

Because You Prayed

Selected Scriptures - NCBC, January 9, 2022

Main Point: **God uses your prayers to bring grace to you and glory to Himself (Psalm 50:15).**

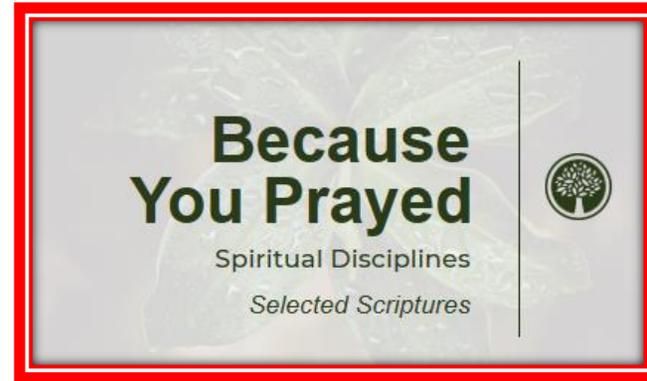
- God uses your prayers to bring you grace.
 - For your physical needs
 - For your spiritual needs
- God uses your prayers to bring Himself glory.
 - For His kingdom expansion
 - For His kingly exaltation

Application: **Recommit to praying expectantly for God's grace and glory!**

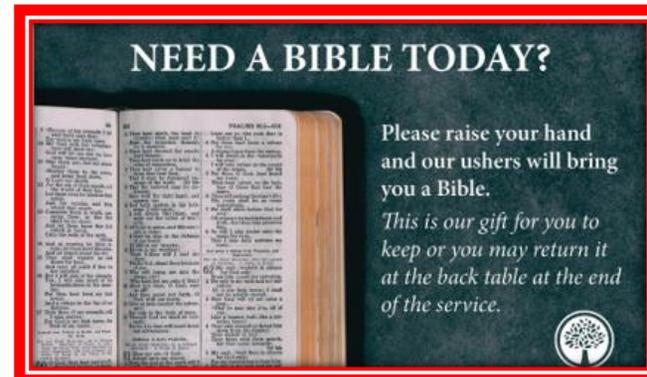
Opening Announcements:

- **This month we are collecting any unneeded Bibles or discipleship resources** that could be shared with Gospel workers in other countries for their greater edification and joy. Donations are welcomed in the church office, and will be taken to Love Packages after January 22nd.

<<My Jesus I Love Thee>>



There is no Savior like our Lord Jesus. I pray that your love for Jesus is growing and increasing in these last days. It is such a privilege to worship Him together with you.



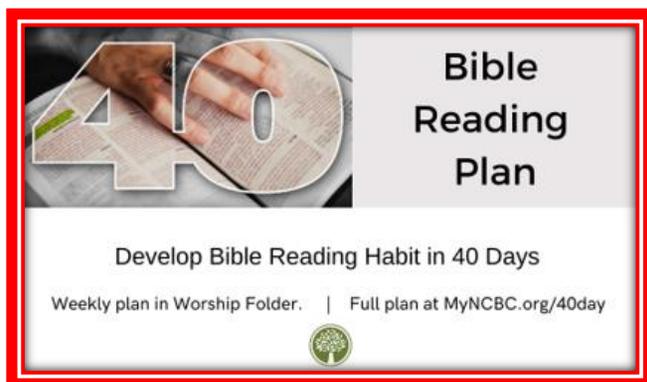
If you need a Bible, simply raise your hand and we will gladly give you one. Today we continue our New Year series on Spiritual Disciplines, or Habits of Grace,¹ and in a few moments we will be reading the Lord's prayer together from **Matthew chapter 6**, so please open your Bible to **Matthew 6** today.

¹ I highly recommend the book entitled "Habits of Grace" by David Mathis. It provides a compelling review and exhortation for various expressions of
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spiritual discipline in our daily lives. It is an excellent complement to NCBC's January 2022 preaching series.

Last Sunday our sermon was about listening to God's Word with the commitment to live God's Word. **James 1** called all of us to renew our commitment to reading and obeying God's Word as a regular habit of grace.

And for those us who weren't already in the habit of daily reading God's Word, last week we started a,

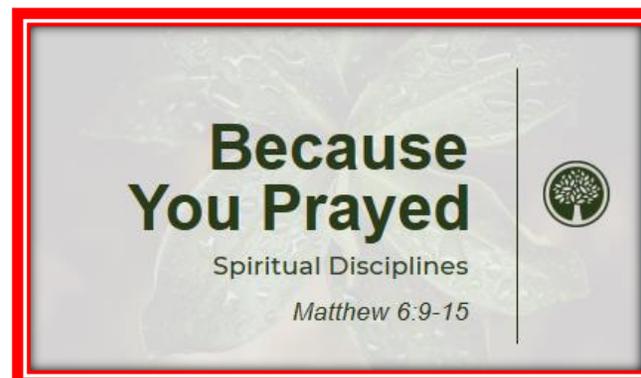


40 Day Bible Reading plan through many of the shorter New Testament epistles.

So now that we're 7 days into this, how's it going for you? Wasn't it so convicting and encouraging this week to read through **James** and **Philemon**? I desire so much for each of us to truly benefit from God's Word every day.

This week, we'll read **Galatians**. Just one chapter a day. I'm eager to see how God is wanting to change my life, and all of our lives together, as we seek to hear and obey **Galatians** this week.

Now today, we turn our attention to prayer. The glorious privilege that God's people have to talk with God and express our humble dependence of faith in Him.²



Prayer is the first and primary expression of faith. While many people claim to believe in God, only their practice of prayer reveals whether they truly live by faith or not. For when we truly believe in God, then we pray to God.

Prayerlessness is a contagious epidemic of unbelief that often greatly weakens us, church. Far too often we rely on our own abilities and our own efforts as we live and minister for Christ together.

But God clearly says that "without faith it is impossible to please God",³ no matter how much we may accomplish. To truly live for God's glory requires that we are continually growing stronger in faith.⁴ And the best indicator of how much faith we have is how and when we actually pray.

² 1 Peter 5:7

³ Hebrews 11:6, and

⁴ Romans 4:20

So the aim of today's message is simple: I want to persuade us to reprioritize prayer! Our God is eager to answer our prayers! And as we remind ourselves of the power and privilege of prayer, I'm asking God to renew our commitment to praying expectantly for more of God's grace and God's glory among us.

Fair warning: this is not a typical expository message where we take a deep dive into one particular passage. Instead, today we will only skim across the surface of several different Scriptures all to inspire us towards greater faith and prayerfulness.

To begin, I've chosen to read the Lord's prayer from **Matthew chapter 6**. So, if you are able, please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. I'm reading this familiar but life-changing prayer from **Matthew chapter 6, verses 9-15** in the English Standard Translation:

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This is the reading of God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's pray.

Come with me to **Isaiah chapter 37**, where I want to show you the power of our God in the year 701 BC.

In **Isaiah chapters 36 and 37** we find Judah's king, King Hezekiah, in great distress. The Assyrian King Sennacherib had Jerusalem surrounded with the most powerful military army in the world. God's people were in real trouble, and King Hezekiah knew it.

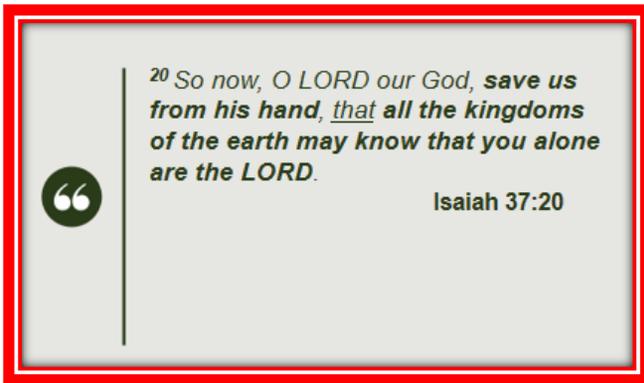
King Sennacherib and his Assyrian armies totally had them outnumbered and outgunned. Humanly speaking, there was no hope for escape from Assyria's violent conquest.

And so look at how King Hezekiah responded in **Isaiah chapter 37, verse 14**,

Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God.

Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed.

Now we see the heart of his prayer in **verse 20**:

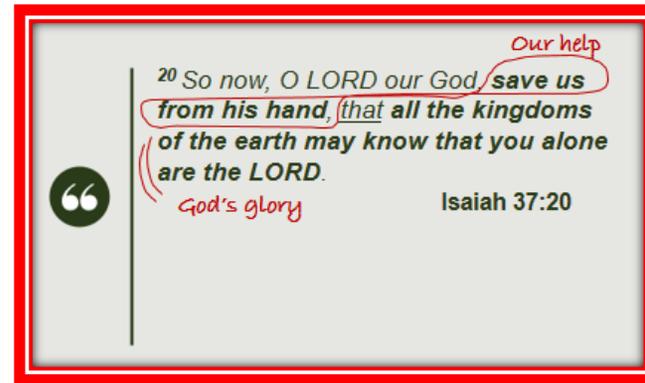


So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD.”

Push the pause button here. Because I want us to learn from this prayer.

When you are in trouble, and you can't see any possible way out, do you pray? What do you pray for? And what motivates your prayer?

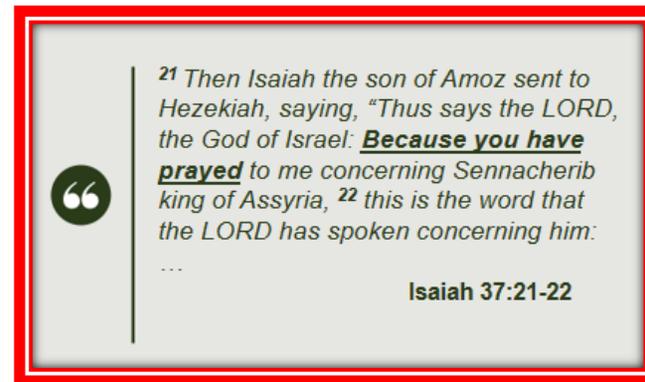
Notice that Hezekiah prayed for help... “God save us” so that... “all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the Lord.”



In other words, this prayer is a prime example of how our help is always connected to God's glory. Like we learned recently from **Psalm 67**, God always blesses His people for the sake of His praise from all peoples.

Therefore, the prayer of faith always connects our help to God's glory. We should pray earnestly for God's gracious deliverance in our lives...but never for our sake alone, but always for the sake of His glory among all peoples!

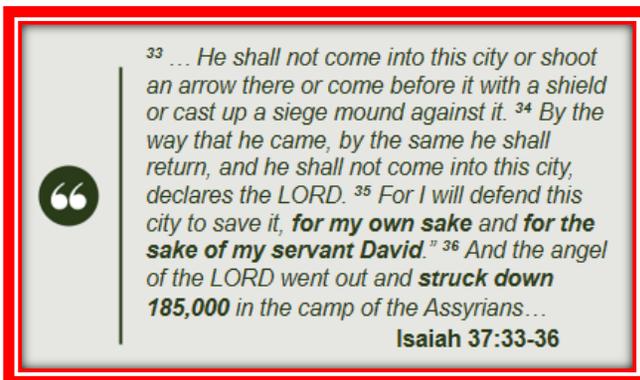
So what happened to Hezekiah? Well in **verse 21**,



The prophet Isaiah sent to Hezekiah, saying,

“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

Stop. Underline the words, “because you have prayed.” Notice the prophet directly links what God is about to do to Hezekiah’s prayer. And if you skip down to **verse 33** just for the sake of time, here’s the conclusion of what God says He is going to do *because Hezekiah prayed:*



Verse 33 says *Sennacherib shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”*

Notice again the two-fold purpose of God’s power – His own glory and the good of His people.

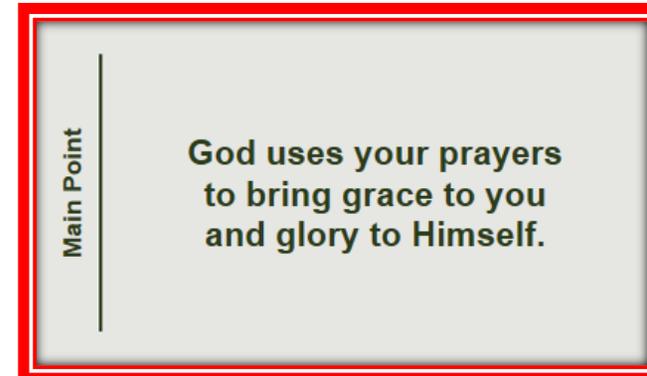
Verse 36, *And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.*

Let that sink in for a moment.

185,000 violent warriors of the strongest military power on the planet... immediately fell dead, by the power of our Living God... *all because one man prayed.*

Church, our God can do in 1 second what it would take us all a lifetime to do. We are all too busy to not pray!

Nothing is too hard for God.⁵ He doesn’t need us.⁶ And yet, God chooses to use the faith-filled prayers of His weak people as the instrument for doing His work on earth. Be amazed by this, church:



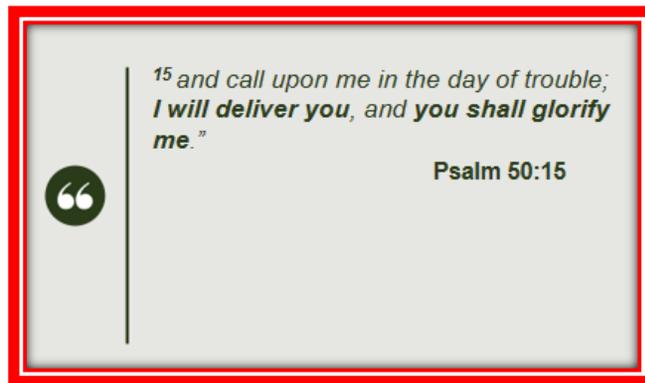
God uses your prayers to bring grace to you and glory to Himself. Your prayers are the means or the instrument that God chooses to employ in order to accomplish His sovereign will.

⁵ Jeremiah 32:17
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⁶ Psalm 50:9-13

Your praying is a means to your help, and your praying is a means to God's glory. Or to say it negatively: Prayerlessness cuts off the stream of God's grace towards you and falls short of the glory of God. Your prayers directly connect you to God's grace and His glory.

I love how God so clearly says this in **Psalm 50**:



*Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*⁷

This is why we pray! For whenever we call upon Him, God promises to 1) give us His grace, and 2) glorify Himself.

Surely there's nothing more desirable to a redeemed soul than God's grace and God's glory. In fact, this is why we love Jesus so much, for Jesus is the personification of God's grace and glory to us.⁸

⁷ Psalm 50:15

⁸ John 1:14, 16-17; c.f. 2 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Peter 1:17-21

⁹ Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:15-16

¹⁰ 1 Peter 3:18

¹¹ John 14:13, 15:16; 16:23-24; 1 John 5:14-15;

So let's not forget, that praying to God is only possible through faith in Jesus, right? That's why we commonly end our prayers with the phrase, "in Jesus' name," right? Not because those words are some sort of a magic formula or anything. But these words acknowledge we are calling out to God through the high priestly ministry of Jesus.⁹ We come to God "in Jesus' name" because we believe Jesus died to bring us to God.¹⁰ To pray "in Jesus' name," is to pray "according to His will,"¹¹ and in submission to His Kingly authority.¹²

So let's consciously put this entire message on the foundation of Jesus' shed blood and resurrection. If you don't confess your sins, and bow your will to the Lordship of Jesus, then praying will not connect you to God's grace.¹³ Stubborn unbelief and pride always blocks God's grace.¹⁴ Only when our prayers express our faith in God's good power are they linked to His grace and glory.

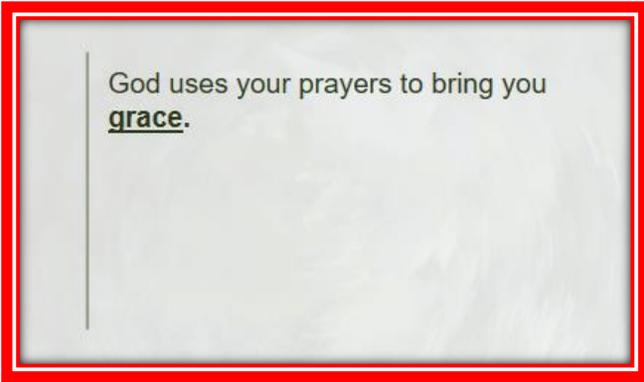
So have you believed on the Lord Jesus for the salvation of your sins? Have you been born again by God's Spirit through His Word? If so, God mercifully uses your prayers to bring grace to you, and glory to Himself.

Let's first consider how,

¹² Matthew 26:39, 42, 44

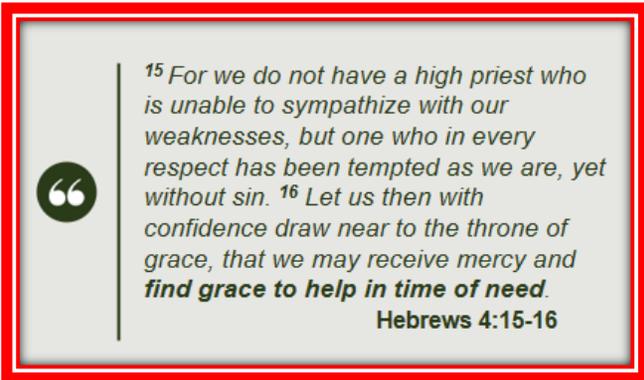
¹³ Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:29, 28:9; Isaiah 59:2; Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; John 9:31; James 1:7, 4:3; 1 Peter 3:12

¹⁴ James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5



God uses your prayers to bring you grace.

One of the clearest passages that teach this is **Hebrews chapter 4, verses 15-16,**



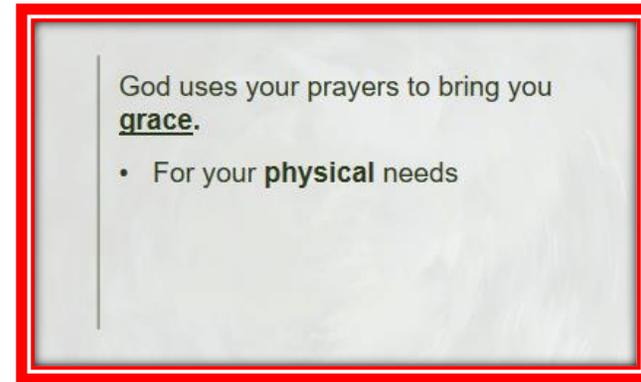
Which says, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.¹⁵

So what happens because you prayed, according to **Hebrews 4?**

Because you pray, you find *grace to help in time of need*.

Certainly all of us need God's unmerited favor, or grace, don't we? For we are sinners, and we can never earn any good or favorable standing with our God. So pray, loved ones! Prioritize purposefully drawing near to the throne of God's grace in prayer.

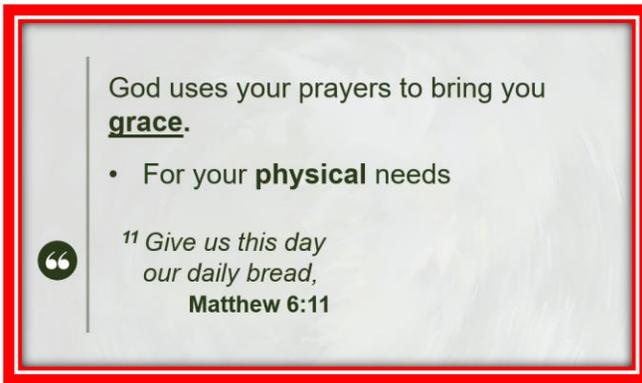
Throughout Scripture we can find all kinds of examples for believers praying for God's help with both their physical needs, and their spiritual needs.



So let's quickly consider how God teaches us to pray for His grace for our physical needs.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus taught them to pray,

¹⁵ Hebrews 4:15-16



*Give us this day our daily bread.*¹⁶

In other words, God intends for the Christian life to be a life of complete dependence upon God. Prayer acknowledges that all of my health and daily provision for life comes from God my Creator.

I could have the best medicines in the world, and the smartest doctors...but if God Himself does not provide what I need to live, I will perish. God uses prayer to bring us His grace for our daily, physical provision.

So do you pray for God's help when you are sick, or when you are hungry, or when you are in pain, or when you can't sleep, or when you're anxious about your crops or your business? Do you acknowledge that your very life depends on God's grace?¹⁷

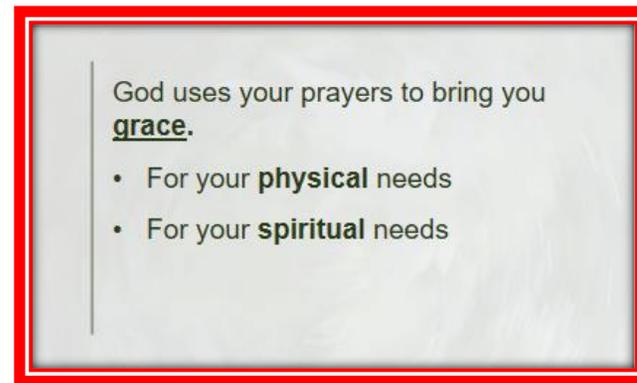
As the Coronavirus rages through our communities, are we fervently praying for God's protection and God's healing?

¹⁶ Matthew 6:11

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 33:4; Ecclesiastes 5:19; Acts 17:28; 1

Prayer is the means God employs to give His children grace for their physical needs. So whenever you need help physically, be sure to pray. For prayer is how we amputate our self-reliance and self-righteousness and acknowledge that we need God's grace even to just survive through every day.

But of course God uses our prayers to bring us grace,



For our spiritual needs as well.

Our greatest spiritual need is always spiritual intimacy with God Himself. After all, our sin separates us from God. But when we pray, God's grace appears bringing salvation and restoring our relationship with God Himself.¹⁸

In fact, Jesus taught His disciples in **Luke 11**,

Corinthians 8:6; James 5:13-15

¹⁸ Titus 3:3-8



That, If you who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"¹⁹

What grace our Heavenly Father gives to those who ask that we might know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God by His Spirit!²⁰

Does this encourage our hearts to pray? For because we pray, we can experience the fullness of God's Spirit!

Since God alone has the ability to save souls from sin,²¹ God invites us to pray for the salvation of our loved ones, that His electing grace might be realized in the salvation of our loved ones through our prayers.²²

God says if any of us lack wisdom, we can pray, and He will generously give spiritual wisdom to us.²³

And clearly we all need the grace of God's wisdom, right? Here in our church, we're seeking to hire an Associate

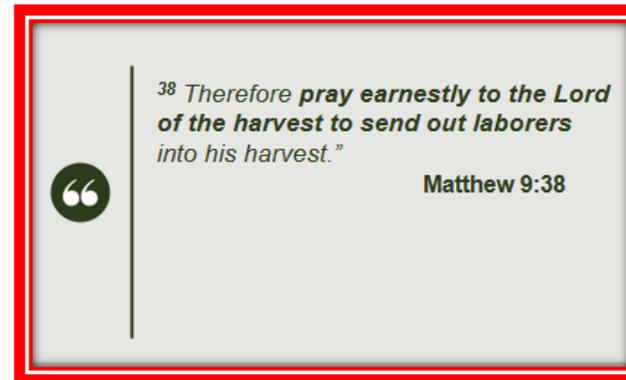
¹⁹ Luke 11:13

²⁰ Ephesians 3:19

²¹ John 6:63; 2 Timothy 2:25-26

²² Romans 10:1; c.f. 1 Samuel 12:19-23

Pastor of Care and Discipleship, an Outreach Director for Goodfield, and an administrative assistant to replace Teresa Krause. Certainly we need God's leading in these important hiring decisions, don't we?



So Matthew 9:38 urges us to, *pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*

God always intends for spiritual leaders to be identified by His local church through fervent prayer.²⁴ So loved ones, let's remember today that God uses our prayers to bring us His gracious provision for all our physical needs, and all our spiritual needs.

Our entire lives and ministries are dependent on God's powerful grace.²⁵ So consider, what grace might God grant us because you prayed? What power of God might be unleashed in our preaching, or our evangelism, or our children's ministries... because you prayed? What Gospel workers might God bring to strategically partner with us here at our church because you prayed? What

²³ James 1:5-6

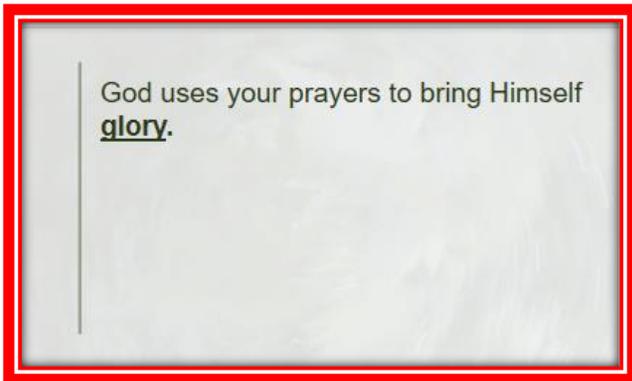
²⁴ I.e. Acts 13:2-3; 14:23

²⁵ John 15:7-8

healing from disabling diseases and long-term ailments might be received among us simply because you prayed?

God always uses your prayers to bring much-needed grace.

But more than that,



God also uses your prayers to bring Himself glory.

What greater activity could we ever participate in, church, than to cry out to God for the sake of His eternal glory?

After all, if we reflect back on how Jesus taught His disciples to pray in **Matthew chapter 6**,



Jesus began the prayer by asking our Heavenly Father to cause His own Name to be treasured and made holy.

Hallowed be Your Name!

God intends for His holiness to go public... because we prayed! Because we pray, God will someday establish His earthly kingdom on the earth.

After all, when we pray for God's kingdom to come, we are praying for God to fulfill all of His promises to establish His righteous rule upon this earth – reigning from David's throne in Jerusalem and bringing peace and perfect justice to all creation.

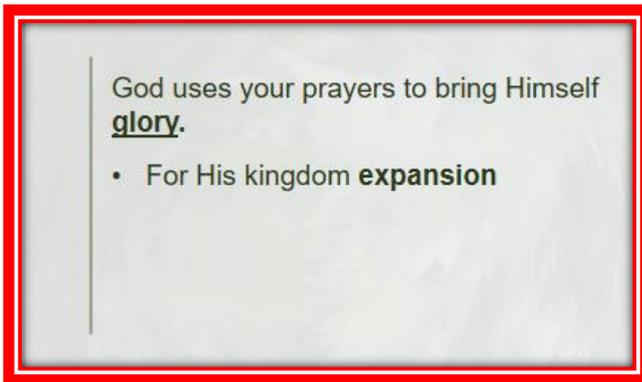
Therefore, God intends to use our prayers as the means to usher in His kingdom, and cause His righteousness to be done on earth, even as it is now done in heaven.

So think of this church! Because we pray, God will someday receive the kingdom! Because we pray, someday every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus' Name is Holy!²⁶

²⁶ Philippians 2:9-10

O what glorious privilege it is to pray!!

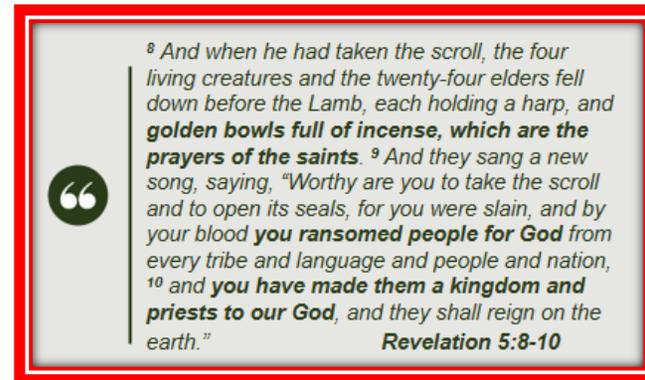
So church, whenever we pray for God's grace, let's make sure we are asking for the sake of,



His kingdom expansion.

Pray that the Gospel would be received by faith whenever and wherever it is faithfully proclaimed.²⁷ Pray for God's boldness for your own witnessing,²⁸ and for God to use your prayers to ransom many people for His own kingdom.

After all, the last book of the Bible, **Revelation**, gives us a thrilling picture of the heaven's worship at the end of the age.



In **Revelation 5, verse 8**, John describes the scene when Jesus takes the scroll of God's righteous judgments and prepares to usher in the end of time.

And notice how this worship scene is described in heaven:

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Pause. Did you catch that? The heavenly court around Jesus is eternally consumed with both praises and prayers. The harps represent praise, and their golden bowls are full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.²⁹

So when we pray, our prayers are stored up in a bowl before God...as if awaiting their final Amen and fulfillment from the Lamb of God as He expands His kingdom and

²⁷ 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Romans 15:30-31

²⁸ Ephesians 6:18-19; Acts 4:29

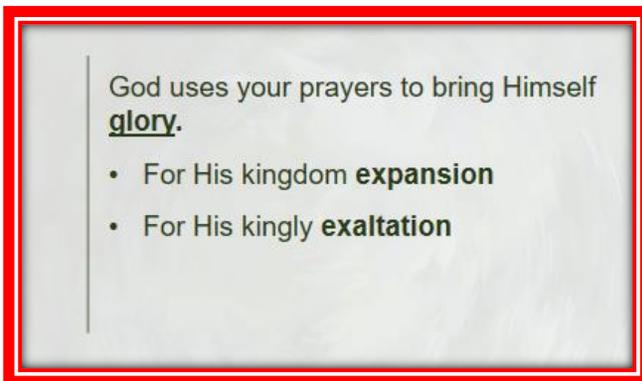
²⁹ C.f. Psalm 141:2

makes a people for Himself from every tribe, and language, and nation.

Just think of this church. Your prayers are not inconsequential or meaningless. Your prayers...the simple believing prayers of children, and singles, and moms and dads... the fervent prayers of believers who are mocked and despised by this world...are continually be stored up before God like a sweet-smelling fragrance... waiting for the day when Jesus will end time and give His eternal answer to all these prayers for God's greatest glory!!

So do you desire to be part of God's kingdom expansion on earth for His glory? Be sure to set aside focused time to fervently pray. Because believers prayed... the bowls of heaven are filled with a perfumed dependence that awaits final fulfillment on that last day!

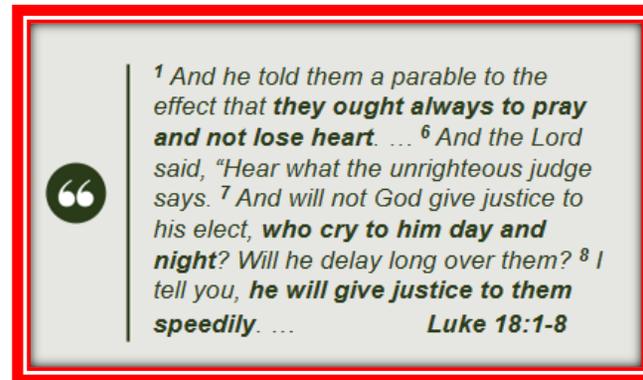
Make no mistake, loved ones. God uses your prayers to bring Himself glory,



All for His kingly exaltation. All for His eternal victory celebration. After all, we are currently living in a war, aren't we? Satan and his demonic army are hell-bent on

destroying all of God's people and our witness for God's life-giving truth.

And sometimes we grow weary, we lose heart, and we stop praying, don't we? But in **Luke 18**, Jesus taught a parable to His disciples,



That they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

Jesus then told a story about a widow who persistently badgered a wicked judge until he finally gave her justice just so she would stop bothering him. And then in **verse 6**, Jesus says,

“Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

In other words, we must not lose heart. We must not give in to prayerlessness, church. We must keep filling heaven's bowls with our cries for God's justice and eternal victory.

After all, **Revelation 8** again references our prayers:



¹ When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ...³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given **much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints** on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴ and **the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.**

Revelation 8:1-4

Because we prayed, according to **Revelation chapter 8**, the wicked will eventually all be judged, and righteousness will be restored to the earth.

Twice in this chapter, before the seventh seal of God's judgment is opened and poured out upon the earth, our prayers, along with the prayers of God's people from all time, are offered up before God to receive their final vindication.

So be encouraged church – God will indeed bring justice on our behalf. No wickedness will ever go unjudged or unpunished for eternity. God is far better than any wicked judge. And because we prayed, God's glory will be revealed in His perfect judgment of evil, and the glorious establishment of His eternal joy with His people.

So what do you pray for, when you pray? Do you know that your prayers are combined with all the prayers of God's people from all time to await their fulfillment in the ultimate exaltation of King Jesus?

O then pray loved ones, for God to judge the wicked. Pray for God to expand His kingdom through us. Pray for our joy and delight in Christ to be increased, as we patiently wait for His kingdom to come.

Main Point

God uses your prayers to bring grace to you and glory to Himself.

For God uses your prayers to bring grace to you and glory to Himself. And eye has not yet seen, nor has ear heard, what God has prepared to do because you prayed.³⁰

Application

Recommit to praying expectantly for God's grace and glory!

Again, my aim today is that you would each recommit to praying expectantly for God's grace and glory!

³⁰ Ephesians 3:20-21

We all have the privilege of personally participating in God's sovereign rule on this earth... simply because we pray. So how might you prioritize your practice of prayer this week?

What grace might God bless you or your loved ones with because you prayed? What glory might our God eternally cherish because we prayed?

Prayer is humbling, and it's always hard work. It takes discipline. Energy. Time. Concentration. And sacrifice. But think of the heavenly power and praise that is unleashed every time a humble Christian sincerely believes God's Word and prays for its fulfillment in life.

O church, certainly there's no lack of need for us to build this grace habit of prayer into our lives.



Recommit to praying expectantly for God's grace and glory!

Application

- Greater joy & satisfaction in Jesus
- Healing from sickness
- Fruitfulness in Gospel Ministry (Ice Camp)
- Hiring Pastor of Care & Discipleship
- Hiring Outreach Director for Goodfield

So as we close, I want to give us all an opportunity to respond by praying to God right now.

The band is going to come and play softly while we all take a few minutes to cry out to God. Personally, privately, sincerely...right where you are today.

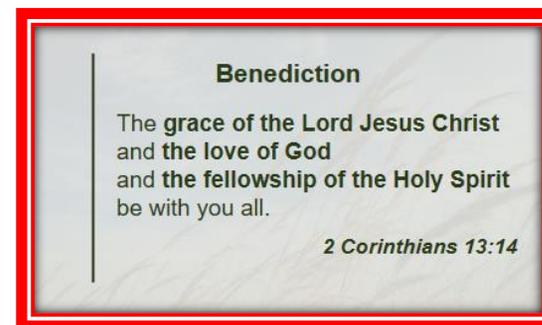
Cry out to God, believing that He is able to give you greater joy and satisfaction in Jesus. Pray for God's healing mercies for our loved ones who are sick. Pray for greater fruitfulness in our Gospel Ministry together. Pray specifically for all of our teenagers and Rooted staff who are headed to Ice Camp this coming weekend for a spiritual retreat.

Please pray for God's grace and glory in our pastoral search for a Pastor of Care and Discipleship. Pray for God to bring us the right Outreach Director for our Goodfield Ministry, and the right administrative assistance to replace Teresa.

O church, only eternity will reveal the grace and glory that results ... because you prayed.

So please pray now, and then the band will lead us in singing a final prayer together before we close.

<<I Need Thee Every Hour>>



Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Let's pray our benediction together:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
2 Corinthians 13:14

Recommended Resources on Prayer:

- Psalm 38:15; 50:15
- Isaiah 37:21-36
- Matthew 6:5-18; 9:36-37
- Mark 11:24-25
- Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8
- John 14:13-14; 15:7-8; 16:23-24
- Romans 8:26-27
- Ephesians 6:18-20
- Philippians 4:6
- Colossians 4:2
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18
- Hebrews 4:15-16; 10:19-23
- James 1:5-8; 4:3; 5:13-16
- 1 John 3:21-22; 5:14-15
- Revelation 5:8-10; 8:3-4

- <http://www.64fellowship.com/>
- <http://www.desiringgod.org/topics/prayer>

- What Every Child Should Know About Prayer, Nancy Guthrie
- A Praying Life, Paul Miller
- Old Paths, New Power, Daniel Henderson

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. There are at least four primary obstructions to prayer: the personal sin in our hearts (Ps. 66:18; 1 Pet. 3:7); the ignorance of our minds (Jer. 17:9-10; 1 Cor. 2:14); the infirmities of our bodies (Matt. 26:41); and the opposition of Satan (Eph. 6:12). In light of Romans 8:26-27, how can we achieve mastery over these oppositions to our praying?
2. Read Matthew 6:6 and Colossians 4:2. How can we guard against complacency, routine, or distraction in our discipline of prayer?
3. Compare Luke 11:13 and James 4:3. What do you pray for when you pray? How does God want your beliefs/actions to change in this area of your worship? How can you accomplish this change? What is the first step toward bringing about this change?
4. Read Matthew 6:9-13. Notice all the plural pronouns in the prayer. Does it help you to pray with other Christians? Why or why not? How could you pray together more with other believers?
5. Have you ever prayed Scripture back to God? Discuss how you seek to pray Scripture-led prayers to assure that you are praying “in Jesus Name,” or according to His will. (1 Jn. 5:14-15)