

DAY 7

PRAY EARNESTLY
MATTHEW 9:38

Okay, let's just admit it: prayer can be weird! You've seen it. I've seen it. If you want a room of middle school or high school students to be quiet, what do you do? Ask someone to pray. It's amazing how they will quiet down and look at the floor! There's another weird side of prayer as well, and many of you probably know what I'm talking about: The guy who starts praying and enters into another state of intelligence by offering large, verbose, superfluous words you've never even heard come out of his mouth before. Like this one:

"Dear omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God, we beseech thee to justify us through thy vicarious atonement, and sanctify your ekklesia through thy Holy Spirit. Though we inhabit a "simul iustus et peccator" world, we are forever grateful that we receive nourishment and are sustained through the Eucharist. Help us properly exegete the Bible and this world until the coming parousia. Most sovereign, infallible, immutable God, Amen."

Translation: "Hey awesome God, thanks for your grace and continue to guide us with your Holy Spirit until you return! Most awesome God, Amen."

Will Davis, author of *Pray Big*, says, "Somehow we've gotten the impression that true prayer requires big words, lengthy phrases, and choice theological terms."¹³ Everything that is said seems to be "just right" and even

rhymes. To some degree you are impressed by this, but another part of you is actually turned off. I'm not saying those prayers aren't genuine, but sometimes they can do more harm than good. I think this sort of prayer can actually give a bad impression of what prayer is.

You see, at the heart of it all, **we have a God who desires to have a relationship with us.** Prayer is about being in relationship with God, and God wants you to be who you are. It's not about coming to God with all the right words. It's not about saying everything perfectly. It's about talking, listening, and spending time with Him. And when we spend time with Him, He wants us to be who we are! He doesn't want a fake version of who we think the world wants us to be. He wants you, with all your imperfections, to simply spend time with Him and to grow closer to Him. He wants you to tell Him what's on your mind.

We all come to prayer differently: some of us with good motives, some with bad motives, and some with mixed motives. And that's okay. Prayer isn't pretending that everything is perfect before God. It's not telling God things that aren't true. It's simply being real before Him: telling Him how it is. I'm not saying we shouldn't be respectful, but I'm also saying we shouldn't be afraid to address Him. In fact, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to address God as a father. And so, in many ways, prayer is like me listening and talking with my dad. Richard Foster says, "*Our children come to us with the craziest requests at times! Often we are grieved by the meanness and selfishness in their requests, but we would be all the more grieved if they never came to us even with their meanness and selfishness. We are simply glad that they do come—mixed motives and all.*"¹⁴

Jesus tells us in Matthew 9:38 to pray earnestly. Prayer is such an important part of our journey on this Challenge. Some of the Challenges will be easy; some will be difficult. I'm grateful that no matter how easy or hard the Challenge will be, God is always ready to listen. **Prayer is the most powerful tool we have on this earth**, yet for so many of us it is not a part of our regular daily routine.

It's okay if you don't know exactly how to pray or what to pray. Even Jesus' disciples had to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. God is glad when you come to Him in prayer. Praying earnestly is the Challenge we are taking up today, but this discipline is truly meant to be a part of our lives every day. Continue to ask God boldly and specifically for the things you desire. The more you come to know Him and spend time in prayer, the more you will find yourself praying for things that you want and that He wants.

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#REDLETTERCHALLENGE

We learn from this parable to never give up praying.

LUKE 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"



SPEND SOME TIME TODAY IN PRAYER. HERE'S A GREAT MODEL:

- A** Adoration (Tell God what you love about Him)
- C** Confession (Tell God about the sins in your life and how you plan to turn/repent from them)
- T** Thanksgiving (Thank Him for His forgiveness and for all the blessings in your life)
- S** Supplication (Ask Him specific things that you need in your life)

Ask God to give you the strength to make it through this Challenge. Boldly ask Him to strengthen your faith and help you share Him with others.

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