

Prayer

Motivation to Pray Without Ceasing

February 6, 2011

Text - John 15:5

Scripture Reading - John 15:1-8

No Isaiah???

- God did a mighty work in my heart this past week and I felt I needed to share it with you while it was fresh
- Desiring God Pastor's Conference

My two hopes

- That God will do for you in three messages what He did for me in three days
 - Multiply those loaves and fishes!!! (Dave Emerson's quote)
- If not, that He'll at least convince you to tune into the conference yourself
 - <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/by-conference/2011-pastors-conference>

4 truths that changed my prayer life, *hopefully* forever

- 1) We are completely and totally DEPENDENT on God to do anything worthwhile for Him, therefore there is NOTHING more important that we can do than pray
 - a. I thought I believed this
 - i. **Prayerful** - Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. Therefore, in order to make a difference, we must be humbly and constantly asking for and depending on Jesus' strength, wisdom, and guidance in everything we do. We must become a house of prayer where praying is not merely one of the many things we do but the foundation and power source of everything we do. (John 15:5, Col 1:29, Jam 1:5, Mt 21:13)
 - b. But my actions spoke louder than my words
 - i. Ex. Martin Luther quote

- c. We are completely and totally dependent on God to do anything *worthwhile* for Him
 - i. We can do things apart from God. Most people do it all the time. But we can do nothing *worthwhile*, nothing of lasting, eternal value, nothing that *really matters*, apart from Him.
- d. Paul Miller realized this the hard way one day while camping with his kids
 - i. His wife stayed home
 - ii. Kids were fighting in the car. He was getting angry.
 - iii. Got to camp site and dropped a contact lens
 - iv. Young daughter said, "Prayer doesn't work because God hasn't answered my prayers for Kim."
 - v. Hit him that He was losing his daughter and he could do absolutely nothing about it
- e. He came to realize at that moment that what the Bible says about our dependence on God is true
 - i. **John 15:5 (ESV)**
⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for *apart from me you can do nothing*.
- f. There was no way he could change his daughter's attitude toward God and prayer (bring her to repentance). God had to do it.
 - i. **Acts 5:31 (ESV)**
³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, *to give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
 - ii. **2 Timothy 2:24-26 (ESV)**
²⁴And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵correcting his opponents with gentleness. *God may perhaps grant them repentance* leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may escape from the

snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

- g. There was no way he could convince his daughter to believe in, trust, and follow Jesus. God had to do it.
 - i. **John 3:3-5 (ESV)**
³Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*"
 - ii. **John 6:44 (ESV)**
⁴⁴*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*
 - iii. **Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)**
⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; *it is the gift of God,* ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 - iv. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)**
¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and *he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*
 - v. **1 Corinthians 3:5-7 (ESV)**
⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, *as the Lord assigned to each.* ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but *God gave the growth.* ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, *but only God who gives the growth.*
- h. There was no way he could change his kids' hearts or behavior. God had to do it. There was no way he could change his own heart or behavior. God had to do that too.
 - i. **Ezekiel 11:19-20 (NIV)**
¹⁹*I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their*

heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰
Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

ii. **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control;*

iii. **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

- i. He realized, at that moment, that all he could do was pray and so that's what he did...
- i. After talking to his daughter he said a silent prayer, "God, this would be a really good time for you to come through," and then he prayed that they would find the contact lens
 - ii. God came through, built both his and his daughter's faith, and set in motion a new pattern of dependence on God and prayer in his life
- j. Miller then went on to remind us that God wants us to come to Him like little children and painted three great word pictures of what that looks like
- i. Kids come all muddy and dirty
 - 1. **Matthew 11:28 (ESV)**
²⁸*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
 - ii. Kids ask about everything, keep asking, and don't take no for an answer
 - 1. **Philippians 4:6 (ESV) - Ask about everything**
⁶*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything (pray)...*
 - 2. **James 4:2 (ESV)**
²*...You do not have, because you do not ask.*

3. **Luke 18:1-8 (ESV) - Keep asking**

¹ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought *always to pray and not lose heart.* ² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' "⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

4. **Matthew 11:28 (ESV) - Plead the promises of God and don't take no for an answer**

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest.*

5. **Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything (pray)...⁷ *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

iii. Kids sit on their Father's lap and whisper in His ear (Calvin)

k. Great pastors and preachers of the past knew they were completely dependent on God to produce any fruit in their ministries and so they spent significant time in prayer

i. **Acts 6:4 (ESV)**

The apostles (first pastors) appointed deacons so that they could, “devote (themselves) to *prayer* and to the ministry of the word.”

- ii. Joel Beeke hypothesized that the biggest thing that separated the Puritan pastors of old from the pastors of today was their dependence on God in prayer
 - 1. Sermon prep
 - 2. They didn't do *anything* without first praying
 - a. “Never see the face of man until you've seen the face of God.”
Robert Murray McCheyne
 - 3. Prayer was their ministry
 - a. Beeke's example of old woman in hospital
 - iii. Why do we do anything but pray???? (Francis Chan)
- I. The last thing Miller mentioned that really struck me was that *Jesus was the most dependent human being of all time*
- i. **John 5:19 (ESV)**
¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.
 - ii. **John 5:30 (ESV)**
³⁰ "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.
 - iii. **John 8:28 (ESV)**
²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.
- m. If Jesus was COMPLETELY and TOTALLY dependent on His Father for EVERYTHING, how much more should we be?

2) Though we should ask God for EVERYTHING in prayer, the main reason we should pray is to FELLOWSHIP with Him

a. **1 John 1:3 (ESV)**

³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

b. **John 17:3 (ESV)**

³And this is eternal life, *that they know you the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

- c. It is so easy for a pastor's prayer life to become dominated by the needs of His church rather than fellowship with God
- d. The greatest gift a pastor can give his church is to really know God.
- i. "The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness." Robert Murray McCheyne
 - ii. Francis Chan agreed/inspired me the most
- e. The only way to really know God well is to spend significant time *fellowshipping with Him* in prayer.
- i. Francis' Challenge - Pray only Psalm 27:4 for one week
 - 1. **Psalms 27:4 (ESV)**
⁴*One thing* have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.
 - ii. What is the one thing we keep asking God for? It should be God.
 - iii. Could we ask just that one thing for a week? What a difference it would make!
- f. Jesus was totally dependent on His Father for everything, just like we are, *but I have no doubt that fellowship with God was at the heart of His prayer life*. It needs to be at the center of our prayer lives too.

3) If we're ABIDING in Jesus we should be confident that He WILL answer our prayers

- a. Francis Chan was asked to speak about his personal journey in prayer

- b. Shared a bunch of wonderful stories of answered prayers in His life
 - i. *Book sale, driver, gas pedal, vacation \$, car rental, garage*
- c. If God DOESN'T answer his prayers he is surprised.
- d. He didn't believe the key was his praying *but his abiding*
 - i. **John 15:5-7 (ESV)**
⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,.... ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
 - ii. Expand on this more in two weeks
- e. Pray and WATCH (Miller)
 - i. **Isaiah 64:4 (ESV)**
⁴From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.
 - ii. Paul Miller's been watching 50 prayers for more than 10 years. It's exciting; they're building; God's working.

4) We need to ORGANIZE and PRIORITIZE our petitions

- a. *If prayer really matters, if prayer is truly our ultimate weapon, then we need to make sure we're using it well.*
- b. Do you ever feel like you have so many people to pray for you don't know where to start?
 - i. Pray through church directory
 - ii. Prayer cards for those closest to you

How this week was different

- Prayed more with Jess and the kids than ever before
- Prayed more individually than ever before
- Tried to make prayer half my quiet time
 - o Read, prayed, read, prayed
 - o Only agenda fellowship with God
- Scheduled prayer first each work day (despite having been gone)
- Didn't attempt anything for God without prayer

- o Prayed before every e-mail and phone call
- Tried to make prayer half my sermon prep
- Organized and prioritized my petitions
- Prayed with as much fervency and faith as I could muster *believing that my prayers REALLY mattered*

One neat result

- A sweet time with God Thursday morning

Transition to Communion - Ushers and worship team come forward

Jesus death on the cross 2000 years ago made prayer possible for us today

- **Matthew 27:50-51 (ESV)**
⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.
- **Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)**
¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then *with confidence* draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.