

Prayer Week

... men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Luke 18:1

We want to carefully consider and consistently keep in mind how important this task of prayer really is, and how important it is for us as a church to acknowledge this truth and order our ministry accordingly. Fervent prayer is **vital** to our personal spiritual life, the **health** of our **church**, and the effectiveness of our ministries. Vibrant prayer is not **optional** equipment for the church.

We want our prayers to be **genuine** and **biblical**. I must not think that Christ will work His grace in me simply by **reciting** particular words or following man's "**rules**" of prayer or participating in a **program**, it needs to be genuine. With the word **biblical**, the intent is to remind us that God, in His Word, has given us instructions on **how** to pray/not to pray, He does **not** say; "just do it anyway you want, I don't care." Prayer is really very simple, but we can spend a lifetime "in the school of prayer" learning to pray **better** and seeing God work, His answers, through **my** prayers.

Prayer Week is intended to direct our attention to prayer and hopefully to provide a **spark**, that will ignite a **flame** that we can continue to **fan** in the year ahead. It is sort of a yearly **revival** of this vital aspect of our individual walk with Christ and the importance of it in the life of our church body.

Luke 18:1-8

Jesus is instructing us to always pray, and not to faint. Faint= to grow weary, discouraged, or lose heart. When I faint, my very real temptation is to stop praying- hence the admonition to always pray. The following statements are reflected in this parable.

- There will be times when I will "faint" in prayer, and be tempted to stop praying.
- Continuing in prayer when I am fainting will require obedience, commitment, and effort
- I can, since Jesus instructs me to, overcome fainting and continue in prayer.

Help for a heart fainting in prayer:
Meditate on the following:

1. God knows my **real need**. Matthew 6:8, 32
2. God does not view **time** the same way I do. 2 Peter 3:8
 - His timing is perfect. He looks for "**faith**", Luke 18:8
 - Man's perspective, v.7: "**night** and **day**", "long"
 - God's perspective, v. 8: "**speedily**"
 - Maybe the time is not perfect, yet – so I keep on praying and have faith the God will answer in His perfect time.
3. God's **ways** are different than mine. Isaiah 55:8-9
 - Maybe God has answered or will answer in a **different** way than I think.
 - Cp. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
4. God is always good and wise – working for my good. Romans 8:28; 16:27.
 - Wisdom= choosing the best means to the highest end.
 - The goodness and wisdom of God's response to prayer is not determined by **me**.
 - What I want and pray for may not be what is best for me, cp. Matthew 7:7-11.
 - Not giving us what we want may be His way of **protecting** us, cp. Psalm 106:15.
 - Giving us things we do not want may be His way of working His best in me.

5. Christ desires continuing **fellowship** with me. Revelation 3:20; cp. James 4:5
Waiting for His perfect answer and time is not **wasted** time.

We might expect God to hear and answer our requests while at the same time refusing to deal with the sin that has damaged our fellowship with Him. *(Picture it this way: Christ is outside and knocking on our door, but instead of opening the door, we are shouting our requests to Him expecting Him to stay out and just give us what we are asking for. Christ on the other hand is saying; "Open the door and let me in, then we will talk.").*

6. Christ may be "**schooling** me", changing or sharpening my prayer – fitting me for greater use, 2 Timothy 2:21.

- Maybe my prayers need to be changed. Maybe I pray like a **heathen**, Matthew 6:7-8.
- Maybe I am asking "**amiss**", James 4:3.
- Maybe I am thinking that God needs more **information**.
- Maybe I am thinking God will hear because of the **number** of words I pray or the **intensity** of my vocal expressions or because of the number of **people** praying for that request.
- Maybe I am thinking I can force God to act in my way by "**claiming**" His promises and holding Him to it or thinking that "praying God's words back to Him" will get Him to answer.

7. God may have answered, but we do not **see** it **yet**. Daniel 10:2-3, 12-14; cp. 9:23
Maybe we need to open our eyes to the spiritual realm.
There is more going on than I can see and more than just my prayers.
Cp. Jeremiah 33:3.

8. God may be **testing** my love for Him- whether I will be obedient to His will. He may be showing me that I am not really committed to what I am asking.
- We have **many** commands to pray, keep praying, what to pray, how to pray... am I obedient to those commands? Cp. 1 Samuel 12:23.
 - Obedience does not require "feeling like doing it" or "getting what I want."