



WEEK 8

Pillar #3 - Prayer

Luke's Gospel includes for us a parable that emphasizes the power of persistent prayer. Jesus picks up everyday examples by comparing a lowly widow to a powerful judge. Despite her low social standing, the widow's unwavering persistence, rather than her social status, ultimately wins her case. Jesus then challenges his listeners: If even a small amount of this persistence were present in our prayers, wouldn't we achieve more? If prayer can truly do so much, and the Heavenly Judge is of such exemplary character and love, why aren't we asking him for more?

THE SCRIPTURE

LUKE 18:1-8

¹And he told them a parable¹² to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' " ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God¹³ give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

¹² **parable** – a shorter metaphorical story using everyday examples, parables were utilized by Jesus frequently to reveal and illustrate an aspect of the kingdom of God.

¹³ **And will not God** – This parable contrasts the lesser (the earthly judge) with the greater (the Lord). The argument is that if even an earthly judge who "neither feared God nor respected man," grants justice in the face of persistence, then it must be true that the righteous Judge will do so as well.

WE PRAY IN RECOGNITION OF OUR NEED AND DEPENDANCE UPON THE LORD, AND OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIS POWER TO ANSWER.

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 8

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Can you recall a time when you were engaged in a physical activity and faced the urge to quit, but you persevered? What made the situation so challenging?
2. If a new Christian asked you, "Why do you pray?", how would you respond?

DIVING DEEPER

3. It's rare to find the meaning of one of Jesus' parables explained so explicitly. According to Luke, what is the meaning of this parable?
4. While your Bible might have a summary title already provided (like "The Parable of the Persistent Widow"), how would you title this section of Scripture?
5. Paraphrase verse 5 in your own words. Find the phrase "she will not beat me down." This uses the negative form of a verb meaning "to wear down" or "exhaust" someone. How does this relate to our persistence in prayer? What would that look like in your relationship with God?
6. Are you ever tempted to treat God like the unjust judge in this parable? How are you tempted to see yourself in the hopeless state of the widow?
7. Consider 1 Samuel 12:23. In what way can we say that failing to persist in prayer is actually sinful and selfish?

8. Consider the final sentence of the passage: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Does it surprise that the conclusion of a parable concerning prayer ends with faith? Why do you think Jesus ends this way?

9. Take some time to read through and discuss this quote by the writer and pastor, John Piper:

*"Prayer and faith stand and fall together. If we lose heart and drift away from prayer, then the Son of man will not find faith in us when he comes. Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer. If you lose heart and lay down the shovel, the fire will go out, you will grow cold and hard."*¹⁴

As you examine your life, how does this motivate you to grow in prayer? Was this one of your reasons you gave to the question #2?

10. Read the following verses, and jot down some additional reasons given to be daily devoted to prayer:

Colossians 4:2

Ephesians 6:18-19

Luke 11:8

Philippians 4:6

2 Peter 3:8-9

1 Timothy 2:1-2

11. Choose 2 of the following prayers and read them aloud as a group: **Ephesians 1:17-19, 3:14-19 Colossians 1:9-12, Matthew 6:9-13, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**. What do you notice about these prayers? How does each passage guide us to pray with God's purposes at the forefront? What do these prayers reveal about God's character and the prayers he desires from his people?

¹⁴Piper, John. "Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart." Desiring God, 28 Dec. 2024, www.desiringgod.org/messages/always-pray-and-do-not-lose-heart.