

Love of Prayer

Misc. Texts

We have arrived at the dog days of the summer of love! Things have heated up; the Vikings are in training camp and before long we will wake up to cool morning air. But we are not there yet.

I originally planned on speaking on love in friendship today and in a sense, we still are, but I have felt lead to speak on love of prayer.

When I say that phrase, love of prayer, does it resonate with you? Unfortunately for most people it stimulates feelings of inadequacy and the unknown. Far too many people have never been taught to pray, how to listen in prayer and even the very meaning of prayer.

Many of us are fearful of being asked to pray out loud over a meal or simply in front of other people. How can we change that?

First, let me ask the simple question, what is prayer? What is prayer?

Prayer is simply talking to your papa. Think about that, you are just having a talk with your dad. You've done that before, right?

We put this name, prayer, on this conversation and our minds make it into something alien, mystic and something we can't attain.

Let me tell you something: you can pray because I know that you can talk to your papa. And that is exactly what you should do.

As a child when we are hurt or scared, we run to our papa and we cry out.

1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Do you see it? PAPA, I'M SCARED. Give that anxiety to God and how do you do that? We say, Father, I'm really concerned about my situation at work or school. What if I fail? I don't know what to do.

Then when you do that see what happens?

Philippians 4:6-7, "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.”

You may never have to deal with anxiety ever again when you simply bring your concerns to God, give them to Him with thanksgiving and God will give you peace even when it’s beyond understanding, you can have peace.

Log Church, this is prayer.

We don’t need to be afraid, we don’t have to feel inadequate, we don’t have to shy away from prayer when we understand that it is simply talking with your Father.

When you believe that simple fact, that He is your Father, you will then have confidence in prayer. Then you can approach your Heavenly Father in boldness, in confidence.

1 John 5:14-15, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: 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 what we asked of him.”

Now, most people reading this will lock onto those two words ‘ask anything’ and run off asking for anything and everything and when their prayer isn’t answered they feel cheated and cease praying.

They missed the condition. They totally ignore the ‘according to His will’ part. If this has happened to you, you are not alone. We have all asked for things to fulfill our desires, even things completely out of God’s will for us, sinful things. And then we are surprised when that prayer goes unanswered.

How can God tell us to ask anything and then not answer those prayers?

Remember, not only is God our Father, but He is a good, good Father. Any good father will ignore the request from a child that he knows would hurt that child.

God is more complex than any earthly father and His word gives us a number of reasons why our prayers go unanswered.

I want to give you 8 reasons why God might not be answering your prayers.

1. You didn’t pray right!

James 4:2, “You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.”

OK, this is the no brainer one. You don’t have because you didn’t ask for it. You have to ask, you have to pray. Let me put it a different way.

You won’t get a Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-shot Range Model BB Gun if you don’t ask for one. Little Ralphie knew this in the movie Christmas Story, we should know the same thing. You must ask for it, pray!

The second reason you may not have your prayers answered:

2. Unconfessed or cherished sin!

Psalms 66:18-19, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; 19 but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.”

Listen very carefully, if you are actively sinning you can not expect God to answer your prayers. One of the important aspects of prayer is confession.

God already knows what you are doing. You can’t hide in a dark room or in incognito mode without God knowing exactly what you are doing.

Imagine catching your son taking all the cash out of your wallet or purse and when you catch him his response is, can I borrow the car to go spend this money at the mall, what will your response be? How can we expect our heavenly Father to respond any differently?

Unconfessed sin, cherished sin, will slowly and quietly eat away at your soul. Give it to God, let Him free you from it.

The third thing that can hinder your prayer is:

3. Doubt!

James 1:6, “But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”

When we doubt it reveals our lack of understanding of what God’s will is. The way we can ask in confidence in belief is by spending time getting to know God’s character. You do this by spending time in God’s Word and with Him in prayer.

The fourth reason why your prayers aren't being answered is:

4. Wrong Motives!

James 4:3, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

How do we pray with wrong motives? How about when we pray to win the lottery? Have you ever promised to give God 10% of that 746-million-dollar lottery? Do you really think God needs that money?

How about this one, have you ever prayed about whether you should live with your partner before marriage? It's ok, right? We love each other. How do you really expect God to answer a prayer like that?

If God has called us to holiness and dependence on Him how can we ask God for opportunities to reject holiness and for an opportunity to have enough money to rely on it rather than Him?

Why are you asking God for what you are asking Him? Will it draw you and others closer to Him?

The fifth reasons God might not be answering your prayer:

5. Unforgiveness!

Mark 11:25, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Simple adage here, we must be willing to forgive because we need forgiveness ourselves.

Holding onto unforgiveness is a poison to our souls. It creates bitterness and anger which eats away at us. When we forgive those who have sinned against us it gives us freedom and peace.

Is there someone you need to forgive?

The sixth reason your prayers aren't being answered is:

6. Ignoring hurting people!

Proverbs 21:13, "Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered."

The poor to us is much less of a gap than the state we exist in compared to the glory of heaven. When we get a little comfortable we think we have all we need but the reality is that we don't even know what we are missing and available to us through our Father.

That said, I think our church family doesn't have much of a problem here. You have given to moms in need recently. You have walked side by side with those who have suffered addiction. And this past Sunday you stepped into the gap for between 33-38 children in Malawi.

I thank God for the generosity of this church body!

Thank you for not only seeing the need, but for meeting the needs God has laid before us.

The seventh reason God may not be answering your prayers is:

7. Bad Husband!

1 Peter 3:7, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

Guys, we represent our Heavenly Father before our wives and children. If we don't like the negative of treating our wives poorly getting our prayers hindered think of it in the positive.

Men, treat your wife well and get your prayers expedited. Do you like that idea? I do, so let's get it done! Amen?

The eighth reason God may not be answering our prayer is:

8. He has something better for us.

Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

How many times do we as parents have to say no to our children when they are asking to have or do something that is not safe or good for them? This is exactly why God says no to us. He has a plan for us that is better than we can possibly imagine.

The challenge for us is to live in such a way as to come into alignment with God's plan. As we cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our lives we begin to align with that plan.

Our prayers should reflect those characteristics. For example, have you ever heard someone demand something in prayer? Now, the thing they may be

demanding might be honorable and noble like the healing of someone with cancer. Noble, right?

Does demanding something in prayer reflect how Jesus taught His disciples to pray in the Lord's prayer?

Your kingdom come, your will be done, Mt. 6

How about when He was in the garden praying?

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Mt 26

Jesus had every right as God and the Son of God to demand and pray with extreme boldness, but His example is to pray with humility leaning into obedience to God's will.

Even Jesus' brother knows how to pray in the will of God.

James 4:13-15, "Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought

to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

Supporters of prosperity theology will teach you to claim wealth, claim healing. I see Scripture teaching us to lean into God, seeking His will, His plan.

God's plan isn't that we would all be rich...dare I say 'filthy' rich. His plan isn't that we live forever. Scripture says that it has been appointed unto man once to die. It's not how He originally designed us, but it is the result of sin coming into the garden.

There is one last element of prayer I want to share with you. There are some that emphasize emotion and it seems their goal is to have an emotional experience every time they pray.

Let me be clear, there are times you will be moved in prayer, and you may weep, you may rejoice in extreme joy, you may experience other deep emotions. There will be times when there is little to no emotion.

Catch this: The sign of an encounter with God isn't emotion, its rearranged priorities!

Sin will matter less and God's will will matter more.