

GENNEXT

-BUILDING SUPERHEROES FOR TOMORROW-

In this season of our ministry, we are focusing our attention and prayer on how we can bless the next generation. We dream of building a vibrant and dynamic Children's and Youth ministry, providing facilities that enhance our ability to influence and impact children and teens, leading every young person in our community to find and follow Jesus.

This GenNext 21-Day Prayer Guide will guide you through the Biblical principles that Jesus communicated to His disciples when He invited them into His school of prayer. The application is to focus our prayers on the heart of God for reaching the next generation with the Good News of Christ.

The next generation, the Millennials are:

- › The biggest generation in history, 1/3 of the world's current population
- › 61% of Millennials feel personally responsible for making a difference in the world
- › 81% have volunteered in the past year
- › 77% have "helping others" as one of their chief motivations in life
- › 79% want to work for a company that cares about how it affects or contributes to society
- › 65% of adult Millennials have college degrees, making them the single most educated generation ever

They want to change the world...let's help them. We are asking God to give us eyes to see and ears to hear His heart for reaching this next generation. As you begin this journal, won't you stop and take a few minutes, asking God to teach you how to pray for the next generation? Pray for your children, or grandchildren—consider praying for a young person in your neighborhood. Ask God to give you eyes to see how you can be a blessing to the next generation as we seek to be a blessing to the next generation as a church. Nothing begins without prayer.

Day 1

Praying From the Heart

Pray it Forward in Our Community

It is difficult to overstate the importance of prayer in the life of both the believer and the church. The statements God makes about prayer in the Bible are so incredibly bold, so clear and absolute they sound unattainable. They sometimes sound so unbelievable that our “resistance to salesmanship” instinct kicks in and we put up a kind, but cool exterior that says, “I’m still evaluating because this deal seems too incredible to believe. There must be some fine print somewhere.”

Yet when we look at the statements God makes about prayer in the Bible, it is difficult to overstate the incredible importance He places on talking with Him. For example, look at Jesus’ words...

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.”

John 14:12-14

Jesus says here, “You may ask Me for anything...” That is anything... anything...anything! Do you see why I say it is difficult to overstate the importance of prayer?

The pray-ers (person who prays prayers) that ask for the “anythings” that Jesus invited us to ask for are the pray-ers that bring revival to the world. They pray God-sized, “anything” prayers. They have the faith to believe the God Who tells them to pray for anything and He will do it— will do it.

Jeremiah the prophet had a clear picture of the God we are praying to...

“Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”

Jeremiah 32:17 (ESV)

In Jeremiah 33:2-3 the prophet reminds us again of Who we are praying to before he gives instruction on prayer.

“This is what the LORD says, He Who made the earth, the LORD Who formed it and established it– the LORD is His name:”

Any time God repeats something three times, He is doing so for emphasis because it is important. In this verse God declares His name three times. Whenever you see the word “LORD” in small capitals in Scripture it is the word “Jehovah” or “Yahweh.” That is the special personal name He chose to reveal Himself by in the Old Testament. By calling Himself Yahweh three times in this verse, He is emphasizing and calling attention to Himself as the One Who can do anything. In verse 3 God instructs us,

“Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

When God made this promise things could not have been worse for Jeremiah or the nation Israel. Jeremiah was under arrest and put in stocks by his own king for his prophetic messages from God. Jerusalem had been under siege by the Babylonians for a long time. The people had torn down their homes and piled the stones and wood against the gates. The terrors of starvation led to despicable survival options for mothers. This promise came when the people were most desperate. God did not tell them to solve their problems on their own but to call on Him and He would help.

Notice in verse 3 that God:

- › Invites us to call on Him. He wants to be called upon.
- › He will answer. He will tell us “great and unsearchable things we do not know.” That is His will revealed, incredible secrets that we are incapable of searching out or discovering on our own.

Day 2

Prayer Is Genuine Communication With
God

We will be seeking to answer these questions:

- › Why pray?
- › How do I pray?
- › What is at the heart of prayer?
- › Why should we take the time to pray?
- › Why does God place such importance on prayer?

What does it mean to pray those “anything” prayers— the kind that say, “I don’t know how it is possible, so if God chooses to answer, it will clearly be God who pulled it off”?

Pause right now and ask God, “Lord, what kind of ‘anything’ prayer would you have me pray, that will bring You the most glory? What kind of great and unsearchable thing do you want to reveal to me? Will You teach me more about how You are honored and glorified when your children ask and You respond? Will you teach me to pray as you taught the disciples?”

No one ever prayed more genuinely, honestly and authentically than Jesus. Is it any wonder that those in Jesus’ presence, as he prayed passionately to His Father, would respond, “teach us to pray!” (Luke 11:1) With that request they entered into Jesus’ school of prayer. What did Jesus teach them about prayer? That is the primary focus of this study you have in your hands. It is called “The Lord’s Prayer,” Jesus’ primer on prayer.

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”

Matthew 6:5

Who are the hypocrites?

The word “hypocrite” means one who is a pretender, an actor, one who conceals the truth or gives off a false appearance. The word in classical Greek meant “an actor;” a person who portrayed someone other than who he was. When used in Scripture, a hypocrite is one who pretends to be someone they are not or to do something for appearances.

Jesus said, “Do not be like the hypocrites...” Just who was He talking about? He was speaking of those who acted like they were praying but weren’t. They were doing it for show, creating an image of spirituality to impress people. They liked to pray standing on street corners, not the little narrow streets that were normal in Jerusalem but the corners of the large streets. The purpose of their prayers was not to genuinely communicate with God but to be seen by men, making a display of their “righteousness.” Their prayer was not genuine and humble, but self-righteousness arrogance. They were using prayer to elevate themselves with the religious establishment of the day. Jesus is saying, “Don’t be two faced when you pray, because you want to be seen as ‘spiritual’ by men. Instead pray ‘genuine’ prayers that connect with God Himself.

What are genuine prayers?

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, Who is unseen. Then your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

The word “genuine” could be defined as sincere and honest, actual, true, free from hypocrisy or pretense, not false or imitation. What genuine prayer comes down to is this: if you were alone in your room, with the door closed and no one around, how would you pray? How would you talk to God then? That is genuine prayer without concern for what people think.

Jesus is NOT prohibiting prayer in public or in small groups, as Jesus prayed publicly and in small groups with His disciples. What He is prohibiting is those who pray to be seen and heard by men in contrast to those who pray to be seen and heard by God.

Prayer needs to be a genuine expression of our hearts and minds to God. This is why privacy or secrecy is stressed. It is in our private and secret alone times with God that we tend to feel the freedom to be genuine. Jesus’ emphasis is on talking to God as you would if you were alone with Him and not concerned with performance. The motive is to simply talk with God. There is no concern about proper posture, tone of voice or praying in Elizabethan English.

My Own Struggle with Prayer

As a new Christian, one of my biggest hurdles to praying in a small group was getting over the fear of what I sounded like to others. I was totally intimidated about praying with others. So I ignored what others were praying and began forming my thoughts for how I would pray when it was my turn. I waited for the right pause, and then I jumped into my “prayer performance.” Then after my short burst of prayer, I instantly began to review in my mind, how I did, still not joining others I prayer. As others prayed, I focused on comparing my prayer with theirs.

I was praying the way that Jesus warned us against praying, I was hypocritical, arrogant and full of pride because I was far more concerned with how I performed and sounded to other people than I was about communicating my heart to God.

God Understands Our Way of Talking

If you struggle with how to pray with others, welcome to the party, it is a common struggle for all of us. There is no greater place to learn to pray than with others in a Life Group, a small group, a safe environment where the primary focus is helping each other grow in the faith and genuinely connect with God in prayer.

Read through the Psalms and you will find the total range of genuine, authentic, raw prayers: of praise, of sorrow, of joyful hearts, of anger, of confidence and doubt. In the Psalms you see the record of genuine prayers of people like David and the others who expressed themselves wholeheartedly and transparently before God.

Would you ask God to search your heart and reveal where you have been a hypocrite, more concerned with your image than speaking honestly to God. Finish this prayer, “today God, in all honesty, here is what is on my heart as I consider investing in and loving the next generation, setting them up for success...

Day 3

Prayer Is Confident Communication With
God

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

Matthew 6:7

The people Jesus is speaking about here think that if they just keep talking and repeating to God what they want, the better their chance He will hear them and grant their requests. They are like the child who thinks that, if he keeps badgering his parents, he will get what he wants by wearing his parents down. God is not impressed by this.

Jesus says, “they think they will be heard because of their many words.” He says this kind of prayer, characterized by babbling or piling up words is characteristic of pagan prayers— those who pray to false gods or idols. The Jews of Jesus’ day practiced this kind of constant repetition in their prayers. They would say the same prayer over and over again thinking they were laying up some kind of blessing to their spiritual account. Jesus did not give this prayer as an incantation where power is generated by repetition of words.

A Formal Prayer Scheme?

Jesus is saying, “Don’t pray that way. You can pray with confidence.” In verse 8 He says

“your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

In other words, “You can have confidence in your Heavenly Father.” Our confidence lies in the fact that God is our Father Who:

- › Is perfectly good
- › Knows everything about us
- › Loves us completely with no reservations at all
- › Already knows what we need—so we don’t have to wear Him down or talk Him into anything
- › Is ready, willing and able to answer our prayer.

Day 4

Prayer Is Personal Communication With
God

**“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name,’”**

Matthew 6:9

In this verse, Jesus teaches us to address God as “Father.” This is a warm, personal term of address for God. God has always revealed Himself in a personal way. In the Old Testament He revealed Himself by his name, Jehovah or Yahweh.

God also reveals His character and what He is like by His revealed names:

- › Yahweh Tsidkenu— Yahweh our righteousness
- › Yahweh M’kaddesh— Yahweh Who sanctifies
- › Yahweh Shalom— Yahweh is peace
- › Yahweh Shammah— Yahweh is there
- › Yahweh Rophe— Yahweh heals
- › Yahweh Yireh (Jehovah Jireh)— Yahweh provides
- › Yahweh Nissi— Yahweh is my banner
- › Yahweh Rohi— Yahweh is my shepherd

But God’s most personal revelation of Himself is summed up in the name “Father,” because the Father is the One who establishes, encourages and helps a maintain a righteous standard in His children’s lives because He loves them. He is the One Who corrects them and helps bring sanctification or holiness to their lives. He is the One Who brings and protects their peace. He is the Father Who is there. He is the One Who brings healing— mental, emotional and physical. He always provides for our needs. He is our shepherd, watching over, protecting and nurturing us. He is our banner— He loves to be identified with us. He says, “I am proud for people to know you are my son or daughter.”

We must also be careful to acknowledge God’s awesomeness, holiness and perfection. When Jesus says, “hallowed be Your name,” He is saying “May Your name be made holy throughout all the earth.” We need to strike a balance between our loving, tender, heavenly Father and our righteous, holy and awesome God.

C.S. Lewis captures this well in this scene from the book “The Silver Chair” from his well-known Chronicles of Narnia. A young girl named Jill is in Narnia for the first time. She is alone and extremely thirsty. She hears a stream and when she finds it, she has an encounter with Aslan, a very massive lion who is three to five times the size of any other lion. He represents Jesus Christ in the Chronicles of Narnia.

It (the Lion) lay with its head raised and its two fore-paws out in front of it, like the lions in Trafalgar Square. She knew at once that it had seen her, for its eyes looked straight into hers for a moment and then turned away— as if it knew her quite well and didn’t think much of her.

“If I run away, it’ll be after me in a moment,” thought Jill. “And if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth.” Anyway, she couldn’t have moved if she had tried, and she couldn’t take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure; it seemed like hours. And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the Lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first.

“If you’re thirsty, you may drink.”

They were the first words she had heard since Scrubb had spoken to her on the edge of the cliff. For a second she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said again, “If you are thirsty, come and drink,” and of course she remembered what Scrubb had said about animals talking in that other world, and realized that it was the Lion speaking. Anyway, she had seen its lips move this time, and the voice was not like a man’s. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.

“Are you not thirsty?” said the Lion.

“I’m dying of thirst,” said Jill.

“Then drink,” said the Lion.

“May I—could I— would you mind going away while I do?” said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

“Will you promise not to— do anything to me, if I do come?” said Jill.

“I make no promise,” said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

“Do you eat girls?” she said.

“I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,” said the Lion. It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

“I daren’t come and drink,” said Jill.

“Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“O dear!” said Jill, coming another step nearer. “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.

It never occurred to Jill to disbelieve the Lion— no one who had seen his stern face could do that— and her mind suddenly made itself up. It was the worst thing she had ever had to do, but she went forward to the stream, knelt down, and began scooping up water in her hand. It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted. You didn’t need to drink much of it, for it quenched your thirst at once. Before she tasted it she had been intending to make a dash away from the Lion the moment she had finished. Now, she realized that this would be on the whole the most dangerous thing of all. She got up and stood there with her lips still wet from drinking.

“Come here,” said the Lion. And she had to...

You see, there was only one stream of life and it came from the Lion. In the midst of her fear and terror, Jill found herself drawn closer and closer to the Lion out of obedience. But as she got closer, she found she could trust him.

In your experience with God, have you ever felt like Jill did with the Lion in Lewis’s story? Explain:

Day 5

Making a Commitment to Pray

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Matthew 6:5-9 (ESV)

In verses 5 and 6 Jesus told us not to be like the hypocrites who pretend to be praying when they are not. Jesus said the Pharisees prayed for the same reason they did everything else, to be seen by men. He instead challenged us to pray genuine prayers. When we pray, our motive should simply be to talk with God, as we would if we were alone with Him and not concerned about performing for anyone. We should not allow ourselves to get distracted by people.

In light of these thoughts, how are you now approaching your times with God differently? Explain:

Confident Communication with God

Jesus warns against praying with empty phrases (*babbling*) like the pagans who have the mistaken notion that they will be heard because of their many words. He tells us we can pray with confidence because our Father knows what we need even before we ask. We are able to have this confidence because God is our Father and is ready, willing and able to answer our prayers. It is not uncommon for the older generation to become cynical and give up on the next generation.

“Children today are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers.” So wrote Socrates in 450 B.C.

This week our staff visited “Passages” a 30,000-square-foot, interactive exhibit presented by Museum of the Bible that chronicles the remarkable history of the Bible, from its transmission and translation to its impact and controversies. Around 400 priceless artifacts are used to tell the stories at Passages. One video presentation highlighted the incredible efforts, the meticulously detailed discipline of the scribes, the bold, courageous, sacrificial commitment of those over the centuries who were passionate about making sure that the next generation received copies of the life changing word of God. Many lost their lives because of their commitment to guard and protect the Bible for the benefit of generations to come. Now we have that responsibility to pass on the blessing to the next generation.

No matter how great the obstacles, we can pray confidently about spreading God’s word, knowing that God says...

“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:11 (NIV)

A staggering truth is that 40 to 50 percent of students who are active in the church in their senior year of high school will drift away from the church as young adults. Did you catch that? Not 40 to 50 percent of kids, but 40 to 50 percent of kids who are active in their final year of high school will walk away.

Day 6

Expanding God's Kingdom Through
Prayer

Pay it Forward in our World

Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Matthew 6:9–10 (ESV)

If we desire for God to use us in expanding His Kingdom, we need to:

- › Adopt God’s Mission—to reach the world with the Gospel. Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We must desire to see God’s will accomplished on earth as it is in heaven.
- › Adopt God’s Standard—to live by His Word. Jesus told us to pray, “Your will be done...”, not that it be contemplated or considered but that it be done.

The Kingdom of God is anywhere God reigns as King. It is not limited to geography. It can be as large as the expanse of heaven or as small as the heart of any individual, who, by faith, trusts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The Kingdom of God is present now, in heaven and on earth, but it is not yet fully realized here on earth.

Jesus is expanding God’s kingdom through those who love Him and follow Him. One day soon Jesus will return and He will establish God’s Kingdom fully, completely and permanently.

One of the most remarkable aspects of expanding the Kingdom of God is that God has made Christ-followers His partners— who are not merely bystanders watching Him work.

God has placed in Christian’s hands the keys to the Kingdom—

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:19

He told us to go and make disciples of all nations

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

He gave us the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill this mission—Acts 1 and 2, summarized in 1:8:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus Christ instructed us to expand His Kingdom through prayer.

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’”

Matthew 6:9-10

Why is prayer so important?

Why is prayer so indispensable in establishing God’s Kingdom? The language used in Matthew 6:9, 10 is very powerful. This is not a mild, poetic request we are told to make. It is a passionate plea, an urgent request, a powerful appeal brought to our Heavenly Father. It is a heart of passion that prays for God’s Kingdom, “let it come, Your kingdom; let it be done, Your will: as in heaven, so on earth!”

This is not a prayer, trying to goad God who is reluctant to do something, it is a prayer that is saying to God, “I’m with You! I’m on board! I’m excited about Your agenda and I want to see it happen now! I don’t want to see anyone enter into a Christ-less eternity.”

This kind of passionate prayer for God’s Kingdom expansion is also revealed in Paul’s heart for the Jews to enter into God’s Kingdom:

“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,”

Romans 9:2-3

God’s will obeyed on earth, just like heaven

What would it be like if everyone in the Santa Clarita Valley, obeyed God on earth, just like is done in heaven?

We estimate that there are 160,000 people in the Santa Clarita Valley, who aren’t connected to any church. We are passionate about helping every one of them “find and follow Jesus.” We are particularly focusing our attention on reaching the Millennials, the next generation in this valley because Christianity is only one generation from extinction. The Good News of Jesus must be passed on, just as others have passed it on to us.

Day 7

Pray Because of Spiritual Warfare

There are only two kingdoms and everyone on earth belongs to one of them:

- › The kingdom of God and of light
- › The kingdom of Satan and of darkness

“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves,”

Colossians 1:13

“I am sending you to them (the lost) to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

Acts 26:17-18

What is the place of prayer in this battle?

Paul paints a very vivid picture of this spiritual warfare for us in Ephesians...

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood (people), but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand...”

Ephesians 6:12

After listing the Spiritual Armor provided by God for his people, Paul addresses the need for prayer.

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,”

Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

Prayer is essential for winning at spiritual warfare. It is as necessary as the air we breathe. Without air, spiritual armor is useless.

Through prayer we wage spiritual warfare in the heavenly places to expand the Kingdom of God. We see this illustrated in the book of Daniel. Daniel had been praying and fasting for three weeks, in a time of mourning. During that time, the Lord sent an angel in response to Daniel's prayer but the evil one tried to stop God's messenger.

“Then he (the angel who was bringing God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer) continued, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words (prayers) were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom (a demonic ruler) resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes (an archangel), came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia’..”

So he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece (another demonic ruler) will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)”

Daniel 10:12, 10:20-21 & 11:1

Here we get a glimpse of a battle in the heavens between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. In it we see:

- › Angels fighting demons
- › Demons seeking to block the answers God sends to prayer
- › Angels fighting in teams, like tag-team wrestling, supporting one another
- › That certain demons have been assigned to certain peoples or countries (princes of Persia and Greece)

Day 8

Prayer for Other's Spiritual Condition

There is more going on in this world than eyes can see. There are spiritual battles taking place that are just as real as any physical battle raging in our world today. Physical battles have immediate impact, but spiritual battles affect the eternal destiny of souls. The Bible describes the unseen realities:

“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.”

Matthew 13:19

“The god of this age (the devil) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

2 Corinthians 4:4

“and that they (those who oppose the gospel) will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

2 Timothy 2:26

Prayer is doing battle in the unseen world.

We need to pray with power against the kingdom of darkness' strategy revealed above. We need to pray that:

- › Satan will not be able to steal the Word from the hearts of the lost and replace it with a false gospel—Matthew 13:19
- › God will open the eyes of the lost that Satan will no longer be able to blind them; so that the Gospel will be able to move with power throughout the world—2 Corinthians 4:4
- › The lost will escape the trap of the devil and be freed from his grasp—2 Timothy 2:26

Day 9

Pray for Laborers

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’”

Matthew 9:35

Multitudes of people were coming to see and hear Jesus— often hundreds and thousands at a time. Whenever He saw them, He was moved with compassion. He saw the lostness of the multitudes and His heart was broken for them. He saw how “they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” They were like sheep without someone to protect them from the wolves.

When Jesus saw the lost like this and His heart was moved with compassion, what did He tell the disciples to do? He could have said, The work is so demanding and the people are so hurting that we:

- › Need to work harder
- › Need to preach harder and with more fervency
- › Need to work longer. From now on, it will be 16 hour days for everybody...”

But instead He said, “Pray.” Somehow God moves in the hearts of people when we pray. He pulls demons off of people when we pray. He motivates, encourages, inspires and calls people when we pray.

In verse 38 Jesus says, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” What compels you to want to serve Christ, to want to tell others about Christ? It is only by the work of God in our lives through the Holy Spirit that we begin to have compassion for lost people. How often is our reaction to the sins of our society, that we read about or see on the news, revulsion and condemnation rather than compassion? How often does it cause us to pray for God to raise up workers to reach these people for Him?

Why the Shortage of Workers for the Harvest Field?

Why are there not enough workers to reach the lost around the world for Christ? Could it be because the church is failing to obey Jesus' teaching to pray for laborers?

God's house is to be a house of prayer where we connect to God and express our dependence upon Him through prayer. There are many churches, gatherings of believers, who will work hard, even staying up late, but if that church is not praying, it will be "laboring in vain."

"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."

Psalm 127:1 (ESV)

Could it be that prayerlessness is the reason the church in America is often characterized by pathetic weakness? The Church in Korea is a Church of power. It is a Church that prays. A church in Seoul, Korea is rapidly approaching one million members with several other churches in the city numbering 150,000 or more members. A church of 30,000 is seen as the little church on the corner.

What is the difference between the Christians in Korea and the Christians in America? The Christians in Korea pray. We are not talking about a few minutes here and there. There are early morning prayer meetings at several churches where thousands of people meet each hour in each church at 3, 4, 5 or 6 a.m. to pray.

There are all-night prayer meetings every Friday night. People go to one of several "prayer mountains" for one, two, three or seven plus days of prayer and fasting for the lost. These people pray and God hears— hundreds of thousands are saved, people are healed, marriages are restored. Could it be that God is answering believing prayer?

Notice the role of fasting and prayer in the moving of God's Holy Spirit in the early church:

“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers... While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Acts 13:1

Are you desperate and burdened enough about seeing the next generation find and follow Jesus that you would be willing to skip a meal or two and devote that time to prayer? Express to God your heart:

Write a prayer asking God to move in the hearts of adults with a heart of compassion to minister to and serve the next generation:

Day 10

Prayer Support for Laborers

Along with the responsibility to pray as Jesus instructed us in Matthew 9:38 “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field,” we have an obligation to pray for the workers who enter that harvest field. Just what should we ask for as we pray for these people? The Apostle Paul, who made three missionary journeys over the span of his ministry, asked that people pray for these things for him:

That believers would stand firm

“Epaphras...is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

Colossians 4:12

That he might be free from fear

“Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

Ephesians 6:19

That there might be open doors of ministry

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”

Colossians 4:2

That he would proclaim the Gospel message with clarity

“Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”

Colossians 4:4

Why is this important?

“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.”

Matthew 13:19

That he might be encouraged by seeing the fruit of his labor

“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.”

2 Thessalonians 3:1

That he might be protected in his ministry

“And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.”

2 Thessalonians 3:2

A Great Sacrifice

A little boy was told by his doctor that he could save his little sister’s life by giving her some of his blood. His six year old sister was near death, the victim of a disease from which the boy had made a marvelous recovery two years earlier. Her only hope for restoration and life was a blood transfusion from someone who had conquered the illness. Since the brother and sister had the same blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.

“Johnny, would you like to give your blood for Mary?” the doctor asked.

The boy hesitated and his lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled and said, “Sure, Doc. I’ll give my blood for my sister.”

Soon the two children were wheeled into the operating room— Mary, pale and thin, and Johnny, robust and the picture of health. Neither spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny grinned. As his blood siphoned into Mary’s veins, one could almost see new life come into her tired body. The ordeal was almost over when Johnny’s brave little voice broke the silence, “Say,

Doc, when do I die?”

It was only then that the doctor realized what the moment of hesitation and the trembling lip had meant earlier. Little Johnny actually thought that in giving his blood to his sister, he was giving up his life! And, in that brief moment, he had made his great decision.

We are like Johnny in that we too, we have been marvelously cured of a deadly illness—sin. And we have the answer within us—Jesus Christ; through the person of His Holy Spirit. We are being called upon to share what we possess with others who are dying of the same terminal illness.

Like Johnny, do you ever think that sharing what you have will drain your life away? It may mean we will have to lay aside some of the things we want to do in life because there just is not time to do it all.

The reality is that, when we pray, we are used by God to bring eternal life to other souls. Will you pray? Will you take up the armor and engage the enemy so that:

- › Those all over the world, who are lost and headed for a Christ-less eternity, might be saved?
- › Workers might be encouraged?
- › The Lord of the harvest will thrust His people into the harvest fields?

Will you battle through prayer, asking that adults will be called and mobilized to reach the next generation?

Pray for our RLC Staff who are working directly with the next generation:

- › **Jim Howard** *Executive Director of Family Ministry*
- › **Dave Wilson** *College/Young Adult Pastor*
- › **Lucas Miller** *Junior High Pastor*
- › **Nicole Kalan** *Student Lead Coordinator*
- › **Christy Vulich** *Assistant Children’s Director*
- › **Ramona Lewis** *Children’s Small Group Coordinator*
- › **Shellee Zenteno** *Elementary Production*
- › **Marilyn Lombardi** *Children’s Communication Coordinator*

Day 11

Asking God to Meet Your Needs

God Is Concerned With Your Basic Needs

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, Who is unseen. Then your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’”

Matthew 6:5

Getting Down to Basics

“Give us today our daily bread.”

Matthew 6:11

Is it surprising to you to find so mundane a request as “give us our daily bread” at the very heart of the Lord’s Prayer? Why do you think Jesus includes this in His model prayer?

What we are praying in this verse is, “Lord, do not leave us without supplies. Give us day-by-day what we need. Help us to walk day-by-day in faith and confidence trusting you to supply what we need. You are Jehovah Jirah, the blessed provider of all things.”

This prayer of Jesus’ tells us something of the importance the Lord places on providing for our basic human needs. We can sometimes feel embarrassed bringing our personal needs and problems to the Lord. Here we are, in the court of the God of all the universe, talking about the commonplace details of life that weigh so heavily upon us. Apparently our needs do matter to Him because Jesus taught us to pray for them. God is willing to give us everything we need. He knows it is difficult for us to do

what He has called us to do if we are starving or lacking what we need to accomplish His purposes for us.

We are Not Independently Sufficient

When Jesus was tempted by the evil one to turn the stones into bread, Jesus refused the temptation by saying,

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4:4 (ESV)

Jesus refused to become the source of His own sufficiency. If He needed bread, His Father would provide it. He was certainly hungry after forty days in the wilderness fasting, so what would have been wrong for Him to turn those stones into bread? He had the ability to do it, so why not?

Jesus is communicating that there is something more important than eating a meal, and that is living by the word of God. That is the heart of prayer, it is saying, “I need You God!” I trust you to provide for me, even for my daily bread. I agree with Paul,

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

Jesus is teaching us to come to our Heaven Father, not self-centered or need-centered, but God-centered and Kingdom-centered. Our prayer is not to be in the spirit of “gimme, gimme, gimme” but in light of the primary purpose of God for His world and our lives.

This is the great secret in praying “Give us today our daily bread,” God meets our needs so that we can accomplish His Kingdom purposes in accordance with His plan. God actually glorifies Himself and brings about His Kingdom through caring for His people, while providing for their needs.

Therefore, praying for our daily concerns is a vital part of God’s plan. When we bring the details of our daily lives to Him in prayer, we give Him the opportunity to mold and direct them and to work out His will through them.

Day 12

Jesus Taught Us to Depend Upon God as
Our Provider

“Give us today our daily bread.”

Matthew 6:11

The word “give” is not a rude demand of God, but an urgent plea. We are, in effect, saying, “God, You’ve given us this charge to pray in Your Kingdom. Now, give us what we need to live, so that we can do the work You’ve called us to do. Father, we ask you to meet this need because You are the only One Who can!”

The word “bread” was used for food generically and in the literature of Jesus’ day for one’s support or livelihood. So, in this passage, it is asking God to provide for all of our material needs in life.

Jesus wants us to recognize that God is the Great Provider. In praying for our daily needs to be met, we come to realize our total dependence upon God, even for our daily bread.

Compared to others around the world, Americans are rich with food in the freezer, two cars and even a house for our cars. Americans have the funds to eat out and travel and take vacations. With so many resources, the temptation is to find security in things instead of God.

If God so willed, we would have no daily bread. He could:

- › Withhold the sun and its influence in an extended eclipse
- › Stop the rain by a drought. We know what those are. (In the Old Testament they were God’s judgment against the sin of a nation.)
- › Make our land absolutely barren so that the farmer, with all his modern implements and chemicals, could not raise a crop, no matter how hard he tried
- › Just wipe out a crop if He wanted to

We may have the technology of weather satellites so forecasters can tell us it might rain. But we must not forget, it is God Who causes the clouds, the wind, the rain and the sun. All we really do is track the clouds—God orchestrates everything! In reality, we cannot live for a day without Him. Nothing would continue were it not sustained and maintained by God.

Probably one of the greatest examples of a person who trusted God for daily bread was George Muller, who, in 19th century England, started a work among orphans which was run totally by faith. Muller never solicited funds for the work and told only the Lord and his workers of the needs to continue the work. He claimed Psalm 68:5 that God is “a Father of the fatherless,” and trusted Him to provide for the needs of His children. Muller said, “I only have to remind Him of the need of these poor children to have it supplied.” He said that never in all his experience of caring for orphans, even when he was feeding 2,000 daily by faith, was any meal more than thirty minutes late.

After George Muller’s death, his biographer, A.T. Pierson, said, “Nothing is more marked in George Muller, to the very day of his death, than this, that he so looked to God and leaned on God that he felt himself to be nothing and God everything. He sought to be always and in all things surrendered as a passive tool to the will and hand of the Master Workman.” George Muller was a man who knew what it meant to depend upon God for his daily needs.

Those who do not realize they need to depend upon God for basic life needs, do not tend to be rich in faith or in trusting God. It is because they do not see a need to trust Him. Their faith has not grown through their day by day trust in Him to meet their needs.

Living in the richest nation on earth, in a materialistic society, it is very easy for all of us, and particularly the next generation, to feel entitled, forgetting that we should be grateful to God who has freely given to us. Confess your independence and self sufficiency and begin to thank God for His abundant daily provision for your life, asking that you might set the pace for the next generation as one who lives a life of gratitude.

Day 13

Jesus Taught Us to Pray for Our Own
Needs and the Needs of Other Believers

Notice the wording of verse 11, “Give us today our daily bread.” It is *us* and *our* not *me* and *my*. When we pray, we need to remember we are a part of the Body of Christ, a part of the family of God, one of the community of believers. We need to pray, not only for our own life and needs, but for the other brothers and sisters in the Kingdom.

Sometimes as we pray and ask God to meet a need in our life, He gives more than we need so we can be a channel of God’s blessing for others in God’s forever family. This kind of praying and living was a hallmark of the early church.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need...”

Acts 2:44

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.”

Acts 4:32

Sometimes, as we pray for the needs of our brothers and sisters, God reminds us of just how rich we are. It is very easy to confuse our wants with our needs. God has promised to meet all of our needs. If you feel you are truly lacking in an area, pray and ask God to show you if it really is a need or just something you want very badly.

There was once a farmer who had worked very hard and stored away lots of grain. His silos were full and he had already sold enough grain to ensure that all his needs would be met. He happened to live in an area where there were many others who were in need. There were regular appeals for help.

Each evening at supper, this farmer would pray thanking God for meeting their need for food and asking Him to meet the needs of the poor. But whenever he was asked by the Salvation Army or some other organization to help with the poor, he always said he did not have enough to help.

One evening, after praying his usual prayer asking God to meet the needs of the poor, his son said, “Dad, I wish I had all your grain.” The father

Day 14

Jesus Taught Us to Trust God Day by Day

“Give us today our daily bread.”

Matthew 6:11

The words *today* and *daily* speak of being sufficient for today. We are saying, “Lord, give me the things I need to eat for this coming day.” It is quite similar to the Lord’s dealing with Israel when He supplied the manna in the wilderness.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.’ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.”

Exodus 16:4

The people were to gather just what they needed for each day and no more. When they tried to get extra, it spoiled before the next day. Why? Because God wanted them to depend upon Him each and every day for their existence so they would know He was their Provider. And He took care of them each day for forty years.

As we learned, George Muller trusted God through prayer to provide for 2,000 orphans. Let’s look at a few quotes from his daily journal to see how faithfully the Lord provided for him and his orphans, day by day.

August 18, 1838. “Nothing on hand for the orphans. My eyes are on the Lord, and this evening received \$25.”

September 2. "Funds are needed but the Lord gives by the day now. I sought the Lord again and again both yesterday and today, and one of the laborers gave \$10, and this evening \$20 was given us, which came in small donations. This amount helped us to adjust to present conditions but left us penniless."

September 29. "A brother and I prayed one and three-fourths hours today concerning rents due and money for the orphans."

October 2. "Praise the Lord for His mercies. Enough money was given to pay the rent of the three houses and to supply our daily needs, and to buy bread for tomorrow. Praise the Lord."

March 17, 1839. "Received a letter from a brother inquiring if I needed any money. My reply was, I make it a rule never to tell anyone but the Lord our wants, as the primary object of the work is to lead those weak in faith to trust God alone; but I prayed the Lord to influence the brother to help us, and this brother sent us \$500."

October 26. "Yesterday someone put \$25 in my hat."

April 12, 1840. "We were in great need, but \$500 arrived from the East Indies. Praise the Lord."

Notice how Muller had to put His trust in God day by day? Did you see God's faithfulness to meet Muller and the orphans' daily needs? Who received the glory in Muller's life and ministry? God did.

"Give us today our daily bread." is a simple prayer that God will supply us with the things we need for the coming day. This must be important to the heart of God if Jesus taught us to pray it as part of our model prayer. God wants us to depend on Him daily, because we really do need Him daily, whether we realize it or not.

Write a prayer asking God to meet your daily needs:

Day 15

Jesus Taught Us to Be Content With
Having Enough for Each Day

“Give us today our daily bread.”

Matthew 6:11

Not only does God want us to depend upon Him daily, He wants us to be satisfied with having enough for the day. We see the reason for this in a prayer found in

“Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

Proverbs 30:7-9

This man prays and asks God for two things:

- › To help him be honest, and
- › To give him what he needs for each day, rather than giving him either poverty or riches

Then he gives God two reasons for the second request:

- › He does not want to have too much because he knows he would feel no need to trust God
- › He does not want to be poor because he knows he would steal to provide for his family. He is aware this would dishonor the name of God.

In verse 8 when he says “give me only my daily bread” the idea is “give me my portion of bread.” The man is really praying a prayer of protection—“Lord, only give me that portion that You have cut out for me. If You give me too much, I will feel that it was my brilliance, my hard work, my skills, my tenacity that met my needs and not you. I will think, ‘Who needs to pray? If I need food, clothing, etc., I’ll just go out and work a little harder.’”

We need to learn to be content with God’s provision in our lives. God promises to provide for our physical needs. He does not take them lightly.

He knows we have very real needs.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?...So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:25

God is saying here, “I know your needs. You get on with doing My Kingdom’s work and I will meet your needs—trust Me.”

We also run into problems when we are not content with God’s provision in our lives. We tend to look at others, within and outside the Body of Christ, and compare. We want more and more or nicer and better things. When we are not content with God’s provision we run into problems described in

“...You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

James 4:2-4

James says that instead of asking for their needs to be met, so they can better serve the King, people ask for things to use on themselves or for their own pleasure. Instead of loving God, they are loving the world and this makes them an enemy of God and His Kingdom.

It all comes back to Jesus’ command for us to pray. If we don’t pray and God meets our need, we’ll think we did it. If we pray and God meets our needs, we’ll recognize God is the One who provided and our faith and

Day 16

How Prayer and Forgiveness Work
Together

Jesus Places Great Emphasis on Forgiveness

Jesus taught us how to pray. He said to pray:

- › Personally— to call God our “Father”, recognizing His holiness
- › For the establishment of the Kingdom of God all over the earth
- › For our daily bread— the physical provision we need to live while we help expand His kingdom

This week we will see that Jesus told us to pray for forgiveness. Forgiveness is as necessary for the life and health of the soul as food is for the body. We pray and ask for His forgiveness so that we might walk in fellowship with Him. We also pray for forgiveness so we can walk in holiness and in power to fulfill His mission. But there is an interesting twist to what Jesus teaches about asking forgiveness from God.

**“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...
For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your
heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive
men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”**

Matthew 6:12; 14-15

Jesus clearly instructs that we should pray that God will forgive us in the same proportion, or to the same degree, that we forgive others. Then in verses 14 and 15 He further clarifies His instruction by saying that, if we forgive those who sin against us, God will forgive us. But if we do not forgive those who sin against us, God will not forgive us.

Do those verses bother you? Have you ever thought those verses through to their logical conclusion? Needless to say, it is of great importance that we understand what Jesus was saying, so that not even one of us will be trapped by an unforgiving spirit.

Praying for Forgiveness

In verse 12a Jesus says, “Forgive us our debts...” The word *forgive* means to cancel, pardon, dismiss, send away, wipe out. Jesus puts great stress on forgiveness. The same word is used twice in verse 12, twice in verse 14 and twice in verse 15. Notice, too, that this is the only point from this prayer that Jesus chooses to clarify and expand upon. He wants it to be very clear.

The word *forgive* is again an imperative. Once again, it is not a command but a very urgent plea, a passionate request from a child of God to the Father in heaven. It is as if he were saying, “Father, forgive me! If You don’t, I will never be forgiven!”

The reason we are to pray urgently is who else can forgive but God? The urgency does not come because we have to beg and plead with God for His forgiveness, but from the breach in our relationship with God and the desire to have it restored with all its warmth and intimacy. This is what husbands and wives experience with the “cold war” that comes during an argument. They want the intimacy of their relationship restored. So this prayer is like saying, “Father, forgive my sin. It is standing between You and me.”

We see this urgent type of plea in the parable Jesus told in

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 18:10

In this parable, we see the one who realized he was a sinner begging God for mercy and forgiveness. He did so with the same imperative tone, the same impassioned plea Jesus is teaching us to use.

By praying for forgiveness, man is, at the same time, confessing that he is sinful and guilty. Jesus tells us we are to ask God to forgive us for our *debts*. When we sin, we incur a debt that we cannot, nor could we ever, pay. So we turn to the only One who can forgive us and we implore Him to forgive the debt— to forgive our sin.

We realize that God, in His infinite mercy, paid our sin debt through the death of His Son, Jesus, on the cross. That payment is not to be taken

Day 17

Two Errors Concerning Asking for
Forgiveness (Part 1)

It is important that we understand why we need to do as Jesus instructed in asking for forgiveness.

An Erroneous Understanding of Justification

There is a group of teachers who claim that Christians no longer need to ask for forgiveness because we are justified by faith in the presence of God. What does it mean to be justified by faith? It means that God has dealt in full with our sins in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He has given us the righteousness of Christ and, therefore, that we are righteous in Christ. That is justification by faith.

These teachers claim that since all our sins were dealt with through Jesus Christ, why do we have to ask for forgiveness of sins? The answer to this error lies in the fact that our Lord tells us to pray for forgiveness of our debts, trespasses, sins. In verses 14 and 15, Jesus says that if we forgive others when they sin against us, God will forgive us. But if we do not forgive people when they sin against us, God will not forgive us.

Jesus is not talking about justification here. He is not dealing with the case of a sinner who has just awakened to the fact that he needs to have his sins forgiven and comes to God and receives the gift of salvation and realizes his justification in Christ.

In this passage Jesus is dealing with the same issue He covered with His disciples in John 13. As He was washing the disciples feet, Jesus came to Peter who did not want Him to wash his feet. Jesus said to him in verse 8b,

“Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.”

Peter then responded in verse 9,

“Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.”

Jesus answered in verse 10a,

“A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean.”

There is only one washing of the entire person— that is our justification. But having been justified, we become soiled and tarnished with sin as we walk through this world. That happens to every Christian, daily. Though we know we have been forgiven, that is, our relationship with God has been secured through Christ, we need daily forgiveness for particular sins and failures.

1 John 1 describes a Christian walking the life of faith and yet, from time to time falling into sin. What are we to do about it? John says we are to confess our sins. In verse 9 he says,

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

We are in a permanent relationship with God because of the blood of Jesus Christ. When we sin, it does not break that permanent relationship, but it stresses it out.

Notice in 1 John 1:10 John says,

“If we claim we have not sinned, (as these teachers would have us believe) we make Him out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives.”

It's like the 1970's movie *Love Story*, starring Ryan O'Neal and Ali McGraw. A line used in that movie was “Love means never having to say you're sorry.” That saying was so ludicrous it never caught on, even for that *love* saturated generation.

But these teachers might as well be saying, “Grace means never having to say you're sorry.” What God's grace means is that He is always there waiting for us to come to our senses, to repent and to confess our sins to Him because we know He loves us.

Just as there is no contradiction in saying to someone you love, “I'm sorry for what I did. It was wrong,” so there is no contradiction for forgiven children of God confessing their sin to God. It is the relationship of a child to the Father. The moment we realize we have offended, grieved or sinned

Day 18

Two Errors Concerning Asking for
Forgiveness (Part 2)

Yesterday we looked at the erroneous teaching which says that, because we have been justified by faith in Christ, we no longer have to ask for forgiveness of sins. Today we will see there is another teaching going around which says there is no need to ask for forgiveness of sins because of our sanctification.

Those who adhere to this teaching believe that, since all of our sins were paid for by Christ's finished work on the cross, we are purified by God and, therefore, no longer sin. And since I no longer sin, there is no need to ask for forgiveness of sin. In fact, to do so would be to detract from the salvation Christ purchased for me by His blood on the cross. These teachers and their followers hold to the holiness theory which teaches that sin has been eradicated and they, therefore, are perfect and sinless. They may make "mistakes" but they do not sin.

Again we can look to 1 John to find the truth of the matter. We can see from 2:12-14; 3:1 and 5:13 that this letter was written to believers. And yet in 1:8 John writes, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves (these people sincerely believe this but they are only fooling themselves) and the truth is not in us." If it were possible that we no longer sin, why would John go on in 2:1 to state,

"I write this to you so that you will not (choose to) sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense— Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

The man or woman who does not know the blackness of his or her own heart, but is simply concerned with his own theories, is a person who is not examining himself truly. The greater the saint, the greater the sense of sin and the awareness of sin within.

We also see that the rest of Scripture is in harmony with what Jesus taught about asking God for forgiveness. The Bible speaks in many different areas about a work that is complete but still needs to go on in progress.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

1 Corinthians 2:16

Day 19

The Condition for Experiencing God's
Forgiveness

“...as we also have forgiven our debtors...For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Matthew 6:12; 14-15

Jesus establishes the prerequisite for receiving forgiveness from God. The principle is simple but sobering— if we have forgiven, we will be forgiven. If we have not forgiven, we will not be forgiven. Notice that He does not say, “Forgive us our debts because we forgive our debtors.”

This may bring a question to your mind. “If I am forgiven, if I am truly a Christian, can I be ‘unforgiven’ by not forgiving others.” The language of this passage is very clear. Look closely at verse 14: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” If God sees that we forgive, then He will forgive.

In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus taught His disciples about confrontation with the purpose of restoration and forgiveness. Then in verses 21-35 He says that we are to offer unlimited forgiveness—“seventy seven times” (some translations have seventy times seven).

John Stott has said, “Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us, appear by comparison, extremely trifling.” Once we have been to the foot of the cross and realize the weight of the sin we have committed (we are billion dollar debtors, there is no way we could ever repay our debt of sin), when someone else sins against us, we may be angry, hurt, offended, etc., but, when we see how God has forgiven us, we are able and under obligation to forgive everyone who sins against us. If we have received the forgiveness of God, we have the capacity to extend forgiveness to someone who sins against us.

If, on the other hand, we choose not to forgive someone else, the question is are we in the Kingdom— have we received the forgiveness of God? Stott continues, “If we have an exaggerated view of the offenses of others, it proves that we have minimized our own. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, its conclusion is: ‘I forgave you all that debt...should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’” As believers,

Day 20

Day to Day Issues of Forgiveness

Today we want to deal with some of the questions that come up whenever we talk about offering forgiveness.

How do I forgive someone that I cannot trust?

There is a difference between extending forgiveness and extending trust. Forgiveness is an act of the will, regardless of our feelings. Trust is another matter. Let's learn from Jesus example in

“Now while He was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs He was doing and believed in His name. But Jesus would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for He knew what was in a man.”

John 2:23

God did not forgive us because He trusted us. We were not trustworthy. And we all still fail. Forgiveness is not based on trustworthiness. We can forgive someone and still not be able to trust them.

An example would be a father who sexually molested his own children. The children grow up and marry. They may have forgiven their dad, but they know they cannot trust him with their children. Not being able to trust him does not mean they cannot forgive him. Withholding their children from him does not necessarily mean there is bitterness or resentment or lack of forgiveness. It means there is a rightful lack of trust.

How do I deal with feelings that linger or are triggered by actions or thoughts?

Paul, in Colossians 3:8-17, gives us step-by-step how-to's to get rid of bitterness, resentment and ill-will against someone:

Get rid of it, take it out—verse 8

“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”

Replace it with godly qualities—verse 12

**“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,
gentleness and patience.”**

Be willing to accept other’s faults—verse 13

**“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may
have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

Choose to give them what they need, when they need it—verse 14

**“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all
together in perfect unity.”**

Have Christ’s peace rule your heart instead of the anxiety of sin—verse 15

**“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members
of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”**

Let the Word of God cleanse your mind and heart—verse 16

**“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and
admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing
psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your
hearts to God.”**

Act as Jesus would in every situation—verse 17

**“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in
the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father
through Him.”**

In Luke 23:34 when He was dying on the cross, Jesus said,

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Time can be in your favor, if you continue to forgive, or it can destroy you and make you just like the one you are bitter against, if you refuse to forgive.

How do I know if I have truly forgiven someone for a wrong they have committed against me?

To forgive our debtors means that we no longer consider them as debtors. Their debts to us are nothing compared with what we owe God. Our forgiving others is the evidence that God’s grace has really wrought faith in us and made us His children. Lack of forgiveness, on the other hand, leads to separation, divorce, alienation of families, neighbors, in-laws, members of the Body of Christ, etc. Lack of forgiveness defiles many.

You cannot shake lack of forgiveness on your own. You need help. Christ demonstrated that He can give us the help we need. When He hung, dying, on the cross, He prayed for the forgiveness of those who were responsible for His torture and death. That’s power to forgive!

He gives us the same power. Once we have experienced God’s grace and forgiveness, we are able to extend that forgiveness to others. Someone who is bitter cannot expand the Kingdom of God. They cannot walk in the power of God. They poison their friends and family members through their bitterness. No one who fails to forgive understands the forgiveness that God has extended to them. Those who refuse to forgive will not be forgiven themselves.

Are you leaving a legacy of forgiveness and grace for the next generation, your children, grandchildren, for generations to come? Write a prayer expressing your heart for your legacy:

Day 21

Prayer for Deliverance

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Matthew 6:13 (ESV)

Jesus taught his students to pray for deliverance from evil. We are weak, left to ourselves and we easily fall into temptation and sin. It does not take much effort to witness the evidence of the Biblical truth, that the world is under the rule of a powerful, supernatural being who is the enemy of our souls. Satan is a defeated foe, but he is not a powerless enemy. Left to ourselves we do not have what it takes to stand against this Deceiver. The good news is that we have the potential to win the battle...

**“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them,
for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**

1 John 4:4 (ESV)

We have the promise of winning because of our connection to Jesus.

**“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our
Lord Jesus Christ.”**

1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV)

When Paul instructed the young pastor Timothy about spiritual warfare, and the spiritual armor that is available for the battle, it is important to see that he concludes with teaching on the necessity of prayer.

**“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and
supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance,
making supplication for all the saints,”**

Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

Jesus does not want us to lose to a loser!

