He allows us to draw close

to Him, and if we do so, He says that He will draw close to us. Why would we not take Him up on this invitation? Would you turn down an invitation by someone on earth like this? Why would we turn Him down?

- I want to be near Him, and I want to know Him. This promise is a huge invitation. It has helped me to be close to him, and it comes by drawing close to Him. Making it a priority. Keeping my appointments with Him. Reaching out to Him whenever I can.

When I pray, God's peace will guard me

Phil 4:6-7 NIV

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- I can become anxious about a lot of things, from my past creeping into my present, from the problems of my present and the unknowns of the future. I and we are bent on being anxious. God knows this and has a solution for us that we are to present our requests to God. This again is an incredible invitation. Why would we not do this? And there is a promise attached to this.
- The peace of God, which “transcends” my understanding, will stand guard of my heart and my mind because my mind and my heart need a guard. This guard gives me peace, knowing that God will protect these things because I am vulnerable. Giving things to God gives me peace, and then trusting myself to Him, knowing that He is with me and watching over me.
- I have a friend in my study who reminds me of this. At my desk, on my right side, I have a quote by Martin Luther that says:

Pray, and let God worry. – Martin Luther

- This reminder from his mouth helps me. It is funny and also powerful because I know of some of what Martin Luther went through. He stood up against the Catholic church and risked his life for what he believed the Bible taught. He was in hiding and built the Protestant church. He had all the normal stresses of taking care of a church but also overseeing the entire movement and being hunted for his life. He had way more stress and troubles than most of us, and he said, “pray and let God worry.” This is a wonderful reminder indeed.

Prayer is powerful and effective

James 5:16 NIV

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

- At first glance, you may say, well, I am not a righteous person, but the reality is that Jesus died so that we can become the righteousness of Christ. We are declared righteous because of our belief in the righteous one and that we are in Him and He is in us.
- Our prayers are powerful and effective. If you want to affect things in both heaven and earth, it is accomplished through prayer. That we partner with God and see Him work on behalf of our requests, you can affect what is happening on this earth anywhere through the power of prayer.

There is no place that God cannot go, and there is nothing that God cannot do. If we want to affect things, then prayer is the powerful means to do so.

- This passage continues on and gives us as an example, Elijah:

James 5:17-18 NIV

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

- These verses give me hope and confidence. Elijah was a man “just like us.” He was just like us, and the same power that was in him is in us. You don’t have to be a supernatural man or supernatural woman. You just need to be in touch with the supernatural God.

Conclusion

- Prayer matters and prayer does make a difference. What we talked about today is true according to the Scriptures. I am asking you to believe these things not because I say them but because God does. Knowing these things helps us, but the power is in doing these things. I would encourage you to put prayer into practice intentionally and practically.
- Next week, we will learn from the model for prayer that Jesus gave us as recorded in Luke 11, and we learn from Jesus as He teaches us to pray.