

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday February 23, 2020 "Don't Stop Believing: Intercessory and asking prayer."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II Recap.

This is our third Sunday of our prayer series, and we're taking a deep look and incorporating specific practices at what prayer is, and how we can become better at it. We all know these things. Prayer is important or Jesus wouldn't have taught us how to do it. Prayer is hard, and we know this because the disciples who spent all their time with Jesus, asked him how to do prayer. And, we know we all have room for improvement in how we pray. The first week we broke down The Lord's Prayer, and then did an actual time of guided prayer to help us focus on working through some specifics of prayer. And we got a lot of good feedback about that exercise. This past week we talked about centering or contemplative prayer, and practicing silence, stillness, aloneness, and being in the presence of God. All of that material is available if you missed it.

III Sunday.

Sunday was our final Sunday and we landed on what most of us consider prayer...intercessory, or praying for others and our personal needs. We saved it for last because it was important for us to build an understanding of what a vital, active, meaningful relationship with God looks like before we talk about asking him for stuff. Our prayer life should grow out of a desire for a relationship, not just hoping a relationship grows out of asking for things.

The primary passage isn't really connected to the topic of prayer, but is important in understanding the place of prayer in how we live our lives. That will make more sense after you read the passage, and we unpack some of the specific elements of the story. So, go ahead and read **John 5:1-15**.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

Were there any elements that spoke to you about the nature of need and the nature of 'prayer' in our relationship with God?

This is a unique story that has a lot of unusual elements in it. First, don't know if you noticed or not, but your translation may have been missing verse 4. That's because most ancient manuscripts don't include that short description, and it's a legend or myth that surrounds the pool of Bethesda. And that was if the waters rippled, it was a sign that an angel had dipped its wings in the water, and the first one who entered the waters after that would be healed. So there would be dozens and dozens of

people who would sit around the waters waiting for this to happen. And that's where we find this man who had been sitting around that pool for 38 years.

Here are some of the elements from this story that can help us in our understanding of those life situations that break us and cause us to get stuck. How prayer can be the most effective. And God's feelings about us in helping us in our 'stuckness'.

1. Despair and stuckness. This man had been coming, or being brought, to this pool for 38 years and still had not been healed. I'm sure by this point it was more hollow tradition than anything really hopeful and meaningful. Which is what our prayer lives often look like. Hopelessness and helplessness can build within us a despair that just keeps us stuck. Our prayer lives are stuck, and therefore our spiritual growth gets stuck too.

Where are you stuck in your hope for your future and what genuine spiritual growth could look like?

2. Would you like to get well? So Jesus has to break through this passive acceptance that life just will never get better, and this fog of hopelessness and despair, by asking this guy this one important question. In all of your hopelessness and 'stuckness' do you actually want to get better. This is the question we have to ask ourselves in the situations we find ourselves stuck in. We often become so accustomed to being stuck that it has become our accepted reality.

What does it mean to honestly answer the question; "Would you like to get well?"

3. Prayer requires movement. And then finally from this account, it seems that the desires and hopes we hold HAVE to be paired with actual movement. We can't be like the traditional story of Cinderella and sit around waiting to be rescued from our situation. If we want God to act mightily in whatever situation we're battling we have to be willing to *"pick up our mat and walk"*.

Kal gave us these pieces of wisdom.

"When you pray move your feet" -African proverb.

And this proverb says: **Move in the direction you're asking God to move.**

Then Kal challenged us with some specific movements to practice to get out of our 'stuckness'. Go apologize to that person. Go tell that person you want to work things out. Go apply for some jobs. Go talk to someone. Get counseling. Stop spending so much. Go tell that person you love them. Get yourself out of that situation. Change friends. Draw some healthy boundaries. Voice what you expect. *"Stop sinning or something worse may happen"*, being a victim. GET UP AND WALK!!

Prayer is important and we can always work on becoming better at how we relate to God. That's why it's called practicing prayer. But also we can partner with God and work together as we move towards that life God has for us.

Where are areas in your life you can add some 'feet' to your prayers?