

SESSION 3: Developing a Ministry of Prayer

*Prayer is the hardest work,
the truest test of faith,
and the most incredible invitation of all time!*

The three greatest hindrances to effective prayer, and how to overcome them

I. Sin and Unbelief

- A. Psalm 66:18-19
- B. See also Proverbs 1:24-28; 28:9; Isaiah 1:15-17; 59:1-2; 1 Peter 3:7; James 4:3

II. Misunderstanding how prayer interacts with God's sovereignty

If God is sovereign (and He is!), and if God already knows my needs (and He does!), and if God has already promised to meet my needs (and He has!), then why pray?

- A. It's kind of like asking, "I already know my wife, so why do I have to talk to her?"
- B. What might be the subtext underlying this question?
 - 1. Prayer is an obnoxious burden, so why do I have to do it?
- C. It *is* a natural question.
 - 1. Maybe it arises out of mere curiosity.
 - 2. Maybe it comes from an earnest desire to know more about the things of God.
 - 3. Just make sure it does not spring from a cold heart that views the knowledge and service of God as a drudgery, as a necessary evil somehow connected with going to heaven.
- D. So, why pray?
 - 1. Because we are commanded to pray! 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2

2. Because it is outrageously, incredibly awesome that you and I should have the ear of the One who created all things! Acts 4:24-31.
3. Because we are consumed with love for our Savior! 1 Peter 1:8; Matthew 22:37.
4. Because Prayer is so incredibly effective in bringing God's will to pass in a fallen world.
5. Prayer changes things
 - a. Prayer changes us, and brings our hearts into conformity with God's will!
 - b. But to stop there is inadequate. Though God is fully sovereign over all things, somehow He has ordained prayer as His means of accomplishing His purposes.
 - c. Prayer is not mere window-dressing. God moves in response to our prayers!
6. Prayer is effective and powerful
 - a. Daniel 9:20-23
 - b. Daniel 10:11-14
 - c. Romans 15:30-32
 - d. 1 Timothy 2:1-2
 - e. James 5:16-18

God's sovereignty should increase your confidence in prayer's effectiveness; you are speaking to Someone who can actually answer and accomplish your petitions!

III. Failing to understand what God wants you to do with your prayers.

- A. This is huge. It is impossible to overstate this issue.
- B. Most people consider that prayer is their own personal option.
- C. Most people fail to understand that praying for others is an obligation laid upon them by God.

D. Simply put: prayer is intended to be a way of serving one another. It is ministry to others.

1. Our failure in this area is nothing less than sin.

a. 1 Samuel 12:23 (NASB) “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you . . .

2. Prayer is a ministry by which we glorify Christ by serving others!

IV. Practical Tips for Prayer

A. Prayer should consist of these elements

1. Confession of sin

2. Praise/adoration

3. Thanksgiving

4. Prayer for ourselves and our family

5. Prayer for others

B. Many have found this acrostic to be handy

1. Adoration

2. Confession

3. Thanksgiving

4. Supplication

C. Make a written prayer book (use your journal)

1. If you aren't using a written list, then you probably aren't praying for enough stuff.

2. You probably aren't treating prayer as a ministry.

D. Divide your prayer book up into different divisions.

1. Days of the week.
 2. Personal, family, neighbors/friends, church members, missions, etc.
- E. You may want to organize it so that you can include dates and answers.
1. Keep it updated.
 2. When you hear a request, write it down until you can transfer it to your prayer book.
- F. Make it a ministry.
1. Pick a few requests each week, and get back to those individuals:
 - a. "I prayed for you this morning. Has the Lord answered your request yet?"
 2. Use prayer as an open door for ministry.
 - a. Pray for co-workers.
 - b. Pray on the spot.
 - c. Be careful not to embarrass and not to use prayer as a time to preach the gospel.
 - d. Follow up and be consistent.
- G. If possible, in your QT, pray out loud. It does wonders for concentration.
- H. Keep fresh by
1. Introducing variety
 2. Keeping your prayer book updated
 3. Choosing carefully what you commit to pray for.
- I. Remember, prayer is hard work. It is a ministry!
- J. Make it a personal policy: Never, never, never ask someone to pray about something, if you yourself have not made it a part of your own prayer list.

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