

Rooted - April 18th - Effectiveness of Prayer - Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scriptures:

Colossians 4:2-6 NLT
1 Thessalonians 5:17
Ephesians 6:13-18

Start reading

Colossians 4:2-6

2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. **3** Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. **4** Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should. **5** Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Never stop praying

Joshua 10:12-14

12 On the day the Lord gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the Lord in front of all the people of Israel. He said, "Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon." **13** So the sun stood still and the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies. Is this event not recorded in The Book of Jashar[a]? The sun stayed in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day. **14** There has never been a day like this one before or since, when the Lord answered such a prayer. Surely the Lord fought for Israel that day!

Ephesians 6:13-18

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. **14** Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **18** Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- How would you describe your prayer life? (e.g., intense, lukewarm, sporadic, frustrating. . .) Is praying an easy or difficult thing for you to do? Why or why not?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- Have you ever experienced a time when many people were pleading with God on behalf of the same request and that prayer was answered? What did that do for your faith?
- **Read Colossians 4:2.** Paul said to have an "alert mind and thankful heart." What can you do to make sure that you keep this focus?
- Clay mentioned the following quote by J.C. Ryle: "Laziness and frivolity are bad enough in any profession but worst of all in that of a watchman for souls." Take some time to discuss this quotation with your group.
- **Read Joshua 10:12-14.** In these verses, Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still. Wow, what an audacious prayer! Do you believe that God can do the miraculous for you in your life also? What keeps you from praying big, bold prayers?
- Pastor Clay talked about our prayer life being like "calling in an airstrike" on the enemy. What are some areas in your life that need an airstrike to take place? What "airstrikes" should we be praying for in regards to our community, workplace, church, family, etc.?

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- Have you ever been on a mission trip? How did it impact you? Do you believe that we can be "on mission" when we go to Southport Walmart, Myrtle Beach, or Wilmington? Why or why not?
- How would or do you approach being the hands and feet of Christ in your everyday tasks? How can you actively prepare to see those opportunities and then be the love of Christ? Is prayer a part of preparing for those daily opportunities?
- Do you have a plan for a daily prayer time? If not, take a look at your day in general and come up with a time that works for you and that can lay the groundwork for the day ahead. A lot of people keep a prayer journal. It's a way to keep track of not only prayer requests, but of answered prayer as well.

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Pastor Clay gave some action steps at the end of his message. Start Praying, Keep Praying, and Make Progress. Commit this week to setting a time to pray every day and see what God does through that. If praying is difficult or awkward for you, try writing out your prayers.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Jesus, thank you for the fact that we can communicate with you through prayer and that you hear us. Please help me to learn how to pray with more power and boldness. Help me to be committed to praying more. - In Jesus Name, Amen

Start digging. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

Question: “What is the key to effective prayer?”

Answer: We all want our prayers to be “effective,” so much so that when we focus on the “results” of our prayers, we lose sight of the incredible privilege we have in prayer. That people like us can speak to the Creator of the universe is itself an amazing thing. Even more astounding is the fact that He hears us and acts on our behalf! The first thing we need to understand about effective prayer is that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had to suffer and die on the cross to even make it possible for us to approach the throne of grace to worship and pray (Hebrews 10:19-25).

Although the Bible offers a great deal of guidance on how we can deepen our communication with the Creator, effective prayer has more to do with the one doing the praying than it does with “how” we are to pray. Indeed, Scripture says, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16), and that the “eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer” (1 Peter 3:12; Psalm 34:15), and, again, “the prayer of the upright pleases Him” (Proverbs 15:8). Prayer saved the righteous Daniel from the lion’s den (Daniel 6:11), and in the wilderness, God’s chosen people benefitted from Moses’ right standing with God (Exodus 16–17). The barren Hannah’s steadfast and humble prayers resulted in the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20), and the apostle Paul’s prayers even caused the earth to shake (Acts 16:25-26). Clearly, the passionate prayers of God’s righteous children can accomplish much (Numbers 11:2).

We need to make sure that our prayers are in line with God’s will. “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14-15). Praying in accordance with God’s will is essentially praying in accord with what He would want, and we can see God’s revealed will throughout Scripture. And if we do not know what to pray for, Paul reminds us that as God’s children we can rely on the Holy Spirit to intercede for us, as “the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:27). And since the Spirit of God knows the mind of God, the Spirit’s prayer is always in keeping with the will of the Father.

Additionally, prayer is something believers should do “continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In Luke 18:1, for example, we are told to pray with persistence and “not give up.” Also, when we present our requests to God, we are to pray with faith (James 1:5; Mark 11:22-24), with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6), with a spirit of forgiveness toward others (Mark 11:25), in Christ’s name (John 14:13-14), and as stated above, with a heart that is right with God (James 5:16). It’s the strength of our faith, not the length of our prayers that pleases Him to whom we pray, so we don’t need to impress God with our eloquence or intelligence. After all, God knows what our needs are even before we ask (Matthew 6:8).

Also, we should make sure we have no unconfessed sin in our hearts when we pray, as this would certainly be an impediment to effective prayer. “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2; cf. Psalm 66:18). Fortunately, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Another barrier to effective communication with God is praying with selfish desires and wrong motives. “When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3). Rejecting God’s call or ignoring His advice (Proverbs 1:24-28), worshiping idols (Jeremiah 11:11-14), or turning a deaf ear to the cry of the poor (Proverbs 21:13) serve as additional obstacles to an effective prayer life.

Effective prayer is a way to strengthen our relationship with our Father in heaven. When we study and obey His Word and seek to please Him, the same God who made the sun stand still upon the prayer of Joshua (Joshua 10:12-13) invites us to come boldly before the throne of grace and pray with confidence that He will extend His mercy and grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).