

FIRST THINGS



By Jennifer Lieberum
Christian Centre Abbotsford

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Key verses: 1 Timothy 2:1-10

Introduction

Today we are covering one of my favourite topics – prayer! When I mentioned to a young man this week that I was teaching on prayer he looked at me puzzled – as if to say teaching on **prayer? Don't you just pray? One would think so, right? And while this is true**, there is a lot we can learn about prayer in the Bible.

Your prayer life, or lack thereof is a good litmus test of how you're doing spiritually. Jesus prayed – a lot! And He taught us about prayer. He said things like “pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

Paul in the Bible also prayed a lot. **He's always talking about his prayers. In fact in his second letter to Timothy, he told him**

- “I remember you in my prayers night and day” (2 Tim 1:3).
- Gal 4:19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,
- Eph 1:16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers
- Philippians 1:3-4 “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy...”
- Colossians 1:3 “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you...”
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers...” (3:9-10) as we pray most earnestly night and day
- Romans 15:5 'Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, '
- 2 Corinthians 13:7 “But we pray to God that you may not do wrong...”

He prayed and God gave him insight into what was happening in those churches so he could pray effectively. He was always praying for everything and everyone!

Prayer is meant to be earnest, passionate and heartfelt.

James 5:16 AMPC

¹⁶ Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart].

The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have: and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell on the earth for three years and six months.

¹⁸ And [then] he prayed again and the heavens supplied rain and the land produced its crops [as usual].

How is your prayer life?

If not so good, here is a scripture for you:

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you and give you light.” Ephesians 5:14 AMPC

There is HOPE in JESUS, who is the mediator between God and man, who gave Himself in exchange for us, to set us free. [This is the gospel]

This life is all about JESUS.

And He wants a relationship with YOU.

Keep that in mind as we get into our message for today.

Background

The veteran apostle, Paul, left his spiritual son Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus, to set some things in order. In his first letter, he is giving him some important guidelines for what is needed for a healthy church.

Timothy had a very important work to do in the church. False teachers had arisen teaching different doctrines (not the true gospel message). They got distracted from their faith in Jesus and got caught up in pointless discussions and controversies (*myths and endless genealogies, which promoted speculations*).

He reminded Timothy that the gospel message is about love, which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. But some had turned aside from the simplicity of the gospel and, having rejected faith and a good conscience, had shipwrecked their faith.

Paul gives him a clear instruction as to what to do FIRST!

Scripture

1 Timothy 2:1-10 The Message

¹⁻³ The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live.

*⁴⁻⁷ He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth **we've learned: that there's one God and only one, and one Priest**-Mediator between God and us—Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free. Eventually the news is going to get out. This and this only has been my appointed work: getting this news to those who have never heard of God, and explaining how it works by simple faith and plain truth.*

⁸⁻¹⁰ Since prayer is at the bottom of all this, what I want mostly is for men to pray—not shaking angry fists at enemies but raising holy hands to God. And I want women to get in there with the men in humility before God, not primping before a mirror or chasing the latest fashions but doing something beautiful for God and becoming beautiful doing it.

Prayer

First: *"The first thing I want you to do is pray", "First of all"*

NKJV - I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made

ESV - First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made

- First (in time, place, order, or importance)
- **(i.o.w.)** This is most important, do this first

For who? *"for everyone you know... especially for rulers and their governments"*

NKJV - for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

→ All people

- saved + unsaved (so they can hear and know the truth)
- especially for governments + rulers,
so we can live a peaceful life and share the gospel with others

How?

"Pray every way you know how",

→ Every way you know how

- supplications (petitions, requests)
- prayers (worship)
- intercessions (on behalf of others) *highest form of love*
- thanksgiving

(The Bible mentions other forms of prayer too, e.g. the prayer of faith, prayer of agreement, praying in tongues.)

Some Prayer Truths

1. Authority

Jesus has given us the right to use His name – delegated authority

John 16:23-24 NKJV

²³**And in that day you will ask Me nothing.** Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. ²⁴Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Luke 10:19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

→ When we use the name of Jesus it is as if Jesus is standing here saying it. All of heaven backs His name and His Word.

E.g.

- Small traffic cop and huge truck coming down the road. Can she physically stop the truck? Her badge and uniform carry weight. She can write a ticket and the whole government and force of law backs her.
- Power of attorney – transact on a **person's behalf, as if it's them**

We just point to Jesus – He went to the cross, died, rose, ascended and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High. All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him, and He gave it to us (in His name).

2. The Power of the Word

- The word of God does not return void (Isaiah 55:11)
- God watches over His word to perform it

Isaiah 55:10-11 AMPC

¹⁰For as the rain and snow come down from the heavens, and return not there again, but water the earth and make it bring forth and sprout, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

¹¹So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

- Words spoken carry creative power, for good or bad

Proverbs 18:21 ESV *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.*

3. Praying **God's will**

When we pray the Will of God, our prayers will be answered.

The timing is in God's hands.

Matthew 6:9-10 NKJV

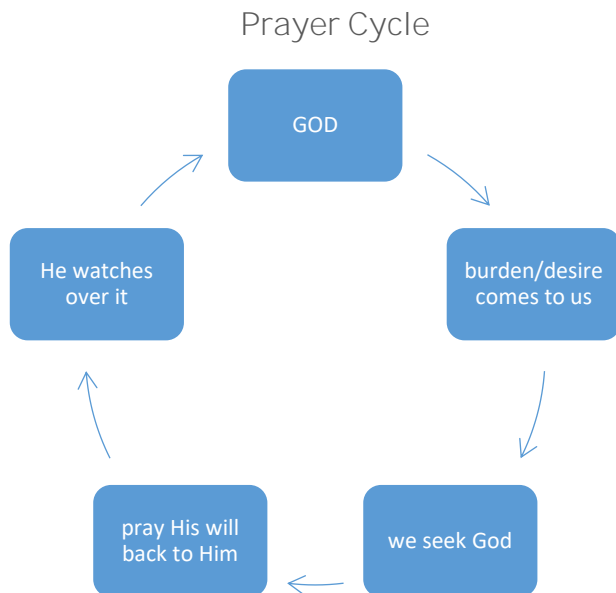
⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- **Jesus showed us to pray for God's will (as it is in heaven) to be done on the earth. This is how His kingdom will come.**

1 John 5:14-15 NKJV

¹⁴Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.



How do we know God's will?

- Generally pray the word, e.g. salvation, Christian maturity, Holy Spirit
 - o Spirit-inspired prayers in the Bible: Eph 1, Eph 3, Col 1:9-, Hebr 13
- Specifically, seek and hear Him as to how to pray for a particular issue or person. Holy Spirit will reveal it to you.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 KJV

¹²Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

- o Spiritual gifts – prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom
- o Dreams & visions
- o Specific Scriptures
- o Other ways God speaks/reveals things to you

Your words and prayers are like arrows; like heat-seeking missiles. Keep them coming until they find their target and you **see results. Trust the process. Remind yourself of God's word and promises.** Mark 11, John 15

[This is different to the vain repetitions Jesus said that the hypocrites do. This is using the creative power of the Word of God to pray what is not, into being, **in accordance with God's will.**]

Prayer starts with God.

We're going to worship Him, thinking about Who He is, how big He is; then we're going to pray!

While you're worshipping, open your heart to hear what He's saying to you. He may give you a word for a situation you're facing or for someone else, or show you a direction you should pray.

We will focus on all people – specific needs, the lost and the government.