

We believe discipleship is a direction  
not a destination.



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**Prayer: Does it Make a Difference**

**Week 3**

# Course Outline

- **Unraveling the Mysteries**
  - **Week 3 Ch 6-8**
    - What's the point
    - Wrestling with God
  - **Week 4 Ch 9-11**
    - Does prayer change God?
    - Ask, Seek, Knock



# Course Outline

- **The Language of Prayer**
  - **Week 5 Ch 12-13**
    - I pray all the time, but...
    - It takes time and practice
  - **Week 6 Ch 14-15**
    - What do I say?
    - When we don't hear anything



# Course Outline

- **Prayer Dilemmas**
  - **Week 7 Ch 16-17**
    - Unanswered prayer, whose fault is it
    - Living with not knowing
  - **Week 8 Ch 18-19**
    - Prayer and healing
    - What to pray for if not healing



# Course Outline

- **The Practice of Prayer**
  - **Week 9 Ch 20-22**
    - How do I pray?
    - Should I “forward this prayer”
    - Rule #1 Love the Lord your God
  - **Week 10 Review, Conclusions**



# Review

- What was the first section of the book about?
  - Creating a relationship with God
  - Spending time with a friend
  - Expressing your complaints, frustrations
  - And listening



# Unraveling the Mysteries

## *Why Pray?*

Chapter 6



# Why Pray

- What do we pray for?
  - We can look at it from two categories *Trouble* or *Trivial*
    - What are some *Trouble* prayers?
      - Sick Kids, airplane passenger, Soldiers
        - There are no atheists in foxholes
    - What are some *Trivial* prayers
      - Please don't let it rain, change the light to green





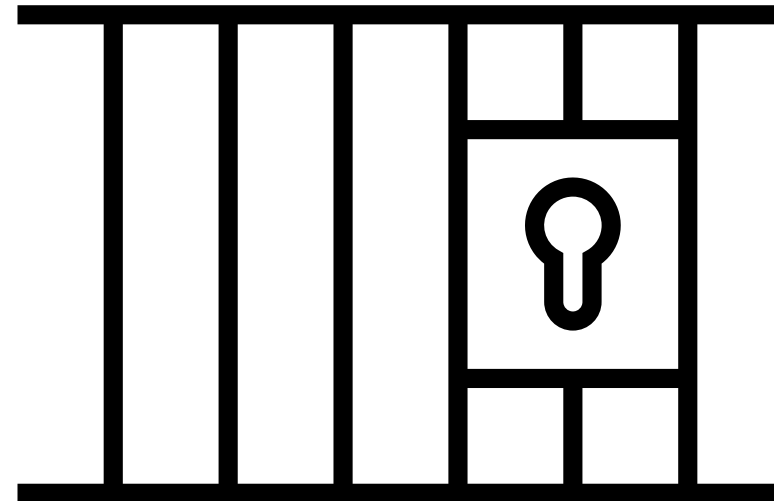
# The Problem

- The problem: What if our *trivial* prayers are answered?
  - But not or *troubled* prayers? Or either?
- If God can change the color of a light, or open a parking space
  - Why can't God change the course of a bomb?
    - Or a plane crashing into a building?
- Is it that God can't? Or wont?



# -What is the Point-

- Let's look at some real-life prayers
  - And the questions they bring up
- Prayers from a prisoner



# A Prisoner

- “God’s overall supervision of creation is scripturally clear, but does He concern himself at all, to the point of intervention, in our daily trivial lives?”
- “Or are His promises of help aimed only at our spiritual self, to help how we respond to events, not to affect events themselves?”



# Didn't You Hear Our Prayers?

- Then the mother wrote out some of her favorite verses from the Bible:
  - Ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you....
  - I will never leave you, I will never forsake you....
  - My grace is sufficient....
  - In all things God works for the good of those who love Him
- How can she reconcile those verses with her son's suicide?

# What Would You Say

- Do you know people with similar questions?
- Do you have similar questions?
- What would you say to console any of these people?
- So why pray?
  - Let's try and answer this question



# -Jesus at Prayer-

- Why Pray? Because Jesus did
  - What does Jesus' prayers, his prayer life say?
    - He followed the normal Jewish practice
      - Jesus went to the temple to pray
      - Praying at least three times a day
    - Jesus prayed in private
      - He told his disciples to seclude themselves

# Troubled Times

- Jesus prayed in times of trouble
  - During his temptation in the wilderness
  - In the garden before his trial
  - On the cross
    - God never answered these prayers, verbally
    - What do you think Jesus thought? Felt?



# The Trivial

- Did Jesus ever pray on a trivial matter?
  - It does not appear so
- Jesus prayed for common everyday things
  - Food, Temptation, Relationships (the Lords Prayer)
    - But these are not trivial
- Jesus most often prayed for others
  - Children, Simon Peter being tested
  - Father forgive them...



# -Does Prayer Matter-

- So, does prayer really matter?
  - When we look at Jesus, He prayed often
    - Jesus felt compelled to pray
  - The Son of God, the creator of the world
    - Prayed fervently
    - Like it mattered
- So prayer must matter



# But Why?!

- But why did He not...?!
- The answer to the “Why” question
  - I don’t know
  - But there is another question
- Does God care about your problem?
  - Yes! And why?
  - Because we have seen God in Jesus
    - And Jesus cared for so many



# -Prayer Limits-

- Did Jesus ever pray and not get an answer?
  - Or more clearly not what was request?
- Consider the following two prayers:



# Prayer Limits

- “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you.                      John 17:20–21
- During those days he went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. When daylight came, he summoned his disciples, and he chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles:                      Luke 6:12–13



# Failure

- One more prayer of Jesus
  - “Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Luke 22:31–32
- What happens here?
  - Was this an unanswered prayer?
    - Or is this a glimpse at how God works?

# Simone and Judas

- Simone and Judas both deny Christ
  - It is recorded that Jesus prays for Simone
    - Is it possible Jesus also prayed for Judas
  - But there were different outcomes? Why?
    - We still have freedom
    - Freedom in our actions
      - Even when He knows our choices
        - And their outcome



# -Unprayed Prayers-

- What prayers did Jesus not pray?
  - We never see a prayer for
    - John the Baptists release
    - Judas to change his mind
- In the garden
  - Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?

Matthew 26:53



# Instead

- Instead we see Jesus praying for things to pass by
  - Jesus knows what is going to happen
    - And doesn't want to go through it
  - But Jesus does want to do the Father's will, His plan
- Notice the difference between the praying Jesus
  - And the Jesus in front of the Jewish leaders and Pilot
- Jesus spent time in prayer crying out to God
  - So when he was in the trials the peace of God was there



# -Parental Pain-

- What can we learn from Jesus' example of prayer?
  - What can we say to people who ask:
    - What about my dead son?
    - What about the abused kids?
    - What about my cancer?
- Keep praying you will get an answer soon
- Keep praying a miracle will come soon



# No

- No, a miracle may never come, and often does not
- We live in a world where:
  - Depression wins
  - Fathers abuse their kids
  - Cancer ravages bodies
- But we do know that God cares, and loves us
  - We see that in Jesus life on earth



# Restraint

- God restrains from fixing all our problems
  - Like with Peter
    - God did not restrain the testing of his faith
- And like a good parent
  - We do not fix or solve all our kid's crisis'
  - We let them suffer
    - A failed test
    - A broken heart



# Parental Pain

- But we love our kids through it all
  - Praying that on the other side they will be stronger, better
- “Jesus prays for me — as he did for Peter — not that I would never face testing, nor ever fail, but that in the end I will allow God to use the testing and failure to mold me into someone more useful to the kingdom, someone more like Jesus.”

Philip Yancy



# Unraveling the Mysteries

## *Wrestling Match*

Chapter 7



Biblical prayer is impertinent,  
persistent, shameless, indecorous.

It is more like haggling in an  
outdoor bazaar than the polite  
monologues of the church.

Walter Wink



“God, I hated you after the rape! How could you let this happen to me? And I hated the people in this church who tried to comfort me. I didn’t want comfort. I wanted revenge. I wanted to hurt back. I thank you, God, that you didn’t give up on me, and neither did some of these people. You kept after me, and I come back to you now and ask that you heal the scars in my soul.”



When her son fell ill she prayed, “Oh, God, you know how much I am distressed, for I have told you again and again. Now, God, help me get my son. If you were in trouble, as I am, and I could help you, as you can me, think I wouldn’t do it? Yes, God, you know I would do it.”

Hard times financially, she prayed “Oh, God, you know I have no money, but you can make the people do for me, and you must make the people do for me. I will never give you peace till you do, God.”

Sojourner Truth





# How Do We Pray?

- Do we ever pray this way?
  - Or do we pray
    - Polite prayers?
    - Well written letter style prayers?
- Should are prayers look a little more
  - Demanding?
  - Argumentative?



# -The Bargainer-

- Can you bargain with God?
  - Maybe haggle with God?
- What does the Bible show us?



<sup>23</sup> Abraham stepped forward and said, “Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup> What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people who are in it? <sup>25</sup> You could not possibly do such a thing: to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You could not possibly do that! Won’t the Judge of the whole earth do what is just?”

Genesis 18:23–25



<sup>26</sup> The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.” <sup>27</sup> Then Abraham answered, “Since I have ventured to speak to my lord—even though I am dust and ashes—<sup>28</sup> suppose the fifty righteous lack five. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?” He replied, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” <sup>29</sup> Then he spoke to him again, “Suppose forty are found there?” He answered, “I will not do it on account of forty.”

Genesis 18:26–29



# The Bargainer

- Can you bargain with God?
  - Apparently yes
- Did God need to be convinced of what was right to do?
  - No!
- Did God just want someone else to care enough about mercy to argue the point?
  - Did God want to destroy Sodom because He is mean?
    - No, but it needed to be done

# -Arguing with God-

- What about arguing with God?
  - Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?
  - What if the Israelites don't believe me ...
  - I have never been eloquent...
- Whiny arguing



# Arguing with God

- Moses did a lot of arguing with God
  - Look at all you went through delivering them from Egypt
  - What about your reputation?
  - Think of how the Egyptians will gloat!
- Convincing
- Don't forget Moses also failed in his arguments
  - He never entered the Promised Land

# -A Strange Intimacy-

- Do you like when people agree with what you say?
  - Of course!
  - But what if they do all the time?
    - It probably means they don't want to think about the issues or just don't care
- Yes, in the end God's decisions are always right, but
  - Maybe just maybe He wants us to push back on Him
    - Think and care about what is going to happen





# -God-Wrestlers-

- Let's look at the time Jacob wrestled God
  - Do you think God could not defeat Jacob in a no holds barred wrestling match?
  - If not, then what's the point of wrestling with God?
    - It means we care
    - We have not quit God
    - There is passion still in our spirit if we are willing to fight when we know we will fail



# **-The Opposite of Indifference-**

A story from a hospice chaplain:



# Unraveling the Mysteries

## *Partnership*

Chapter 8



# Expectations

- What is our expectation when we pray?
  - When we ask God to do something through prayer?
    - Do we expect what we see in the Bible
      - The unexplainable
        - Water to wine
        - Rivers of blood
  - Is this realistic for us to expect?



# -A change Underway-

- A change has happened since Jesus came
  - People went to the temple to worship God
    - It is where God rested
  - But Jesus said
    - But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him.

John 4:23



# A New Place of Worship

- We no longer must travel and worship
  - Or seek out a priest to intercede with sacrifices
- We can now approach God directly, anywhere
- We now have the Spirit of God in us
  - We can hear His voice speaking to us
    - Help that man
    - Stop! Don't go in there!



# -God-Incidents-

- An alcoholic prays, “Lord keep me from drink today.”
  - What does an answer to this prayer look like?
    - The miraculous: With every attempted drink the liquid disappears!
    - The coincident: Your friend calls to check on you as you enter the liquor store
  - Which one is God answering your prayer?



# Prove It

- Prove to me that the coincidence is an answered prayer!
  - You can not
    - But that is exactly what the devil wants you to believe
- “We believe a prayer has been answered not because of any scientific criteria proving cause and effect, but because we have faith.”

Yancey, Philip





# -Stages of Prayer-

- Three stages of prayer
  - Not skill levels beginner/advancement
  - But growth into but not losing
- 1<sup>st</sup> Child like request for something I want
- 2<sup>nd</sup> A kind of meditation
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Submission

# 1<sup>st</sup> Child Like

- Requesting what I desire
  - We can not say this is a bad thing
    - Jesus answered these prayers
      - The paralyzed man
      - The bleeding woman
- Pray as if ordering a burger
  - Be specific
  - Whatever you think best



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Meditation

- Meditation, not the eastern empty your mind but
  - “Keeping company with God”
  - Meditation gives us time to listen to God
    - The benefit is it allows you to align your requests with God
- Over time my request for more money, promotions
  - Change from immature requests to mature
    - Lord help me better provide for my family



# 3<sup>rd</sup> Submission

- If the God we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. **But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”**

Daniel 3:17–18

- This shows Submission
  - Not my will but your will be done



# Not My Will

- Prayer is not about getting what I want done on earth
  - But getting what God wants done on earth
- For some reason God wants me to be apart of His will on this earth



# -Kingdom Partners-

- God could have setup this world in several ways
  - God could interact in spectacular ways daily
    - Letting us know of His presence daily
  - He could have set the earth spinning
    - And stepped away, leaving us to ourselves
- Instead, God asks for us to partner with Him on earth
  - Really?



<sup>35</sup> Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.

<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”

Matthew 9:35–38



# Kingdom Partners

- After seeing the need and having compassion
  - Jesus asked his disciples to pray for more workers
  - Why? Why not just call more on his own?
  - And why not just do it himself?
- Jesus called the disciples to partner with Him
  - Partner with him in the work God has on earth
  - To go out into the world, serving, sharing, loving
    - Harvesting people to God







# Course Outline

- **Keeping Company with God**
  - ~~Week 1 Introduction, Ch1-2~~
    - ~~What do you expect~~
    - ~~Who prays and why~~
  - ~~Week 2 Ch 3-5~~
    - ~~Come just as we are~~
    - ~~Who is God to listen~~



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    - ~~Wrestling with God~~
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    - Does prayer change God?
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**Week 3**