

“Ask”

- Introduction - Continue our Series, Prayer Model: “P.R.A.Y.”
 - How to pray a simple guide for normal people -Pete Grieg
- Review
 - 2 Weeks ago - “P” - Pause”...review main points:
 - Last Week- “R” - Rejoice
 - Rejoice always, natural response to God’s blessing
 - Pray a psalm, count blessings, worship w/music, liturgy, uniqueness
- This Week - “Ask”

Tension:

- A friend of mine was taught in a UMC church that only thing that happens during prayer is that God uses that time to align our will with God’s will- believe that is true, but Scripture doesn’t support that that is all that happens in prayer
 - Now aligned with Oswald Chambers who said: “Prayer does not fit us for the greater works; prayer IS the greater work.”
 - I Believe now James 5:16b - New Living Translation: “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” That prayer matters; that through our prayers, we co-labor with Christ (who is already interceding for us at the right hand of the Father) to bring about new realities that glorify God
 - How exactly does it all work? I’m playing the ‘mystery’ card on this one?
 - Why does God choose to allow us to co-labor and co-create through prayer? No idea. Like Jesus dying on a cross - it didn’t have to happen that way; but God chose to have it happen that way. How and why does our praying matter? I don’t know, but that’s how God chose for it to work, so I’m gonna lean in through prayer and we invite you and encourage you to do the same
- In its simplest form Prayer means asking God for help
 - So important as Chris said earlier
 - Prayer meeting Thursday at 7pm at EUMC
 - Jim Cymbala in his book *Fresh Wind Fresh Fire*, Brooklyn Tabernacle and starting their own prayer Meeting
 - Visiting pastor from Australia on the Sunday he announced it, “ I heard what your pastor said. Here’s something to think about: You can tell how popular a church is by who comes on Sunday morning. You can tell how popular the pastor or evangelist is by who comes on Sunday night. But you can tell how popular Jesus is by who comes to the prayer meeting.”

Matthew 7:7-11

Petition= Yourself

- Jesus in the Lord’s prayer
 - Give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us
 - Petitions for food, safety, protection, and forgiveness
- Daily bread, means daily bread
 - Provision not excess
 - Basics not millionaires
- Asking is a rule of the kingdom- Charles Spurgeon
 - Even Jesus wasn’t exempt
- Why do we have to ask
 - God gives 3 reasons
 - Asking is relational in a way wishing is not
 - Free will, God doesn’t just ‘do’ his will

- Only comes where he is asked
- Asking is vulnerable
 - Realize that you are not in control
- Asking is intentional
 - Imagine having to ask for everything
- Ask, Seek, Knock
 - Greek= present active imperative tense, literally keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking
 - Commanding

Intercession= Praying for Others

- Often lean towards praying for our own needs; intercession is shifting the center of gravity away from our own needs to the needs of other; “Intercession is a way of loving others”
- Quote: “Intercessory prayer can be confusing at the best of times. Secretly, we wonder whether our little prayers can make any actual difference in the face of vast intractable problems, like a relative who is entirely resistant to the gospel, or the tragedy of a natural disaster, or a government that is oppressing its own citizens. Our whispered prayers can seem feeble, foolish, and futile against the sheer scale of life’s troubles - a butterfly confronting a cliff.” -Pete Greig, *How to Pray*
 - An honest description of how prayer can feel
 - “And yet the Bible teaches that our prayers are vastly powerful. That’s why, in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus doesn’t just instruct us to pray personally for daily bread but also for regime change: the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth.”
- Through Intercessory prayer, we have the ability to “Mind the Gap”...like the Church in Acts 12 who prayed earnestly for Peter while Peter was imprisoned for what could have been the last time
- Acts 12:1-5
 - The church was “Minding the Gap”
 - They were inhabiting the space between heaven and earth, Creator and creation, glory and dirt, crying out to God on Peter’s behalf; Peter was in a tough spot!
- Acts 12:6-15
 - Why was the Church so surprised when Peter showed up!
 - Didn’t go down as maybe they had anticipated? How often this happens!
 - Their ‘theology of prayer’ was still being informed
 - The more we pray, and see answers to prayers, the less we are surprised the next time it happens, and the greater our confidence grows in the knowledge that the ‘
“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

Acts 12:16-17 [remaining verses describes how things didn’t go well for the soldiers that were guarding Peter...]

Unanswered

- Whether it be prayers about ourselves or for others, one thing we struggle with as followers of Christ is when our prayers seem unanswered
- Unanswered prayer?
 - Great Theologian Garth Brooks, song “unanswered prayer”
 - I (Brent) don’t buy it
 - Traffic light
 - Yes, No, Wait
 - Jesus told several parables in which he extolled the virtue of perseverance in prayer

- “If our prayers were always answered (yes), then faith is just a logical thing to do. But when it doesn’t seem sensible, when our prayers aren’t working but we are still true that’s faithfulness.” -Pete Greig
 - No
 - Even Jesus was told “no”, remember in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed “Take this cup from me”
 - Wait
 - Sometimes that is a really long time
 - Days, weeks, months, years. . . .or until Jesus’ second coming
- 3 things that factor into prayers seeming unanswered
 - God’s world
 - Natural laws that are put into place
 - Gravity, etc.
 - Two people praying that their team will win on opposite sides of the stadium
 - God is not a helicopter parent
 - God’s war
 - Evil at work in the world
 - Satan trying to encroach on the KOG
 - Addiction and Jail ministry
 - God’s will
 - Back to Jesus in the Garden, God didn’t grant his wish because he loves youand me, and everyone in the world for all time
- Great piece of advice from Pete Greig regarding this subject
 - The question is not “why”
 - Why did you let this happen, Why me, Why
 - Rather “where”
 - Where are you in this situation
 - Rarely, if ever answers the why question
 - Reminded of Job in the Bible
 - Always answers the where question
 - Promises never to leave or forsake us
 - He is always with us and when we take time to ask where he shows us- Footprints in the sand
 - In the midst of pain and struggle we can always experience his presence