

Alderwood Community Church
June 20, 2010

Talking To God About Those You Care About

Talking With God – Part 6

Intro: Prayer- an address to God, talking with God, a general term for prayer
 Supplication- a humble entreaty, to ask humbly, a term for specific requests
 Petition- an earnest, and specific request
 Intercession- to intervene between two parties, to pray to God on behalf of someone else

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:18

To pray in the Spirit is to pray consistent with His nature and will. To pray in the Spirit is to pray in concert with the Spirit. To pray according to God’s will. It is to line up our minds and desires with His mind and desires, which are consistent with the will of the Father and the Son.

To pray in the Spirit is to pray as prompted and guided by the Spirit.

To pray in the Spirit is to pray with his help and in harmony with his will as revealed in the Word he inspired.

1. Grappling With The Mystery And Paradox of Prayer.

A. Does prayer really make any difference? Yes

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” James 5:16-18

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” John 15:7

What is prayer for? Why does a sovereign God answer our prayers?

(1) It is for God’s glory.

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the father.”
John 14:13

(2) It is to change our perspective on our circumstances, and change our relationship with God.

(3) It is to change our circumstances or other peoples.

B. Does prayer change God's mind? No

“He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.” 1 Samuel 15:29

This verse clearly states God's truthfulness and unchanging character. God's essence and character and his resolute determination to punish sin and reward virtue are unchanging. But this does not mean that all his promises and warnings are unconditional. Many of them come with conditions. So whenever God does not fulfill a promise or execute a threat that he has made, the explanation is obvious: in all of these cases, the change has not come in God, but in the individual or nation. When someone obeys or repents it brings blessings, when someone sins it brings punishment. (See Jeremiah 18:7-10)

Of course there are some of God's promises that are unconditional for they rest solely on his mercy and grace.

God is a living person who can and does react to others. So when the bible says that God repented or changed his mind, it refers to God changing his actions toward an individual or nation based on their behavior toward God. Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, an evidence of indecisiveness. It is rather a change in his method of responding to another person based on some change in the other individual.

“But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. ‘O Lord,’ he said, ‘why should you anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand’? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger, relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them and it will be their inheritance forever.’” Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.” Exodus 32:11-14

So, when it comes to prayer, it seems that God invites his children to pray and God does choose to take a certain course of action based on that prayer.

C. Is prayer more effective if more people are praying? It seems it certainly is effective.

“The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them...So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Ex. 2:23, 3:8

“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him...Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’ he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.” From: Acts 12:1-19

“For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.” Philippians 1:19

D. Yet, God is Sovereign and has the right to act independently

“The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.” Psalm 135:6

“The Lord Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.’” Isaiah 14:24

“At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored,. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’” Daniel 4:34-35

“For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together...so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” Colossians 1:16-18

When we find paradoxes in Scripture don’t come up with something in the middle and ruin both truths.

- (1) Who wrote the book of Matthew? Matthew or the Holy Spirit?
- (2) Who lives your Christian life? You or Christ? (Gal. 2:20)
- (3) Was Jesus God or man? Yes 100% God, 100% Man
- (4) Did you choose to believe in Jesus Christ or did Jesus Christ choose you?
- (5) Does prayer move God to Action? Is God Sovereign?

Believe both truths and learn to live with the tension!

2. Let Scripture Guide All Of Your Talks With God!

- A. Where did I get this idea about prayer or about God?
- B. What does the Word of God say about this?

3. Guidelines For Talking To God About Others.

A. Getting out of our prayer ruts.

- (1) Generalizations- *“Bless all the missionaries”*
- (2) Mindless praying- Recited, routine, bland, emotionless
- (3) Almost exclusive focus on health and wealth.

B. Praying for God’s will. *“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* Matthew 6:10

(1) Trials

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If anyone lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him,” James 1:2-5

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” 1 Peter 1:6-7

(2) Suffering

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ...So then those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.” 1 Peter 4:12, 13, 19

“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh [physical ailment], a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

“At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” Job 1:21-22

C. Praying for others.

(1) Government Leaders

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:1-4

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” Romans 13:1

(2) Spiritual Leaders

“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 6:18-19

(3) Family and Friends

“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perspective.” 2 Thess. 3:5

“May [God] give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Ephesians 1:15-20

“May [God] strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” Eph. 3:14-20

“That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.” Philippians 1:9-11

“Asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding..in order that you may life a life worthy of the Lord.” Colossians 1:9-12

Suggestions on how to pray for others who are:

1. Sick and/or suffering. 2 Cor. 12:7-10 Grace and Strength
2. Unemployed or having serious financial struggles. Matt. 6 Trust, Contentment, Good Stewardship.
3. Struggling in their marriage. Humility, forgiveness, Phil. 2:3-5 Attitude of Christ
4. Wayward children. Remove bad influences, bring godly people into their lives, come to their senses; Eph. 1:15 that God would give them the wisdom and revelation “to know him better.”
5. Self-destructive behaviors. That they would know the love of Christ and find security and trust in God, and experience the power of Christ. Eph.3:14-20
6. Terminally ill. Be ready to embrace eternity, 2 Thess. 3:5, “Direct their heart to God’s love and to Christ’s perspective.”

Let’s practice “praying for one another”