

Power through Prayer

Matthew 6:5 through Matthew 6:13 (NKJV)

⁵“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
¹³ And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

For the five Sundays in May, we have used the Model Prayer as a backdrop for our discussions on prayer. Our goal was to help every believer strengthen their prayers and grow in their relationships with God. In the first week we began with the Dynamics of Prayer. During the second week, we discussed the Purpose of Prayer. In week three, Rev. Jackson shared the Provision of Prayer. Last week we learned about Pruning through Prayer. Today, we will conclude with Power Through Prayer.

I believe no series on prayer can be complete without teaching on Intercession. Intercession is the part of prayer where we petition God for someone or some situation that is beyond ourselves. It requires us to have trust in God that he will supply our needs according to his riches in glory.

The Burden of Intercession

We can't pray very well for others when we are consumed with our own needs, desires, and circumstances. Intercession helps us to invoke the power of God to fulfill the second greatest commandment.

Matthew 22:37 through Matthew 22:40 (NKJV)

³⁷Jesus said to him, “‘*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’³⁸This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹And *the* second *is* like it: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

We all say that we love the Lord and it's obvious that we love ourselves. We pray for ourselves. We sometimes come to church only thinking of ourselves. This is why prosperity preaching is so popular these days. It's preaching that tells us how to get what we want. It tells us how to improve our own lives. Prosperity preaching says we can have it all and that God wants us to have abundance. There are many preachers in this world who will tell us what we want to hear. Don't be surprised, Paul told Timothy it would happen.

2 Timothy 4:1 through 2 Timothy 4:4 (NKJV)

¹I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

If Paul and Timothy were dealing with this issue 2000 years ago, we can learn from their words. In Paul's day people were flocking to teachers who tickled their ears but failed to convict the soul. We are no different today. We live in a time when people are heaping to themselves teachers on the radio, TV, the internet, in books, tapes, and DVD's. We are becoming a people who are self centered in church.

The Christian book section of most stores looks more like a secular self help section every day. Books that tell us how to get a blessing or how to have abundance out sell books on evangelism. Books and tapes about prosperity, finding a mate, or even financial freedom are sold everywhere, but books on service or overcoming sin may not make it to the shelves.

I read a book once called “Skill With People”. Actually, I try to read it at least once a year. In this book, the author said to get people to open up in conversation, just talk about their favorite subject; themselves. Why is any of this important? What does it have to do with prayer? Jesus said the second commandment was to love our neighbor as ourselves. It's apparent that we love ourselves, but our self preservation is so strong that many believers fail to show that same love towards another person.

In prayer we can meet this requirement through intercession. We love ourselves enough to ask God for everything we want. We love ourselves enough to pray for our circumstances to be change. We love ourselves and pray that God will heal our bodies. We pray for God to open doors of opportunity for us.

But when was the last time you willingly and deliberately prayed for someone else? If we love ourselves enough to petition God on our behalf, and Jesus said we should love our neighbors as ourselves, then intercession is an expression of love for those in our lives.

Some people will say "I love everybody." But if we don't pray for anybody, our love is suspect. If we love our youth, we will pray for them. If all we do is talk about them, we are only lifting ourselves. Every time we put this generation down, we are saying "they are bad. We are good. And our generation was better."

If you truly love your spouse you will pray for them. Start praying earnestly, not in a self centered way. If you love the church you will pray for it. You will pray for it's leaders, it's members, it's programs. If you love the community you will pray for it.

The burden of intercession is love. We must learn to expand our love lives. Some of us have a love that doesn't reach beyond our own comfort zones. We build a mental and emotional nest of the things that matter to us. Sometimes we may include one or two people who are important to us, but the majority of our attention is consumed with our own twigs and strings that we care about.

But the love of God is so much bigger. It's deeper. It's wider. It's consuming and overwhelming. God's love is too big to keep it contained in our own little nests. As he loves us more and more each day, our love should grow. Our compassion should reach out. Our influence in prayer should swell. Our service to others should increase. Our spiritual territory should be enlarged.

And God will drive us to prayer. He will send us assignments. He will put us to work in the spirit. The burden will get heavier, but so will our strength. God will hold us up with his mighty hand and his strong right arm. And we will be blessed.

The Blessing of Intercession

It was necessary that we tear down the walls of self edification to see the true power of intercession and understand the burden it brings in our lives. Prayerfully, we all understand how pivotal intercession is in fulfilling our commitment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Now we turn our attention to the blessing of intercession. This blessing is not focused on what we shall receive as much as what we will become.

Genesis 12:1 through Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

¹Now the LORD had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.

² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Just as there is more to prayer than simply petitioning God for ourselves, there is more to blessing than receiving what we want. At some point, we need to all desire to evolve beyond being blessed.

Did the Lord wake you up this morning? Then you are blessed. Did the Lord provide some food on your table? Then you are blessed. Did you still have a right mind? Then you are blessed. If you have two nickels to rub together, you are blessed.

Blessing is a spiritual condition. Even when we don’t feel blessed, we are blessed. Even if I’m sick in my body, I’m still blessed. I’m just a testimony in progress. If I am overcome with sadness, I’m still blessed because I have joy that can’t be taken from me. If I have enemies I’m still blessed. The Lord is my shepherd and he can prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.

Job lost everything he had and still turned again to bless God. He said the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Paul said in whatever state he is in he has learned to be content. We are blessed in the city. We are blessed in the field. We are blessed when we come and when we go. We are blessed when we have and blessed when we lack. Blessing does not have a dollar amount or level of status. If we are alive today, God has blessed us.

Okay. Now what?

God tells Abram the next level of blessing is to become a blessing. He says, you shall be a blessing. We must all evolve to the point where people are blessed just to be with us. Our jobs should be blessed to have us. Our friends should be blessed to know us. When we show up on the scene we are a blessing. We can do this through prayer.

Ephesians 6:18 through Ephesians 6:20 (NKJV)

¹⁸praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—¹⁹and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We should pray for the saints. When we do, we are helping to build the church from the inside out. We are being used by God to expand the kingdom. We should pray for the ministry of the church. Those prayers will help the word of God to go forward and the will of God to be done through our work. We need to pray for the servants of God who labor in the word, so they will be strengthened and encouraged.

1 Timothy 2:1 through 1 Timothy 2:4 (NKJV)

¹Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The world needs our prayers. Our prayers for the world affect our quality of life. As we pray for our community leaders God begins to move on our behalf. If we have wanted to see change in our world, we should be fighting on our knees. We fight the problems at our schools on our knees. We fight the despair in the economy on our knees.

When we pray, God makes things happen. Either the situation will change or we will change. That's the power of intercession.