

The Gift of Prayer

Again, the weeks appear to fly by as we age. We are already into the second week of June, and it seems like Passover was yesterday. This week's lesson is generated by a couple of praise reports from this week.

This past Tuesday, I had lunch with a group of "old timers" from the Sheriff's Office. We call ourselves the "Three Digit Dinos" as we all have three digit I.D. numbers. If it is any clue as to how old we are, the current I.D. numbers within the Sheriff's Office have passed five thousand. Conversations are always spirited and reminisce of war stories from years past. Humorous stories of the practical jokes played back then would land us in jail today.

The age is showing on us as many are facing health issues and the years of public service have taken a toll. As we were leaving, one of my friends came up and asked me if I'd keep him in my prayers as he is facing the onset of Alzheimer's. He's younger than I am and it must be frightening to face what lies ahead. What an honor it is to have someone ask you to pray for them. Asking for prayer is a step of faith.

James 5:13-15- “Is anyone suffering hardship among you? Let him pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing praise. Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him after anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick one, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

I’m sure God was stirring in him as he was asking spiritual questions. He was reaching out. So many do when they are faced with life threatening trials.

Psalms 86:1-3- “Bow down Your ear, O LORD, answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am holy; O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I cry unto You all day long.”

Psalms 116:-1-2- “I love the LORD because He hears my voice and my prayers. Because He has bowed down His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.”

This is why ready answers are so vital in knowing God’s Word (**1 Peter 3:15**). It is a test for us and gives us an opportunity to glorify God in serving someone seeking God’s truth.

When I got home, I had the You Tube praise music on for Rusty and Bear. It seemed like a good quiet time to pray for my friend. I'm not sure how much time passed, but I know it was a while. They occasionally break during the music for a commercial. The first (and only commercial) was for Biblical cures for Alzheimer's! I am beyond saying it was a "coincidence" just because *of all of the commercials on Planet Earth*, the one dealing with Biblical remedies for what was being prayed for popped up. Coincidence? You decide.

The second praise report deals with Rusty. He has had a lump on his chest for several weeks (not cancer) and Thursday morning he was passing blood and pacing, clearly not himself and in some kind of distress. I pray for "my boys" all the time as I know God heals pets as He heals us. I made an emergency vet appointment for Thursday afternoon. The devil sure tries to beat you up during the interim. But if we remain in constant prayer, his efforts are futile.

Psalm 84:8- "O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah."

Needless to say, it is a relief when the vet comes back in the room (after x-rays, blood work, and a host of other checks) and says Rusty has a bladder infection and

antibiotics will clear it up. In addition, the lump has shrunk! Sometimes I wish Rusty and Bear had Social Security numbers so we could claim them as dependents. But thanks be to God Who heard every prayer sent skyward on Rusty's behalf. God usually has a way of signing answered prayers and He did on the way home with a huge rainbow over our house. Prayer is one of the many gifts from God and how great it is to see God's Hand move in such ways.

James 1:17- "Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning."

Our communication with God should never be something that is considered a *routine*. It is a conversation with our Creator, a child to their Father. It is foundational to building our relationship with God. We talk and interact with our family and friends to strengthen relationships, but do we do the same thing in our prayer life? Do we talk to and with God or do we talk at God, giving Him a laundry list of wants and desires, omitting thanks and praise?

1 Corinthians 2:12-14- "Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by

God, Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in *words* taught by *the* Holy Spirit *in order to* communicate spiritual things by spiritual *means*. But *the* natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand *them* because they are spiritually discerned.”

Psalm 55:1- “Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not Yourself from my supplication.”

We all want our prayers to be heard but how do we know for sure if we are praying the right thing or in the right way? An interesting part of the Psalm above is *supplication*. A Wikipedia angle on the word supplication is to “*ask in earnest or humbly*.” One definition went as far as to say “*begging*.” I’m sure there have been occasions in everyone’s life where begging was not out of the question when it came to prayer.

Psalm 143:1- “Hear my prayer O LORD; give ear unto my *supplications*; in Your faithfulness and in Your righteousness answer me.”

James 5:16- “Confess *your* faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. *The supplication of a righteous man prevails much, being effective.*”

Ephesians 6:17-18- “And put on the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; Praying at all times with all prayer and supplication in *the* Spirit, and in this very thing being watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;”

Are your prayers repetitious mumblings or a sincere conversation with your Heavenly Father who loves hearing from you?

2 Timothy 2:15-16- “Diligently *study* to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of the truth. But avoid profane and vain babblings because they will *only* give rise to more ungodliness,”

We should remember to approach God in the right standing. Asking the right things in the right manner and we know that ***if*** it is in His Will *it will happen*.

Psalm 34:15- “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.”

Nehemiah 1:5- “And I said, “I pray You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God Who keeps covenant and mercy for those who love Him and keep His commandments;”

We tend to limit God by adding a caveat “according to Your Will” in our prayers. But we must remember our responsibilities regarding the asking in the right way and manner and Who we are asking.

2 Timothy 1:12- “For which cause I am also suffering these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed. **For I know Whom I have believed** and am persuaded that He has the power to keep what I have committed *to Him* for that day.”

When we pray, do we ask in faith believing God hears us?

1 Peter 3:12- “Because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their **supplications**. But *the face of the* Lord is against those who practice evil.”

1 John 5:14-15- “And this is the confidence that we have toward Him: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we may ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.”

When you pray, do you wait with hope and expectation? Do you have any doubts?
(remember doubt is a faith killer)

Psalm 71:14- “But I will hope without ceasing, and I will praise You more and more.”

Psalm 130:5- “I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.”

We need to be persistent in our prayers. God is not like a drive through where we “get it our way,” although most churches worship Him that way. We have discussed waiting numerous times and the fast food mentality we live in weakens our faith and trust in God. It is in our perseverance in prayer we learn patience and our faith grows. God hears us and He will respond in His perfect time and in His

perfect way. We may not always get what we ask for but it will be in our best interests.

Isaiah 40:31- “But those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up *with* wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

When we pray and talk to God, we are reminded of how much our Creator is involved with our lives and His creation.

Jeremiah 29:11- “For I know the purposes which I am proposing for you,” says the LORD; ‘purposes of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

Romans 1:20- “For the invisible things of Him are perceived from *the* creation of *the* world, being understood by the things that were made—both His eternal power and Godhead—so that they are without excuse;”

Ephesians 2:10- “For we are His workmanship, being created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them.”

1 Peter 4:10- “*Let each one, according as he has received a gift from God, be using it to serve the others as good stewards of the grace of God which manifests itself in various ways.*”

No matter how big or how small, God *wants* to hear from us. The more we seek Him through prayer, the more He will reveal Himself to us. Prayer is much more than mumbling words or reciting verses from a string of beads.

A solid and steady prayer life will open our hearts and minds to His peace and our growth. In drawing closer to God through prayer, we receive His peace that is beyond all understanding.

Philippians 4:6-7- “Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God in everything; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

God’s Word promises us when we talk with God we find rest for our souls.

Matthew 11:28-30- “Come to Me, all you who labor and are *overly* burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light.”

When we pray and talk to God it is not a one time event. We must be enduring in our asking. I know God is gracious and merciful in hearing as praying for my friend and Rusty this week were continuous. Knock and keep on knocking (**Matthew 7:7**).

1 Thessalonians 5:17- “Pray unceasingly.”

When we pray it isn't always about our talking. We must also make sure we are listening. God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. We should listen twice as much as we speak. God's guidance that we seek will not always come with an earthquake, trumpet, or a shout. More often it will be when we are quiet and waiting.

1 Kings 19:11-12- “And He said, “Go forth and stand upon the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore

the mountains, and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind. And after the wind was an earthquake, *but* the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake was a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire. And after the fire *was* a still, small voice.”

Psalm 46:10- “Be still and know that I am God! I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”

Our prayers are more powerful when we are united with our fellow believers. When we pray together we share an increased connection to our faith. It is encouraging to us to trust in God even more. It strengthens the bonds of God’s Family. Our prayer life is a vital part of our spiritual growth and building our relationship with God. Jesus Christ died for our sins, and we now have an Intercessor to the throne of God. Never be afraid to ask for prayer.

Romans 8:34- “Who *is* the one that condemns? *It is* Christ Who died, but rather, Who is raised again, Who is even *now* at *the* right hand of God, *and* Who is also making intercession for us.”

Hebrews 9:24- “For Christ has not entered into the holy places made by *human* hands, *which are mere* copies of the true; rather, *He has entered* into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;”

Hebrews 4:16- “Therefore, we should come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

We need to use and develop that which was given to us. We cannot neglect such gifts that came at such a high price.

1 Corinthians 6:20- “For you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

1 Timothy 4:14- “Do not neglect the *spiritual* gift *that is* in you, which was given to you by prophecy with *the* laying on of the hands of the elderhood.”

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to God’s children by and through His Holy Spirit for the purpose of serving God and the Body of Christ. God has given us so many wonderful gifts, life, His only Son, His Holy Spirit, His love, grace, and mercy. We can fill several pages with the gifts God has given us. By our prayers

we can learn and grow towards fulfilling God's creation purpose for each of us. We can better serve the brethren and those in need by lifting them up in prayer.

Acts 6:4- “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.”

May we all embrace the gift of prayer as more than just words but a part of our service to God and each other. Thank you God for answered prayers! Amen.