

Pray and Don't Give Up

By Cecil Culbreth

Text: Luke 18:1-8

Big Idea: When things are not going well, pray and don't give up.

Intro: An 8 year old boy was writing in response to a question about how to explain God:

"One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make, that way, He doesn't have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this, since He hears everything, not only prayers. There must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off."

Someone so powerfully stated that "Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence in accomplishing His re-creative work in the lives of His people."

"The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, he mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray." (Samuel Chadwick)

"You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." (S.D. Gordon)

One person called prayer “banging and slamming on the gates of heaven until they open.”

In referring to Joshua fighting while Aaron and Hur held Moses’ arms up while he prayed, Oswald Sanders stated, “The seeming inactivity of prayer on the hill proved to be a greater test of spiritual stamina than fighting in the valley. It was Moses who tired, not Joshua.”

The lack of dependence on prayer is a clear indication of our lack of understanding of the nature and character of God.

Most churches spend more time welcoming visitors and greeting one another or making announcements than they do in praying.

There are Christians in churches today who seemed to be more interested in getting prayer back in schools than back in our churches. The reason we do not still have prayer in the public schools of our land is that prayer has ceased to be a priority in our churches. Perhaps if we would spend more time in prayer for our schools and students we might see more prayer in the schools.

In this story Jesus shows us that...

I. PRAYER IS THE RESULT OF A CHOICE v. 1

Luke let’s us know exactly why Jesus told this particular parable. He wants His followers to not lose heart. Don’t give up—pray.

2 Corinthians 4:1 (NKJV)

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.”

If you have been a Christian very long you have discovered that things do not always go as planned. What do you do in those situations? Luke says we should pray and not

lose heart. He indicates that we have a choice. I can either “lose heart” which basically means that I give up or I can pray. Prayer is the result of a choice. God does not force me to pray, He simply gives me a choice to pray. No man can keep you from praying. History is full of governments that issued laws and decrees to try to stop people from praying but they have been unsuccessful. To pray is my choice. If you find yourself losing heart, just about to give up, keep on praying.

We often use contrast in our language. Sometimes, we refer to baldheaded people as “Curly”. To illustrate the principle of prayer, Jesus uses a story of contrast. He talks about a widow lady coming to an unjust judge to illustrate prayer. Now understand, Jesus is NOT saying that God is like the unjust judge. It is simply a contrast to draw attention to the importance of prayer.

(Relate the parable)

The lady found out that persistence pays. Jesus is saying that perpetual prayer is the key to the activity of God. When life appears to be hopeless and useless, when there doesn't seem to be an answer or a way out, remember Jesus is still the way out. Jesus is saying prayer ALWAYS stirs the heart of God. Prayer ALWAYS moves God to act.

Isaiah 65:24 (NKJV)

"It shall come to pass

That before they call, I will answer;

And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 (NKJV)

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

The reason we lose heart and give up is because we are not praying. As long as we are praying there is always HOPE! Jesus is saying, “Pray and don't lose heart.” God is NOT like the unjust judge. He will respond.

The choice is yours—you can pray or you can lose heart for prayer. Loosing heart for prayer is the result of a choice.

I am asking you to make a choice to pray for the students and schools in our community on a regular basis. There may be times that you might think your prayers are not doing any good, but keep **Praying and don't give up.**

In this story Jesus shows that...

II. PRAYER IS AN EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE V. 8

Many have interpreted this parable to mean that if I keep “hounding” God like the woman hounded this judge, then I will get what I want. But notice, Jesus says that God is NOT like the unrighteous judge. V. 6-8

My concept of God will determine how I approach God in prayer. If I think God is mean and does not like to listen to the prayers of His children, I will not pray. If I think my praying troubles God, I will not pray much. If I believe that God delights to hear His children praying I will pray and not lose heart.

Psalms 103:13

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;” NIV

God is a compassionate Father who enjoys answering the prayers of His children.

Romans 8:31-32

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” NKJV

Persistent prayer is not a lack of faith it simply demonstrates the depth of my desire. This lady kept coming back to the judge because she had a problem and she felt that this judge was the only one that could solve her problem. I pray **persistently** because I have confidence in God.

I don't have to persuade God to do something; He is not like that judge. Prayer is the cry of a child asking for help and security in a confusing world. Sometimes we don't even know exactly what we need, but God does. When we pray God **will** answer. Jesus asks a question, "When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on earth?" He didn't ask will He find men praying, but will He find faith. What was the point Jesus was making? Jesus is saying that Prayer is faith expressed. True prayer is not begging a reluctant God. True prayer is believing. Prayer is thanking instead of complaining. Prayer is trusting instead of trying. Prayer is rejoicing, accepting and receiving.

Abraham bargained with God over the fate of Sodom. Jacob wrestled with God. Moses the meekest of men struggled with God over the fate of idolatrous Israel. When God wanted to destroy the people who had worshipped the golden calf and raise up a new people, Moses told God to destroy him instead of destroying Israel. Much of the Old Testament is a wrestling with God, a struggle to understand how such things could be. Prayer is an expression of my confidence in God.

Jesus taught that prayer is not just mere words. (Matt 6:7 "vain repetition") Prayer requires more of the heart than of the tongue. The eloquence of prayer consists in the fervency of desire and the simplicity of faith. The abundance of fine thoughts and the order and politeness of the expressions are things which compose a speech intended for other humans, not a humble and Christian prayer. Our trust and confidence ought to proceed from that which God is able to **do in us**, and not from that which we **can say to Him**. (from Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft)

What kind of prayer touches the heart of Jesus? A father who brought his son to Jesus that says, "I believe help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24 son was demon possessed)

A blind beggar who cries out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:46, 47, Jesus response was, What do you want me to do for you?) A woman who has spent all the money she had on the best of medical care but was still about to die who says, “If I can just touch Him” (Mark 5:25-28, Virtue went out of Jesus’ body) A hard core sinner who cries, “God, be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13, This man when home justified) A man of prominence within Jewish circles that falls at the feet of Jesus and says, “Come and lay your hands on her that she may be healed.” (Mark 5:22 His daughter was raised to life)

My Praying is an expression of my confidence in God.

My prayers for the students and schools in the community are a demonstration of my confidence in God. It is not because things are bad that I pray, it is because I believe God that I pray. In a few moments I am going to ask you to make a commitment to pray on a regular basis for the students in our community as an expression of your faith in God.

Pray and Don't give up.

In This Story Jesus shows that...

III. PRAYER IS THE OUTCOME OF A RELATIONSHIP v. 7

“avenge His own”

Prayer should be the natural outcome of my relationship to God. He is my Father. If I struggle with prayer it may be an indicator of a struggle in my relationship with God.

I have some friends that I can discuss a few things with. I have very few friends that I feel comfortable in discussing everything with them. The stronger my relationship with someone, the more likely I will share with them my deepest needs and problems. My strong relationship makes it easier for me to tell them my problems. The stronger my relationship with God, the more things I will bring to Him. A relationship cannot exist without communication.

Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but coming to an **understanding of His will.**

Prayer is an absolute necessity in the interchange of a child's heart with the Father. Prayer is never prayer until we recognize that we are coming to a patient and tender Father, one who understands and cares.

Prayer is simply the expression of human need to our Heavenly Father. It is the cry of a beloved child to a Father who is ready to pour out His love and compassion on us.

If I find myself not praying much it is a strong indicator that I have an inflated opinion of myself and my abilities to get the job done.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He said—pray after this manner "Our Father..." Can you image the shock of the Jews when Jesus prayed, "Our Father?" The faithful Jew even hesitated to speak the divine name. "Abba" which means daddy & "imma" which means mommy are the first words Jewish children learn to speak. Abba is so personal that no one dared use it in address to the great God of the universe. In all of Jewish literature there is not a single example of the use of "abba" as an address to god. Yet by the spirit of God we can cry out "abba father". (Romans 8:15, 16)

Prayer is the outcome of our relationship with the Father. Prayer that flows from our relationship to the Father is powerful.

Because we have a relationship with a loving, heavenly Father, I am going to ask you to commitment to pray to the Father on behalf of the students and schools in our community.

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Conclusion:

Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers. (Richard Baxter)

"Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth." (William Law)

It is prayer that helps us love lost people. (1 Thes 3:12)

It is prayer that gives me a passion for righteousness. Phil 1:11.

It is prayer that opens doors for the gospel. Col 4:3

It is prayer that brings in recruits. Matt 9:38

It is prayer that makes us bold, Eph 6:19

It is prayer that protects from the enemy; Ro 15:31, Matt 6:13

It is prayer that makes the Word of God run and be glorified. 2 Thes 3:1

Pray and Don't Give Up!!!