

## Prayer: The Fuel For Missions, “For Fruit-Bearing”, John 15:16, 2/2/20

In preparation for this series on prayer, I could not have been more personally convicted and simultaneously motivated and encouraged. Convicted because as I have been studying prayer in the Bible, the Spirit brought to my attention just how small a space prayer occupies in my heart relative to how massive a space it occupies the heart of God.

I wonder if you know just how vital prayer is from God’s perspective as revealed in Scripture.

Well over 1000 times the Bible speaks of prayer.

We have 650 prayers recorded in the Bible and 450 recorded answers to prayer.

Prayer was vital in the life of the OT.

At least 20x I found record of God answering the faithful, repentant prayer of just one person to powerfully restore or rescue a group of people or an entire nation.

Before Match.com, God used the prayer of a servant to find a wife for Isaac- Gen. 24

We see a great example of prayer from the Psalmist, David for deliverance, endurance, safety, power and strength, forgiveness, victory, presence of God, blessing for the nations.

Prayer was vital in the life of Jesus. The Bible records Jesus praying 25 different times during his earthly ministry. Here is what is amazing about that, scholars say that we only have 52 days of Jesus’ life recorded in Scripture. Often spent stretches on the night alone in prayer.

Jesus prayed for the vulnerable children- Matt 19

For the deliverance from spiritual oppression- Mark 9

For unity, for love, for strength, for the will of the Father in the Garden.

Prayer was vital in the life of the early church.

They devoted themselves to prayer when they gathered. Acts 2

For boldness in the face of persecution- Acts 4

Prayer was vital in the life and teaching of the Apostle Paul, mentions prayer 41x

Constantly prayed for the churches.

To keep from stumbling and be restored- 2 Cor. 13

For God to open the eyes of heart to know Him- Eph 1, Phil 2, Col. 1

Pray for all people, nations, leaders - 1 Tim. 2

Over and over again prayers resulted in the powerful hand of God moving among his people.

No wonder Jesus tells us never cease praying and not give up- Luke 18

Prayer must be VITAL in the life of Brandywine. If we truly took in just how powerful and critical prayer is, all of us would readily confess that we do not pray enough... with enough faith, fervor, attention. These four weeks are a call to prayer and my hope is that we would increase the importance of our prayer individual lives and as a church. Now there are lots of kinds of prayers as we just saw a few examples in Scriptures, and we are to pray on every occasion, but one of the critical kinds of prayers that God calls us to pray are “missional prayers.” Prayers for the effective accomplishment of the mission of God- to make disciples of Jesus among all ethnicities. Matt. 28:18-20.

Prayers like Colossians 4:2-4

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Matthew 9:36-38

<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

And this leads us right into missions month. These are the kinds of prayer we need to be praying for all the ministries of our church and the ones we support. I love the way John Piper speaks of missional prayer in his book (recommended) *Let the Nations be Glad*. He likens missional prayer to having a wartime walkie talkie to call headquarters for every supply we need in the advancement of the mission. To send supplies to the frontlines where the spiritual battle is the hottest and fiercest.

And so, for the month of February we are going to focus on Missional Praying: 3 ways- 1) We are going to examine 4 missional prayers from Scripture each Sunday and apply them to the practice of our lives. 2) We are going to pray those prayers together as a church, right here in the service for specific frontlines of battle that we support as a church. 3) Daily Prayer Chain email, if you are not on our prayer chain- and you know if you are not if you aren't getting an email often from Carolyn Gale, write on the connection card "Prayer Chain".

The first missional prayer that we want examine is Jesus' call to prayer for fruit-bearing. Now this is probably one of the most misused, out of context passages in all of Scripture. The scripture I'm referring to is *John 15:16 Whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you*. By itself it may sound like Jesus is likening prayer like the magic lamp in Aladdin. God grants us anything we want if we just add "in Jesus name" to the end of it. "God, make that girl say yes to go to the prom with me...in Jesus Name." Is this what he means? If so, Jesus just told a massive lie because that girl didn't go to the prom with me when I prayed that when I was 17.

What does this mean, let's understand the context. Here in John 15 Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. He had trained them for 3 years and soon they would be sent out on mission to make disciples of all nations. And one critical way Jesus prepares them is by giving them the secret to not only living the Christian life, but being effective in accomplishing the mission. And he does this by giving them the analogy of the vine and branches. If you have been to wine country you see this up close. There is a vital relationship between the vine and branches- It is the vine that supplies the nutrients, water, the stability...all the life of the branches is dependent on the vital connection to the vine. Jesus says- I'm the vine, there is no spiritual life, no spiritual power, no spiritual sustenance outside of me. Snap off the branch and put it in the ground at home, doesn't matter how much sunshine or water you give it, it's going to wither and die...not going to bear fruit. Only if it is connected to the vine. And so it is with our spiritual lives. You can do all kinds of religious things, try really hard to be good, work your

fingers to the bone to help others, share your faith...but if it is done in our own strength, if it is done outside of a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, it will lack the spiritual vitality and power and life of God. And the goal of the vital connection is bearing fruit.

John 15:16

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

So if you are new to church and the Bible, and you hear people talking about fruit all the time...now you know that the fruit bearing Jesus has in mind is making disciples. It is the further advancement of the mission of God, the gospel into the world. The gospel that changes lives, that exposes the darkness, that breaks chains of bondage. The gospel that makes dead men and women alive. Now, how does the disciple of Jesus remain in the vine so that the fruit of gospel advancement can flourish? Read on- *so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

A primary way that we remain in the vine and bear fruit of effective disciple-making is prayer! We ask God for opportunities to share our faith or intercede for others, we ask for boldness and power, we ask him to remove the Teflon on our family members hearts so that when we share the hope of Jesus it doesn't bounce right off but goes in. We get on our wartime walkie-talkie and we pray, "God I can't do this on my own I need your power to not give into this temptation to live the comfortable Christian life, I need your courage to speak the truth when I am asked by my school friends why I'm a Christian and I believe those things." This kind of prayer is dependent prayer that acknowledges you are God, you have the power, not me. See, this kind of prayer is the opposite of the Aladdin's genie in the lamp that is all about me.

And the places we need to pray these fruit-bearing missional prayers is where the spiritual battle is fiercest. *Where are the frontlines where the battle is fiercest right now in our community?* One of the frontlines is the *battlefield of addiction*. Addiction to pornography, to alcohol and the party life....and one particular addiction that is destroying our communities and families, the epidemic of Opioid addiction. CDC: *On average 130 Americans die every day from opioid overdose. 6x higher now than in 1999.* Opioid addictions are blind to race, age, gender, socioeconomics, can start innocently from receiving a prescription painkiller from an injury, or a gateway drug from a friend who tells you this will help with your anxiety. *Addiction* affects not only the addict, but entire families who suffer along with the addict, often spending 10s of thousands of dollars trying to get them help, struggle with guilt, enablement, and a constant fear of receiving the phone call that is their worst nightmare. This hits locally- DE is one of the highest rates in the nation for opioid-related fatalities. I won't ask, but I would be willing to bet that if I asked how many of you have had a relationship whether family or friend of someone that has struggled with substance abuse and addiction, most hands would go up. Many trapped in addiction describe it like they are locked inside a tomb and someone threw away the key. They begin to accept it as an inevitable reality. Friends, if you think this is merely a chemical problem, or a health care problem, or an education problem you are fooling yourself. The roots of this problem are deeply spiritual. The enemy, like a snake has coiled himself around their hearts and minds. Now, maybe that describes you here today. And whether it is addiction to

opioids or alcohol or pornography or gambling... I want you to know that we love you and Jesus loves you and we want to walk with you. You are welcome here, you don't have to hide here. Maybe you feeling like you are in a tomb and someone threw away the key. If there is any voice in your head that says that you are trapped, helpless, always going to have to live with this the way it is and there is no freedom. You have to know that is not the voice of Jesus, that is a voice of the enemy whispering in your ear who comes to steal, kill and destroy. Because the voice of Jesus says come to me all who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest. He says I came to give life and life abundantly.

If God can slay the giant Goliath, if he can part the red sea, if he can make dead men walk, then you need to **know Jesus can free you** from the chains of addiction. There is good news- on the frontlines of this battle, there is fruit bearing...and God has called us as a church to get in the battle by partnering with Christ-centered ministries that are on the frontlines of this battle. 1<sup>st</sup> one is **Broken Beginnings**- Tim Santabarbara and Steve Anderson from Prison Outreach of DE. Meets Sundays 1pm in the Connection Café. 2<sup>nd</sup> is a new ministry partner, **[Next Presentation]** Delmarva Adult and Teen Challenge. I want to welcome Executive Director, Bob Carey.