

# THE RHYTHM OF PRAYER

## Sermon Notes

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. – Colossians 4:2 (NIV)

### **This verse is straight-forward right?**

1. Devote yourselves
2. Stay awake
3. Be thankful

**SCRIPTURE READING:** James 5:17-18, 1 Kings 17:1-7, 1 Kings 18:41-47

### **4 Practical Take-aways**

1. **Find a place to pray** (Matthew 6:6)
2. **Pray God's promises** (1 Kings 17:14)
  - During trouble... Isaiah 40:29, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 53:10, Romans 8:28
  - In regards to wisdom... James 1:5
  - In the midst of temptation... James 4:7
  - In confession... 1 John 1:9
  - When struggling with provisions... Philippians 4:19
  - When facing death... Psalm 23:4
  - In regards to personal salvation... Romans 10:9-10
  - When praying for lost friends... 1 Timothy 2:4
  - When we need more of the Holy Spirit... Luke 11:9-13

### **3. Pray desperately**

"We don't need self-discipline to pray continuously; we just need to be poor in spirit. Poverty of spirit makes room for his Spirit. It creates a God-shaped hole in our hearts and offers us a new way to relate to others." - Paul E. Miller in A Praying Life

### **4. Pray persistently**

# INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

## **Exercise 1 - The Lord's Prayer**

Get in a place free of distractions and noise. Take a few moments to get comfortable in God's presence, and then pray through the Lord's Prayer.

### **"Our Father..."**

- Take a moment and think about the idea of God as your Father, with good intentions toward you. If you want, imagine God in your mind's eye. Picture his face. Make eye contact with him.

### **"In heaven..."**

- Take a moment to think about the idea that God is all around you. As you breathe in and out, remind yourself that you are in the presence of God.

### **"Hallowed by your name..."**

- Spend a few minutes just sitting with the Father in joyful, grateful, worship. You might want to sit in silence for a few moments. Or sing a song. Or rattle off a list of things you're grateful for. Or praise God with specific things you love about him.

### **"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."**

- Spend a few minutes asking for God's will to be done in specific ways in your town/church/community/life.
- Verbally give God a few things in your life you're wrestling with control over. A simple prayer of, "Your will be done in \_\_\_\_\_," is a great place to start.

### **"Give us each day our daily bread..."**

- Spend a few minutes praying for specific needs and wants in your life or that of your community.

### **"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors..."**

- Spend a few minutes asking God for forgiveness for specific areas in your life, and releasing others to forgiveness.

## **Exercise 2 - Simple Prayer**

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." -Matthew 6:7-8

Often in prayer, when we are trying to pray about what we think we are "supposed to pray" about, we find ourselves distracted by the everyday details of our lives--our jobs,

our families, plans for the week, emotions from the day. We often try to push these things out our minds and focus on the more “important” things.

Today, pray for those things that come to your mind, whether they seem “spiritual” or not; just tell God exactly what you are thinking about and feeling. Think of how God is described in Scripture--a father, a husband, a friend, a shepherd--in all of these relationships, God is pictured as caring about even our simplest needs.

Take a few moments and just sit and rest. As you do, notice what thoughts and worries keep coming to your mind. Bring those thoughts before God and ask how He wants to meet you in those details. Don't feel the need to over-spiritualize this prayer. Bring your thoughts to God as they come.

“Prayer simply dies from efforts to pray about ‘good things’ that honestly do not matter to us. The way to get to meaningful prayer for those good things is to start by praying for what we are truly interested in. The circles of our interests will inevitably grow in the largeness of God’s love...Many people have found prayer impossible because they thought they should only pray for wonderful but remote needs they actually had little or no interest in or even knowledge of.” - Dallas Willard

# MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

## **Pray**

As you begin, pray with your group. Pray that “the eyes of your heart would be enlightened” (Eph 1:18), so that you can see God for who He is and understand to whom you are praying. Pray that God would destroy any false ideas of Him that live in the hearts and minds of your group. Pray that members of your group would be able to view God in prayer as a loving Father who knows and cares about the needs of His children.

## **Encourage**

### **Encourage your group:**

Prayer is about communion with God. It is not about having the right words to say or knowing exactly what to pray for. It’s not about praying for every need you know of or spending a set amount of time in prayer. Just as we like to spend time with family and close friends without an agenda and sometimes even without conversation, prayer is simply about being in the presence of God.

We don’t have to pray perfectly. Romans 8:26 says that “We do not know what to pray for as we ought.” That is why “The Spirit helps us in our weakness...[He] himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” We don’t know how to pray (we will never master this), but the Holy Spirit does. As we spend time in His presence, He will lead us in prayer and pray for us when we are too weak to know how.

How we view God shapes how we pray. We all have our own ideas of what God is like when we pray. We can see God as a taskmaster, an employer, or a disappointed teacher. Occasionally we might see Him as some sort of cosmic Santa Clause or genie who grants wishes. All these images will affect how we pray. When Jesus taught the crowds to pray, He told them to address God as a father who cares about the daily needs of His children. Jesus elsewhere compares Himself to a mother bird who wants to protect her children under her wings. We see Him as a shepherd, a friend, a king, the bread of life, and living water; the list goes on and on. If we find that prayer is difficult or a drudgery, it might be helpful to ask to whom you think you are praying to? This isn’t always the answer, but it may help.

### **Discuss this week’s sermon and the following questions with your group:**

- How did the four practical take-aways of prayer encourage you?
- How did the four practical take-aways of prayer challenge you?
- What was doing the individual exercises like?
- Read and discuss

“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’” - Matthew 6:9-13

- How do you picture God when you pray? What thoughts or feelings or images come to mind?
- How does this view of God affect the way you pray?
- How does The Lord's Prayer differ from the way we pray?
- What do you think The Lord's Prayer teaches us about how Jesus wants us to pray?

### **Pray**

As you close, pray with your group. Encourage your group to take a few moments individually to imagine God in one of the ways He is described in Scripture (creator, healer, shepherd, friend, savior, etc.). Encourage members of your group to pray individually for a few moments with this description in mind. After a few moments, invite individuals to pray aloud if they want