

# pray first

the transformative power of a life built on prayer

## Keep Praying! | PRAY FIRST

### Luke 18:1-8

When should I stop praying for something? Stop immediately if you are praying a pitfall prayer.

“How do I know when to stop praying for something/someone?” → ...am I talking to the wind?

Jesus tells this story about a determined widow and an annoyed judge. It's a tale that has real-life insights about prayer and answers the question about when it's time to stop praying. The deeply transforming truth of knowing we are God's people and God alone sees the big picture help us to keep praying. Our faithful God wants to find faith in us!

**Text Prep:** Luke 18 finds Jesus on the road to Jerusalem...and he's teaching on different topics...including prayer!

**Luke 18:** *1 One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. 2 “There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, 5 but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’”*

*6 Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. 7 Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to **his chosen people** who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, **he will grant justice to them** quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have **faith**?”*

**Never stop praying!** → Many want the rewards of persistent prayer, but not the futile circumstances that demand it.

- Even an unjust judge grants justice due to the unwavering persistence of the widow, God, **who cares for His people**, will surely **grant justice** to those who continually cry out to Him. → No pitfall prayers!
- Why do we stop praying? → We might stop praying because we feel **God is distant...or He doesn't understand**.
  - Does God love you? → God's not a nameless judge & we're not nameless people.
  - Does God want justice? (he's not an unjust judge...and He understands the big picture)
- Unless God says NO. → David & Bathsheba's first child (2 Samuel 12:19-20). → God ALONE is capable of judging.
- Why would God wait? → God is looking for faith. → God finds faith growing in FUTILE situations when we cry out to a faithful God! → Futile circumstances are fertile crop conditions...IF you are trying to grow faith.
  - Never give up praying for peoples' salvations: prodigal sons & daughters, loved ones, neighbors & co-workers.
  - Never give up praying for healing: I don't care how severe the diagnosis!
  - Never give up praying for California: ...wait, California needs prayer? :)
  - Never give up praying for Mesa Church: ...as long as God is on the throne, we have HOPE~
  - Never give up praying for the wrongs in this world to be righted: God, YOUR Kingdom come...YOUR will...
- VISION: We want to be a church family that is growing in FAITH. → Prayer: Lord, grow our faith.

We never give up praying. Never! Unless God tells us NO. We will cry out.

**Testimony: Jennifer Webster.**

**Yeah but im \_\_\_\_\_.** → Anybody “hit a wall...?” Tired. Hopeless. Spiritually dry. Confused. Impatient. Unbelief.

- The church exists to stand with you when you've hit that wall. → Flat Tire
- COMFORTS: You are not alone in your faith journey. See Scriptures below in notes.
  - Jesus is praying for you. → Romans 8:34 & Hebrews 7:25
  - The HS is praying for you. → Romans 8:26-27 & Jude 1:20
  - You can be praying IN THE SPIRIT. → 1 Corinthians 14:1-4 & 5
  - Mesa wants to pray WITH you. → James 5:14-15 & Ephesians 6:18
- DO THIS: Confess your unbelief. Ask Jesus for help. Pray in the Spirit. Have someone else pray WITH you.
- VISION: Hit a wall?...raise your hand / come forward. → Elders. Prayer Team.
- Prayer: "Lord, we pray with our friends who have hit a wall..."

→ **Our faithful God wants to find faith in us!** → We never stop praying bc we serve a faithful & faith finding God.

**TALK ABOUT IT - Questions to GROW through with family, friends, & myself.**

1. What is a personal experience where God answered a persistent prayer? How did that situation strengthen my faith?
2. What are some "futile" circumstances in my life currently where I am unsure of whether to keep praying?
3. Why is it important to recognize that God is not an anonymous or unjust judge? How does this change how I pray?
4. If I have "hit a wall," what gives me comfort in this "futile" season? How can church come alongside me in prayer?
5. **PRAYER:** "Father, hear our prayers & find faith in our hearts!"

## QUOTES / SONGS:

- "Prayerlessness is our declaration of our independence from God." - **Anonymous**
- "Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts." - **Mother Theresa**

## ARTICLES / BOOKS / TOOLS:

- **"The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears"** by Mark Batterson
- **"Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Hearts of His People"** by Jim Cymbala
- **Prayer Journal PDF:** [Download "Chat With God" Prayer Journal](#)
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- **Prayer Guide:** [Download "The Lords Prayer" Guide](#)

## SCRIPTURES: New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

- **Daniel 10:2-14:** *2 In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning for three whole weeks. 3 I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine crossed my lips, and I used no fragrant lotions until those three weeks had passed. 4 On April 23, as I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River, 5 I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. 6 His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people. 7 Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. 8 So I was left there all alone to see this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. 9 Then I heard the man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground. 10 Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. 11 And the man said to me, "Daniel, you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling. 12 Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. 13 But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. 14 Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come."*
- **Hebrews 10:36:** *"Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised."*
- **James 1:2-4:** *"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."*
- **Romans 12:12:** *"Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying."*
- **Colossians 4:2:** *"Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart."*
- **1 Thessalonians 5:17:** *"Never stop praying."*
- **Romans 8:34:** *"Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us."*
- **Hebrews 7:25:** *"Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf."*
- **Romans 8:26-27:** *26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.*
- **Jude 1:20:** *20 But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit,*
- **1 Corinthians 14:1-4:** *Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy. 2 For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. 3 But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. 4 A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.*
- **1 Corinthians 14:5:** *I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.*
- **Ephesians 6:18:** *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*
- **James 5:14-15:** *14 Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.*

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