

Spiritual Formation: Why Pray?

Part Two of a Three Part Series

Thesis: Since the life of Jesus on earth and in heaven is characterized by prayer, our lives as followers of Jesus will be prayer-full, too (Luke 5:16; Hebrews 7:25).

In this message, I want to share with you some of the reasons why I pray. And, I want to share with you some practices that help me keep on praying. Then, I want to invite you to have a prayer-full life, both individually and corporately.

There are many ways to describe prayer. It involves listening to and talking with the living God. It includes awareness, focusing our heart and our attention upon the Lord. We know that there are many ways that the Lord communicates with us. A part of our journey is learning the language of God and how the Lord communicates. Prayer can also be understood as being with the Lord. How would you describe prayer?

I could spend weeks talking about prayer. The Lord has used prayer to shape my life and the life of this church. As you know, we are called to pray individually and corporately.

- **Individually:** *I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, 7 and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth (Isaiah 62:6-7).*
- **Corporately:** *“And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant-- 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:6-7).*

Here are some reasons why I pray individually and corporately:

1. **I pray because prayer pleases the Lord.**
 - a. *The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him (Proverbs 15:8).*
 - b. The Lord delights in your prayers and loves to spend time with you.
2. **I pray because prayer honors God and God honors prayer.**
 - a. *“Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue: 23 He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he*

prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:22-23).

- b. It honors the Lord when we come to him thanking him, blessing him, and seeking him for what we need.
3. **I pray because the Lord rewards those who come near to him.**
 - a. *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him** (Hebrews 11:6).*
 - b. *...But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...** (James 4:6-8 ESV).*
 4. **I pray because the Lord has what I need and what others need.**
 - a. Luke 11:1-13
 - b. ***If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God**, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).*
 5. **I pray because our God has ordained humble prayer and invited me to come to him in order to listen to him and to talk with him.**
 - a. ***“Call to me and I will answer you** and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).*
 6. **I pray because the Lord said that his house shall be a house of prayer for all nations.**
 - a. *“... these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; **for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations**” (Isaiah 56:7).*
 - b. I want to partner with the Lord. I get to partner with the Lord. It is my joy to partner with the Lord in prayer.
 7. **I pray because God has chosen to rule and reign through humble asking, and I get to reign with him in prayer.**
 - a. *I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 **Ask of me**, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession (Psalm 2:7-8).*
 - b. Jesus exercises his rule over the universe through humble prayer (Psalm 2:8; Hebrews 7:25). Prayer is one of the primary ways in which we carry

out our kingly assignment as representatives of and co-rulers with the Lord.

- c. I get to reign with God in prayer over the power of the demons.
- d. I get to reign with God in prayer over the power of disease.
- e. I get to reign with God in prayer over the power of broken humanity and systemic injustice.

8. I pray because consistent, believing, fervent prayer is an expression of faith in the Lord for which he is looking (Luke 18:1-8).

- a. *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1).*
- b. *And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke:6-8).*
- c. If I say that I have faith in God, but I don't pray, then I don't have Biblical faith, the kind of faith Jesus is looking for.

9. I pray because my intercession influences the Lord and impacts the throne room (see Revelation 4, 5, and 8:1-5).

- a. *And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8).*

10. I pray because I am a priest of my God.

- a. A priest stands in the gap and represents God to people and people to God.
- b. *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).*
- c. *... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).*
- d. *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).*

11. **I pray because the Lord has invited me to stand, serve, minister, and burn before the him.**
 - a. *My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense” (2 Chronicles 29:11).*

12. **I pray because history belongs to the intercessor** (Revelation 8:1-5; see also Abraham, Moses, Nehemiah, David, Daniel, Jesus, and others).

13. **I pray because the Lord invites me to stand in the gap between the ways things are and the way he wants them to be.**
 - a. *”I looked for a man among them **who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap** on behalf of the land **so I would not have to destroy it**, but I found none. 31 So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, **bringing down on their own heads all they have done**, declares the Sovereign LORD” (Ezekiel 22:30-31).*

14. **I pray because I want to see the Lord’s will done on earth as it is in heaven.**
 - a. *Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).*

Here are some practices which help me to keep on praying:

1. I stir up my heart to pray through **spiritual practices** like worship, devotional Scripture reading, journaling, and prayerwalking.
2. **I pray about whatever gets stirred up in me** as I deal with people, read emails, get prayer requests, prepare for meetings, use social media, hear news reports, fall short of the glory of God, seek the Lord for wisdom, cast my cares upon God, or respond to the promptings of the Lord.
3. I practice the **discipline of awareness** throughout the day, turning my attention to the Lord and seeking to tune my heart to God.
 - a. Throughout the day, I turn my attention and heart to the Lord.
 - b. When possible, I get up from what I am doing as a way of embodying my desire to break my routine and turn my attention to the Lord.
 - i. When I get up, I talk with the Lord.
 - ii. When I get up, I listen to the Lord, whether he is speaking or not.
4. **I partner with others in corporate prayer** several times a week.
 - a. **For Inspiration:** Corporate prayer inspires me as I hear the prayers of others.
 - b. **For Learning:** Corporate prayer equips me as I learn to hear the voice of the Lord and get confirmation in the prayers of others. The Lord has

used corporate prayer to help me grow in revelation and in hearing the voice of the Lord.

- c. **For Mutual Accountability:** Corporate prayer challenges me to pray faithfully because I am accountable to those with whom I have committed to pray.
- d. **For Perspective:** Corporate prayer reminds me that we are called to seek the Lord together, not just as isolated individuals.
 - i. I need you and you need me.
 - ii. You and I are a part of a body and each part must function together, not separately, for the body to whole and healthy.

A vision for prayer:

- We pray because we are called into an intimate relationship with the Living God whereby we get to know the Lord personally and intimately.
- We pray because we get to co-create with our God according to his will in our own lives, in our spheres of influence, and in the whole earth.
- We pray because we are invited into a personal, organic, and intimate relationship with the Lord.
- Growing in intimacy with the Lord requires regular, frequent, and intentional communication and connection.
- Finally, we pray because the Triune God is the most beautiful, most stirring, and most captivating being in the universe.

Challenge:

- I want to invite you to pray, to call upon the Lord, to seek his face, to listen to the Lord, to draw near him, to minister to him, and to spend time with the Lord.
- I want to challenge you to pray individually, letting your life be a prayer to the Lord.
- I want to challenge you to pray corporately, to make time to pray with others. I hope that you pray at least once a month in the prayer room or in one of our corporate prayer meetings.

Spiritual Exercise

Spend one hour in reflection around the following questions:

- 1. What has gotten stirred up in you through this message on prayer? (Or, what do you think? What do you feel?)**

- 2. What keeps you from praying or hinders you from praying?**

- 3. What can you do, with God helping you, to get unstuck and to get in action in the place of prayer? (Alternate question: if you are already prayer-full, with God helping you, what can you do to keep praying?)**

- 4. Share with someone what you got present to and what you will do in the place of prayer.**