

PONDERING PRAYER...

Pastor Steve's Wednesday Devotional 6-23-19

I have been pondering prayer. We are praying and fasting on Wednesdays. I have wondered if we are? I have my prayer list and I have been praying for many people. Some of them are struggling with big health issues and they are not seeing resolution. I have been praying for our church finances; our ministries; our community, etc. There are times when we see God working and healing. The other day at our leadership breakfast we heard the report from several people, my cancer is gone, I am healed! As several people shared we celebrated with them. It was an amazing moment. But then there are times when it seems as if He does nothing. I have prayed for individuals, joining hundreds of others who are praying, and yet the person did not get well. Why?

I have heard the amazing reports from Doctors who have said the words, I don't know how to explain this but you are no longer sick, I cannot find a thing wrong, you are healed! The other day someone handed me the miraculous much needed \$10,000 check and all I can say is WOW! Praise God! But there is still financial struggle. I have asked God why are we still struggling? We have reduced, trimmed, adjusted and why are we still struggling?

I have questions: Why doesn't God answer our prayers the way we prayed? Is prayer a spiritual lottery game? Why does it seem as if God shows up most of time but not all the time? Why does it seem like he hears us some of the time and but not all the time? Where are the miracles and wonders? Where is my miracle? And why does it seem as if God is distant when I need Him the most? How does He decide who gets their pray answered and who don't? I heard someone say that we have to understand that God is going to do what God is going to do. So why pray? If God can do anything why doesn't He make life easier? How do we pray? What do we pray for? Does God really answer prayer? Are God's answers yes or no or wait?

On the night before Jesus is going to die on the cross:

Matthew 26:36-43 (NKJV) Then Jesus brought them to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, sit here while I go on ahead to pray. He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and he began to be filled with anguish and deep distress. He told them, My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me. He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine.

The Lord is asking questions: Is there some way out of this? Do I have to go through with this? Is there some other plan here? Is this really going to happen? Is there nothing I can do to stop it? The prayer of Jesus in the garden was not a fatalistic prayer, "why pray?" His prayer was not passive acceptance that there is nothing He can do. There was no rebellious attitude that says my future is mine and I will control my destiny!

My frustration is that I want to know the future or understand the reason for struggle but I don't. Jesus knew what was ahead of him, and He knew the reason. Yet His struggle was intense —He was facing a horrible physical death. He was the sacrifice that would make possible the forgiveness of my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. Even though, what does it take to be able to say "as God wills"? This is really hard even if you know the why. This takes absolute trust in God's plans and purposes! It is my willingness to trust the Lord for each step. This is not all that easy! This is the

heart of prayer and should be our basic response to struggles and trials and hard stuff of life. Trust God, that His way is best, even when it doesn't seem like it. God did not take away the "cup," for the cup was His will. Yet He did take away Jesus' extreme fear and anxiety. Jesus was at peace and in peace as He walked through the next several hours knowing that He was doing his Father's will.

Philippians 4:4-9 Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute! Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies (THE MESSAGE).

Prayer is real when it is brutally honest, vulnerable, transparent and open with God. I have learned that God can handle my honesty, openness and truth. God can handle my anger, frustration and pain. God is good with my questions.

Prayer is sharing our truth, heart, thoughts, soul being 100% honest to God listening to His voice and being in His presence.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Prayer is way of living life 24X7 and not a ritual, couple minutes of words to be spoke, it is reflecting, meditating, living, listening, talking, as we keep on trying to understand what is God's Will. When we pray we become part of the ongoing creative process of God. When we pray we are connecting our heart, soul and mind to the Creator of the universe. We can feel prayer because we are part of an active living real Lord whose name is Jesus. We are connected to our Heavenly Father by the Word of His Son and by the work of the Holy Spirit. When we pray we are connected to one another as the Body of Christ (church). Our conversation with the Lord enlarges our view of life. It gives us a Godly perspective, it gives us a bigger heart, clarity of mind and we feel things we would not feel because of prayer.

Our prayer changes us! We become better people because we pray to Jesus.

**In prayer together,
Pastor Steve**