

What's so Important About Prayer?

by Chris Famisaran

Good morning, everybody. Did you all survive the wind? I didn't even know we were going to have a windstorm. The HOA actually sent a letter. Be aware. In spite of all of that, I remember I woke up probably around two or three in the morning, thinking what is going on and it was literally the wind and it was the branches and immediately thought, Oh, please, Lord, what the trees at the church stand.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the opportunity as a church family Lord to come together, whether we're here in person or for those of our our family and friends joining us online or maybe somebody who tomorrow or a couple of years from now we'll be able to watch this May this time as we study and open the word be a time of enrichment and to help better prepares to be faithfully followers of you in Jesus name, Amen.

So what's so important about prayer? There is a father story of a father who took his son out to go run errands around town. And when lunchtime arrived, was too far to go back home and come back. So they went to the local diner for a nice lovely sandwich. So the father sat down at one of the stools at the counter, he propped his son on a stool just like this next to him. They ordered their lunch, their sandwiches and their fries. When the waiter brought the food, put it placed in front of them. Dad said, Hey, son, we'll just have a silent prayer. So dad got through praying first and waited for the boy to finish. kept waiting. 10 seconds go by 15, 20, a minute and a minute and a half. And when he finally looked up, his father asked him, What in the world were you praying about all that time? Of course, with the innocence and honesty of a little child he said. "I don't know, it was a silent prayer."

Now I have a question. Maybe we will, this will stir some lunchtime conversation. Okay. If you raise your hands if you had the opportunity to have God reveal your future, okay. Or maybe even just let's just say one aspect, your future spouse, your future career, whatever it may be, if you have the opportunity for your future to be completely revealed for you right now. Would you take it? And if so, if you're comfortable? Raise your hand. Okay. All right. Only a handful of you. All right. How many of you would not want to have that happen? Raise your hand. Far more. How many of you just don't care raise both hands. Prayer. You know, it's interesting. I think many of us have probably, over the years have asked God, God, who am I going to marry? What kind of job am I going to have? Lord, I need a job right now. Lord, how do I handle my difficult family member? When it comes to life, we're called to pray. Martin Luther once famously famously says, as it is the business of tailors to make clothes and cobblers to make shoes. So it is the business of Christians to pray. One of the things about our faith is Jesus taught us to pray and you look throughout Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is filled with prayer.

So the first passage I'd like to look at today is I'd like to go to the book of Psalms, Psalm 121. I love this psalm. It's a beautiful psalm. Let's open the Scriptures to Psalm 121. All right, We all there? Give me one more second. Okay. It says, I lift up my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from? My help comes from where? the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. And I love this very beginning this little setup ok, because it says, it's indicating that the Lord is the Creator. And the psalmist is also alluding to protection. My help comes from who-- the Lord. And the psalmist is confident that the Maker of heaven also has a very vested interest in protecting the creation. So that's just the setup. As we continue, he will not let your foot slip. He who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, he who watches over Israel will

neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you, the Lord is your shade at your right hand, the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. And so the Psalmist equates God as a guardian, protects and guides and blesses his own. And in fact, you see this illustration here of how the Guardian literally shades them from the hot sun will not allow to slip, and also watches over us while we can confidently sleep because the guardian does not sleep, nor slumber. Finally, the last part here, the Psalmist prays, and says, Lord will keep you from all harm he will watch over your life, the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for ever more. And hear the final couple of verses point to the sovereignty of God and how God will watch over us and when it says forevermore literally means to quote FOREVER. What a beautiful promise, a psalm, a prayer of promise that we can take. And this is just one example that of many Psalms and many prayers that can be found not only just in the book of Psalms, but through scripture that we can take and we can hold and as we remember, and can recount we can look back with confidence, and courage.

Some of you perhaps are asking though, what is prayer? Prayer is a conversation with God. Do y'all have friends? Okay, what do you talk about? Everything? Okay, maybe you'll talk about your kids, spouses, your loved ones, your cantankerous Boss, life. And just as we have a conversation with our friends, we have the ability to also have a conversation with God, where we can share our deepest joys, the good things, and we should especially remember to do that. I think a lot of times when we talk to God, it's usually the last thing we resort to. And all we want to do is we're trying to come in and hoping that God will come in clutch at the end and save us, right? But what about the rest of the time? If we truly love God, if you truly love somebody, you're gonna want to spend time with them. Right? In order to spend time with them, you have to converse, because what's the relationship if you don't communicate? I'm sure of course, there's all kinds of communication going not just with your mouth, but you communicate with your eyes and your body language. But communication, communication is key in any relationship and just like our relationship with God, we have to be able to communicate with God. And so of course, we communicate through prayer. Why is prayer so important? Well, prayer is also a reminder of our dependence on God.

Many of us know the story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Right? Who were they young Hebrew men, what happened to them? So Babylon comes in and invades and takes them away back to Babylon, right? Not exactly a great life change for them. Fact, it's possible that Daniel was a young man who was destined for greatness in leadership. Yet when King Nebuchadnezzar decides to invade his home and take them back while he still serves, but not in the way that he had expected. And of course, his whole Life changes dramatically. And he's considered they're considered exiles taken away from their home. And as you continue to read, especially through the book of Daniel, see, you hear his heart. As you read into the book you, you can sense this longing and desire to be able to go back home. Because there's nothing like home. Well, Daniel Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't the only ones who were taken away. Many others were taken away from their home. At some point, at the same time that this happens, Jeremiah is instructed to send word to them.

Another passage that we can go to Jeremiah 29:11. Let's go to Jeremiah 29:11. What does God have to say to the exiles in Babylon? Many of us, I'm sure are very familiar with this first, but it's important and good reminder. Jeremiah 29:11 through 13. All right, we all there. Okay. So it says For I know the what? plans, there's intentionality, all right, for I know, the plans I have for you declares the LORD plans to what? prosper you and not to harm you plans to give you hope, and what? and a future. This is also very cute. Everybody likes to read verse 11. But it doesn't stop there. It's important that we remember verses

12 and 13, just as much because that says, then you will call on me and come and pray to Me. And I will listen to you. And in verse 13, it says, You will seek me and find me when you seek me with what? all of your heart, not just a portion of your heart, but all of your heart. And I love this language. I love this promise that God has for the exiles in Babylon. So breaking this down, there's plans to prosper you not to harm you. It's not God's intention to set you up for failure and harm you. There's a promise of a future. And the eyes of the exiles, they really didn't have much to, to look forward to because they were in Babylon, they were forced to be there. So here comes a word of encouragement that this will not be forever.

And it says, especially especially talking about verse 12, it says you will call me and so we're called to speak to God. We're called to pray to God. And the beauty of this passage is that it affirms that God hears our prayers. Okay, God does listen to our prayers. And it says, When you seek me and you find me with all of your heart to seek God, with all of our heart is to seek God with everything in our relationship with God in our prayer life. It can't be just we pray when it's convenient. We pray about everything. The good days, the challenging days, the difficult days, with the the all of the matters the things that are important to you. We should be talking about with God. It's not it's not the we don't pray just when we need something. We only pray what sorry, we should always pray in all aspects of our lives.

Imagine being related to somebody or actually maybe eventually but what if you got married and the only time your spouse talk to you, is when they needed something Oh, did I just raise a few eyebrows? My wife's not here so I can say and she doesn't watch the live feed. I hope, I hope, in all seriousness though, what if... it doesn't have to be your spouse eventually maybe your best friend or whatever they only come to you for when you when they need something? How does that make you feel? Used resentful. It doesn't feel like real love does it? It's sadness. Doesn't make you want to hang around them to be honest. Right?

Right. Imagine how God feels when we deliberately just only talk to God. Thank God I need this please. And then we have The nerves say, Lord, if you if you give me this one thing, I will be faithful to you, I'll go to, I'll go to church every Sabbath, and I won't swear, and I won't do this or that. And yet when we make those promises next week, how are we feeling? Got away with that one. In our relationship with God, it's not just a partial relationship. It encompasses everything about our life. And so it's important that we stay in communication with God.

To seek God with everything means to trust and to be led by God. And so when it comes to prayer, prayer gives us an opportunity to give our concerns to God to bring our concerns to God. You ever had a problem where you felt like you didn't know how to handle it? I'm sure many of us have a long laundry list of things that we probably could just say here. God, I need to have this fixed. How do I again? How do I handle my difficult boss or coworker? How do I love my kids, when sometimes they're just so difficult. How do I forgive my parents? How do I forgive my parents when they've let me down? Or crossed me? How do I handle my neighbor that plays Metallica at 11pm every night? How am I going to pay for my utilities, feed my children pay for the gas in my car and the medication for my child who has cancer? These are all things and things like this that sometimes can probably easily keep us up at night. How do we handle these things that challenges us? Give it to God. And so the beautiful thing is that prayer allows us to partner with God.

Now there was a lady who was going through all of the local garage sales. And when she came to one particular sale, there was a picture and it said prayer changes lives. Okay, so she buys it. She goes home,

she tried to find the most perfect place throughout all of the household. And the best place was in the dining room or over the dining room table. Okay. And with great pride, she admired her garage sale discovered and could hardly wait to show it to her husband. And so that evening, the husband comes home, he arrives from work, and so she shows him the picture. But he didn't really say anything. He didn't mention anything. Didn't show that he liked it or disliked it. Just okay, cool. And so the next day as she's touching up the dining room, she realizes that the new picture is gone. And as she continues to look around she she can't find it. And then eventually she discovers it behind the bookcase. She thought That's strange. I didn't put it there. And so she takes it, she brings it in its original location above the dining room table. Well, the next day she discovers that it's gone again. Right behind the bookcase. Well, when the husband comes home, she asks him are you not okay with the picture? And he says, no, no, not at all. It's a great work of art. So is it the place it's like, do I need to hang it somewhere else? He says no, no, not at all. It's a great location. And so his wife is kind of getting a little flustered and so she concludes Well, maybe it's it's what it says. And he says no, it's the message is great. So she finally says what's the problem? He says I just don't like to change okay

Change then I have to admit, I think I'm I feel somewhat like the husband because I don't I don't like change. I don't like drastic change. Sometimes. I try to say that I think that I am somebody who can adapt to change, but the older I get, the less I want to change. Amen. I like the way things were back in the day. But the truth is, if I don't change, how can I grow if I don't allow God to help shape to shape and mold me? How can I be the disciple that God has called me to be? To truly seek and follow God means a life of prayer. But also the openness to change be changed by God, to be led by God also means to be shaped and molded by the Holy Spirit.

Thomas Kincade. He writes, rather than than set aside daily time for prayer, I pray constantly and spontaneously about everything I encounter on a daily basis. And when someone shares something with me, I'll often simply say, let's pray about this right now. I think we sometimes forget that we can pray all the time at any time, right? Now. For instance, however, maybe you want to pray when you're driving, we would just encourage you not to close your eyes. Right? So be practical about it. But you know, I, I spend a lot of time in the car. What do I do besides looking at other cars? Well, I'm actually praying for you all, because that's when I, I spend a lot of time and I just pray for pray for not only just our church, but many other things that are on my mind. Why can't we make it normal to just be able to just stop and pray with somebody, somebody who's maybe having a difficult time? Hey, let's pray for them. We sometimes make prayer so formal, and yet, we're called to pray at all times. Sometimes we can't always be so formal. But yet, when we love that are inspired by God. Let's give back let's think God. And something as simple as a nice compliment of, hey, thank you, Lord, for sending that person in my life today. To Lord, this person needs prayer, because they're going through XYZ. So, make prayer, be a regular part of your life all the time.

Some of you probably also asking, Well, Pastor, what, what if my prayer, what if my prayers not answered? So we went back to in the beginning, I asked this question, if you had the ability to be shown one aspect of your future, for instance, your love life, your work career, or just your life in general? I think many of us immediately think, Okay, that's great. But when you actually really break it down, is there a downside to that to knowing everything about your future? Because if we know every detail about our future, how could that negatively impact us? Well, we'd know the heartache that we would experience. Right? We could, we would know about the stresses that our job would bring, we would know the challenges that we may face in the future, that will give us heartache. Knowing our compute

complete future takes us takes the takes away the ability to live by faith in some respects, because we already know what is ahead and what we're going to experience. And there's no surprise.

When you look back the people who are in the Bible, especially in in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Faith. I look back and I see how God gave them a good idea. But he didn't reveal everything. And they had to walk by faith. Biggest example that I can think of is Abraham. Abraham was somebody that was a faithful man and considered it as righteousness, as Romans 4 says, but when you look back on Abraham's life, you think, okay, yes, this person was a faithful person. But did Abraham get it right every time? Oh, no, he made a lot of mistakes. Some of them he made them out of fear. Some of them, he thought, Well, God's not moving fast enough. So and not just him, but Sarah too. Okay. So they, they tried to speed things up, in a way. But that's not what God wanted. And so God didn't tell Abraham and Sarah everything, much like we do today to God doesn't reveal everything all at once. Because God wants us to live by faith.

You know, when I was researching, how do I respond to this question, how do you respond to when God doesn't answer your question, or your prayer? And I found this list actually, and I'm going to share a couple Have them for you. Okay, so number one, when God doesn't answer your your prayer says, Well, maybe God did answer your prayer, but you weren't paying attention. Right? Because when we ask God for something, we have to be mindful. What's God trying to say to us? Or the other possibility is God's gonna answer your prayer, but not in the way that you expected. Okay? Or maybe God's only gonna partially answer your prayer? Or this was my favorite, or God's gonna respond with Are you sure you want to pray for that? Another response might be, no, let's refocus or no, but you'll thank me later. Or no, don't be ridiculous. Because God, thank you whoever said that God knows best for us. But the challenge is, we tend to be impatient. Yet, when it comes to God, we have to be patient. And it doesn't mean that what when we pray, it doesn't mean that we get to comfortably sit and wait for God to answer because living by faith means we have to be proactive. If you want to, if you feel that God's calling you to this job, well, that's great. But the job is not going to come to you. Well, maybe in some cases it does. But generally, you have to live by faith and go out, you have to hand your resume out. You have to go and interview. Some doors will open some doors will close. When you want to find somebody to spend the rest of your life with it may take getting to know more than one person getting to know them. Are they compatible with you? And so have patience. Pray, be open.

To live by faith as well. I think is a verse that I love to go back to is Proverbs 3:5-6, trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean, not on what your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge Me, He will direct your paths. And I think that there are some things let's just be honest, I think there are just some things that we can't always understand why God works in the way that God works. I can't I don't have an answer for everything that God does. Why God did this, why God did that. Sometimes it takes looking back and having hindsight a perspective to kind of see the way things worked out.

So let me answer also another question that you may be asking as well. Pastor, how do I pray? Well, in the Bible, there's a couple of examples. There's always the famous Psalm 23. Better yet, the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6, as a template. And another template that we also have is the ACTS prayer. The prayer of adoration of thanking God and giving God complete adoration and recognizing who God is for the majesty that God is, for example, Psalm 103. We also have the prayer of confession, Psalm 51, of David, completely confessing and owning up to his mistake of what he did. We have prayers of Thanksgiving. And finally, we have the prayers of a supplication or what we will also now same times, today, prayers are our requests, the things that are on our hearts we give to God. We also have prayers

of what we would call intercession, praying for one another. And just to touch on that Bill kind of talked about it earlier. You know, I received a text. There's a prayer team, I don't remember how many maybe like four or five, six of us that our on are considered the prayer warriors of the church. Not to say that you're not but there's a team dedicated to praying for people and received a message on our website indicating a young man I will I won't say his name, but one of his parents, I think it's his dad is in the hospital with COVID. And he sent a message and he reached out hey, can you please pray for my dad. And so maybe there's, you want the church to pray for you, but you're not ready to be able to let everybody know what's going on. I want you to do know that we do have a handful of people that are ready and confidential, confidentiality wise, are willing and ready to pray for you. And at the very least, if you're not still even ready for that, please know you can at least text me reach out to me and I will at the very least pray for you or if you don't want to have anybody know for sure. Just say it's a silent request. But we want to be a church that prays for its family here.

What I would love to see what I envisioned not to say that we're I think we we are A church that prays. But if I could paint a picture of a church is that of its members faithfully, faithfully praying, faithfully loving one another, and those outside and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. That's what if I could paint a picture of what the church should be what I want it to be. It is that faithful followers praying for one another, sharing the good news and loving others.

So may we pray for one another. Take time, in every day, whether it's in the morning, afternoon or evening, or just randomly, God, just say what's on your mind. Maybe if you're upset, God, I'm upset. I think God who made the whole world can understand if we're upset, it can listen to us. Because remember, God hears all of our prayers. Amen. And in the in the spirit of practicing, let's pray the ACTS prayer, I'll pray,

God, we thank you for who you are, Lord, we adore you. God, you are great. You are wonderful. Lord, we confess our sins forgive us for our shortcomings. Perhaps Lord, we raise our voice, we saw thought something that is not appropriate. We give that to you. We thank you for everything that you're doing in our lives and how you have sustained us this far. And finally, Lord, we want to give you our prayer requests that are on our hearts and our minds. All the challenges, perhaps the things that keep us up at night, how to deal with the difficult person, Lord, to Lord, what am I going to eat? We give that all to you. We pray that you will make away these things we trust in you and give to you in Jesus name.

So sorry, as we close, I'm sorry, I forgot to do the reflection. I want you to think about what is one time, what is one time that God answered your prayer in a mighty way. Because it's important. I think that we look back and reflect how has God led us thus far.

And the last thing, okay, the action step is I want you to choose seven neighbors this week, and I want you to pray for them. If you live in a condo or an apartment, that's really easy. Or if you live in a block, go for a walk, okay? And maybe just choose one neighbor for that day. And as he walked by, pray for them. Don't stand in front of them because that might look a little awkward. Alright, just keep walking. But pray for them. Pray for your neighbors. Amen.

All right. May the Lord bless lead and guide you may and be with you. And for those of you who want to join us for a prayer walk afterwards, we'll be meeting in the back. Take care, love y'all.