

Let Us Pray

Today I'm going to preach about prayer. Prayer is something we should all do but probably none of us do enough. I don't think you can pray too much.

For some praying seems natural and normal, it is very easy to do. For others it is awkward, feel uncomfortable, it's difficult to do.

People make prayer complicated. We don't know WHAT to pray about. We don't know HOW to pray. We don't know WHEN to pray.

We feel like we have to come up with some profound words so it will be powerful. We think we have to pray like another person does....

"I've already prayed about this. I must not be praying God's will."

"God probably doesn't care about that. Is God even listening?"

Sometimes we think our prayers are unimportant or insignificant. "Others are probably praying about that already, it doesn't matter if I do"

Or how about "You are a pastor, elder, teach Sunday school, etc. God probably listens to you, can you pray for _____?"

Now I'm not trying to say it's not a good idea to have others pray for you or with you. It most certainly is!

But don't belittle your own prayers. Don't think that God cares more about what I ask than what you ask! Because He doesn't.

Pastors do not have a secret pipeline to God. We are simply a believer that God has called to preach the Word and oversee a flock. We may have different spiritual giftings than some of you, and probably the same giftings as some others.

But God does not hear my prayers "better" than yours. That's truth!

If you are one who struggles with any of these things holding you back from prayer, my hope is that today this message will change that!

If you have given up on prayer or don't pray as often as you know you should. I hope that changes today as well!

PRAY

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

The first thing I see here is that we are to have confidence..... First a confidence in Him!

Confidence means assurance, trust, firm belief, boldly

If you have confidence in Him (Jesus), then you trust Him, you have a firm belief in Him. That what He promises, He will do.

Why do we have trouble with confidence in prayer? One reason (not the only) could be condemnation, guilt, shame, about something we have done.

1 John 3:21 (NKJV)

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

If you have sin in your life, or former sin that you have not repented of, it hinders your prayer life!

A clear conscience before God leads to boldness and confidence in prayer!

You can have confidence that you have free access to boldly present your requests to Him.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

That word boldly is the same Greek word as confidence. You can come boldly and confidently to the throne of grace! Come openly, without reservation!

When you come to the throne of grace, you obtain mercy for the past and grace for the present and future!

We have to be confidence toward Jesus! Confidence that He cares, confidence that He is able, confidence that is willing.

Often times people are hesitant to ask for something because they have asked before and have not received. That doesn't mean that Jesus doesn't care, isn't able, or isn't willing!

I can't tell you the exact reason you didn't receive. It could sin. It could be a lack of faith. It could be that you need to suffer for His sake. Maybe you are supposed to learn something from your situation and you have yet to do so! There are lots of reasons.

So I want you to consider something.

Jesus heals.

Matthew 8:1-3 (NKJV)

1 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

You see the confidence in Jesus was there. The leper knew Jesus COULD cleanse Him but he didn't know if Jesus was WILLING. But Jesus was willing, and if He was willing to work in the life of the leper, He is willing to work in mine and yours!

Romans 2:11 (NKJV)

11 For there is no partiality with God.

Jesus shows no partiality, this is worded in KJV as God is not a respecter of persons. He does not deem some more worthy than others. He doesn't prefer some people over others. He doesn't care what your social status is....no matter if it's good or bad!

Whatever your need is....if He has done it for someone else, He can do it for you...

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The love of Christ is unchanging, His character is unchanging, His willingness is unchanging. He always has and always will want good things for His people! Now your definition and His definition of "good" might not be the same. But He wants good for you!

The example here is healing but the same principle applies to other needs in life whether it's finances, spiritual guidance, wisdom, etc.

Back to John 5.....

1 John 5:14 (NKJV)

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

AHHH there is the catch! IF we ask anything according to His will, He hears us! Wait, doesn't He always hear us?

Well.... He hears us, it's not that He is deaf or doesn't comprehend. But if it's not according to His will, He just disregards it or tunes it out.

This kind of goes back to something I shared last week. The best life example I can think of is how a father (or mother) is with their kids. If they are asking you something you really don't want to do, sometimes you just pretend that you didn't hear. It's not that you're deaf, it's not that you don't understand, it's just that you don't want to! It's not what you want to do!

Sometimes they are persistent enough that you have to say NO! And some of you have probably heard that from God before, I have!

But the instant that you are asked to do something that YOU want to do, or they ask if they can do the thing that YOU want them to do, you say YES!

When the word says "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." I can't help but think of that analogy.

For Jesus to hear us, it doesn't mean He has ear plugs in or even that He is ignoring us like we might to to others. For Him to hear us means He will consider what has been said.

Don't we want Jesus to hear us when we pray? Don't we want Him to consider what we have said? We have to do two things.

First, we have to ask!

If we ask....now this is not a half hearted request. The word ask in this context means to ask, beg, call for, crave, desire, require. This sounds like persistence is sometimes required....

Psalm 40:1 (NKJV)

40 I waited patiently for the Lord;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.

Psalm 88:1 (NKJV)

88 O Lord, God of my salvation,
I have cried out day and night before You.

Colossians 4:2 (NKJV)

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV)

17 pray without ceasing,

Sometimes we have got to not only ask but, beg, call for, crave, desire, require!

When was the last time you prayed about something for hours or even all night for a situation you wanted God to work in? This isn't to make anyone feel bad, it's to point out that sometimes you have to contend for what you are believing for!

What did Jesus do in the garden before His arrest? He prayed....ALL NIGHT!

Luke 22:41-44 (NKJV)

41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Jesus was in agony, He was wrestling with His emotions. And yet He prayed MORE earnestly, intently, eagerly, with more desire! That is our model, that is how we are to pray for something that we have a passion for!

We have to ask! but v14 also said that we must ask according to His will.

The second thing we have to do for Jesus to hear our prayers is ask according to His will. His will is what He wishes of has determined shall be done.

We need to pray in accord with what He would want, not what we desire or insist that He do for us! Christians can get the genie in a bottle syndrome with God.

Jay Kesler, in his book, Raising Responsible Kids, records one of his prayer experiences. He writes, "Shortly after I got my driver's license I was driving too close to the middle of a narrow road and I sideswiped another car. The crash tore the front fender, two doors, and the rear fender from my dad's car. After I found out everyone was okay, I stood in the ditch and prayed, 'Dear God, I pray this didn't happen.'

He continues, "I opened my eyes and saw that the car was still wrecked, so I closed my eyes, squinted real hard, and prayed again, 'Dear God, it didn't happen.' Then I opened my eyes, but it happened anyway."

God is not a genie....there is a big difference! You can have your 3 wishes that lead to destruction! Have you ever noticed how those 3 wishes always turn out bad? Because it's that person's selfish will instead of God's perfect will.

God knows what is best for you.....His will! What He wants for you is best for you. No doubt about it!

Here is what James says about genie prayers:

James 4:2-3 (NKJV)

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

This right here is something that hinders prayer. What is the will of God? If I'm asking something that is not His will, He isn't going to do it, but I don't know His will! What do I do?

It's easier than we make it out to be....

If you know the Word of God, you know the will of God.

The Word of God is Jesus. The more you know Jesus, the more you know the will of God. It's not knowing ABOUT Him, it's KNOWING Him!

If I were to write a book about myself and you were to read it, you would know a lot about me. But would that mean that you would know what I would want done in a situation better than my wife (who didn't read the book)? NO!

She KNOWS me. She knows more about me than anyone else. You can read about me and you might know enough about me to make some decisions as I would make them. But it wouldn't compare to her experience with me, being with me as I make decisions, knowing how I think, what I desire, what my passions are.

It's similar with God, except that He has the unfair advantage of His book being alive!

John 1:1 (NKJV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

You have to KNOW the Word to know the will of God! Everything we need is right here!

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV)

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,
If we pray in accordance with what pleases God as found in the scriptures, then we are praying according to His will.

If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, or He will consider what has been said.

So what about answers? That's what we want right? ANSWERS!

People give up when they don't get answers!
People stop asking when they don't get answers!

People become discouraged when they don't get answers!
People begin to doubt when they don't get answers!

Why do we pray? What is our motivation or purpose in praying. We pray for several reasons, but what is the main reason?

Communion or fellowship with God! That should be the real heart behind prayer. Fellowship with the Almighty Creator of the universe.

1 John 5:15 (NKJV)

15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

To know that He hears us in whatever we ask is enough, because communion with God is the real goal of prayer!

But v 15 says that if we know that He hears us, we know that we have the requests we have asked for!

We must not doubt! God will keep His word!

Mark 11:24 (NKJV)

24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

We must have confidence in Jesus!

We must ask, beg, call for, crave, desire, require of the Lord!

We must know Him to know His will!

We must have faith, knowing that He will do what He says, we must have patience, we must be obedient, and we must be in submission to God's greater wisdom!

childrens prayers

are we even looking for the answered prayer? He doesn't always answer the way we expect

Matthew 21:13 - And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

Psalms 138:3 On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.

2 Chronicles 7:14

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.