

Voices and Choices

6/26/2024

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Over the last few weeks, we have heard Pastor Christopher deliver some powerful messages regarding the voices and choices we allow to influence our lives.

He has spoken directly to our choices concerning marriage and family and the voices we choose to follow regarding both. He has given us much to consider and some ground rules to implement as we create boundaries and apply the Word of God to our home life.

Tonight, I want to wrap up this series with an encouragement. Most of us were challenged by this series to really inspect our homes, our marriages, and how we raise our kids. We were challenged to seek counsel from the Word of God, to set boundaries, as we limit the external cultural influence by learning to say no.

If you have said no over the past few weeks, you are most likely still feeling a euphoric sense of accomplishment because you drew a line in the sand regarding your marriage and family. I applaud you! I honor your bravery and your willingness to allow the Word of God to reshape and redefine your homes.

After 30 years of marriage, and a lot of practice saying no to my kids when it wasn't the popular thing to do, even among my fellow church family and colleagues, drawing boundary lines that I'm sure our kids thought were unfair, I have learned that that the key to keeping the external voices at bay, is when I

choose to lift my **voice** in prayer. When I choose to pray, I am choosing to silence the outside voices. Life is loud, but when I pray, the world goes silent.

The most basic definition of prayer is “talking to God.” It is direct communication of our soul with the creator of the soul. Prayer is the primary way we as believers in Jesus Christ can communicate our emotions and desires with God in pursuit of fellowship with Him.

You may be thinking to yourself. Why does it matter if I pray? God already knows my emotions and my desires. But just like any other relationship you desire to foster, that you want to see grow, they require two things... time and communication.

Before we get into the issue of time, I want to talk about prayer as communication.

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. All prayer must be offered in faith ([James 1:6](#)), in the name of the Lord Jesus ([John 16:23](#)), and in the power of the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:26](#)). The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says, “Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit” (“Prayer” by J. C. Lambert).

Prayer is described in the Bible as seeking God's favor ([Exodus 32:11](#)), pouring out one's soul to the Lord ([1 Samuel 1:15](#)), crying out to heaven ([2 Chronicles 32:20](#)), drawing near to God ([Psalm 73:28, KJV](#)), and kneeling before the Father ([Ephesians 3:14](#)).

Paul wrote in ([Philippians 4:6-7](#)), "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" Worry about nothing; pray about everything.

God wants us to talk with Him about everything. The biblical answer is "pray without ceasing" ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#))ESV. How is that possible? How do we pray 24/7 and still accomplish all we have to do every day? It's not about being in a prayer closet 24/7, it's about being in such relationship with the Father that we keep a running conversation going with God all day long. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and dependence upon Him. When we develop that relationship with Him, His voice cannot help but be the loudest, most influential one in our lives.

Have you ever had a mentor? Someone you respected so much that you hung on every word they said and brought correction to your life in order to align with their instruction? And it didn't matter who else was speaking or clamoring for

your attention, you could recognize their voice above all the other noise. You knew without doubt that their instruction was sound and could be trusted. That is the role of Holy Spirit in your life. That is the level of relationship that God desires for you to have with Him. But while the voices of the world around you scream for your attention, Holy Spirit will not. Being a gentleman, He waits for you to choose to lift your voice.

The idea of pray without ceasing seems overwhelming. Hearing that makes your mind begin to race and you think how is that even possible? Or you may think, I don't have the gift for that, I'm not an intercessor, only those called to intercession have the ability to pray without ceasing, that's just not my gift.

It is actually false to think that those who offer up intercessory prayers have a unique gift and are the only ones called by God to a ministry of intercession; that somehow, they are in a class above the rest. The Bible is clear that *all* Christians are called to be intercessors. All Christians have the Holy Spirit in their hearts and, just as He intercedes for us in accordance with God's will ([Romans 8:26-27](#)), we are to intercede for one another. This is not a privilege only offered to an elite few; it is a command to all. In fact, not to intercede for others is sin. "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you" ([1 Samuel 12:23](#)). How many times do we sin against the Lord by failing to pray for others, especially when we told them they we would? Ho about the next time someone asks you to pray, rather than reply to a text with the praying hands emoji, how about sending back a prayer? Texting back a one sentence prayer, or better yet, hit the picture of the microphone and send a recorded prayer that

they can listen to build their faith.

Intercessory prayer is simply the act of praying on behalf of others. So, when I choose to use my voice to lift up prayer on behalf of my spouse, my children, my home, my coworkers, my friends... I am fulfilling the call of the Father to be actively engaged in intercession for others.

Let me pause right here for a quick commercial. Many of you are new and not aware that we have two opportunities per week that we open the church for intercessory prayer. Sunday mornings at 9:30 here in the sanctuary and on Tuesday evenings at 5:30 in our Jr High Sanctuary. If you are new in the Lord and you want to learn how to pray, I encourage you to come join us on Tuesday evenings and listen to prayers offered up on behalf of this church, our community and our nation.

As Christians we are to be alert to the tactics the enemy uses to try and disrupt our marriages and our families. Ephesians 6:18 says, **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and *watching* thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”** (KJV)

In essence, we are called to be the watchmen of our families. Watchmen are the lookouts. They keep guard and are the first line of defense against intrusion. The term watchman comes from the Old Testament and there are three Hebrew words used in conjunction with the term. The first of these is found in Genesis 2:15, when God places Adam in the garden and instructs him to “cultivate and

keep” the garden. Then the Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. Genesis 2:15(GNT)

Some translations say keep, some say watch, but they are all the Hebrew word shamar. Meaning to guard, to protect, to attend to. God gave Adam a home, and then told him to guard it, to keep watch over it. To be the first line of defense for it. And in 2000 plus years, His instruction to us has not changed. As sons and daughters of God, we are set by God in our homes, marriages, and families to guard and to keep them. And we do it through prayer.

Did you know that the most intimate thing you can do with your spouse is not intercourse, it's praying together. Praying together and exposing the depth of your trust and dependence upon God is intimidating. That level of vulnerability is something that many couples struggle with. I'll be the first to admit that it took Brad and I years before we felt comfortable enough to be that vulnerable. But I will also tell you that I feel closer to my husband, more emotionally connected, and safe when we pray together.

Earlier I told you that prayer builds our relationship with God because it requires both time and communication.

Being in ministry this long I have heard all the typical excuses for not spending time in prayer. “It’s not my gift”, “I just don’t have enough time in the day”, “I don’t know what to say” But what if I told you the most powerful and passionate prayers are often the shortest?

A few weeks ago I listened to a sermon by Jentzen Franklin entitled The Power of Short Prayers. God had already been dealing with me about prayer being my topic for tonight and He used that message to confirm it. The message challenged my thinking, and it reminded me that I don’t have to pray these long-winded prayers full of flowery words to get God’s attention. It’s not what I say that matters, it’s that I actually do it.

The Bible is full of the stories of people who prayed short prayers and got the attention of God.

Moses- prayed a 5 word prayer, *“Now show me your glory”* (Exodus 33:18).

Because of the level of their relationship the Lord allowed Moses to see enough of His glory that from that day forward Moses had to cover his face with a veil because he permanently reflected the brilliance of God.

Hannah – In 1 Sam 1:10 -11, she prayed a 49-word prayer that turned God's attention towards her, resulting in the birth of Samuel, the prophet who anointed David to be King.

Hezekiah – in 2 Kings 19:19, prayed a 25-word prayer and God delivered Jerusalem from the Siege of the Assyrians. 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died at the hand of the angel of the Lord because of a 25-word prayer. Later in chapter 20:3, Hezekiah prayed a 23-word prayer from his death bed and God gave him an additional 15 years of life.

Elijah prayed a 64 word prayer and fire fell from heaven and consumed the altars of Baal.

Jabez – 30 words that changed the trajectory of Jabez's life. His prayer was simple, short and direct, and God blessed Jabez in response to it.

Solomon – God answered his 79 word prayer in 2 Chronicles 1 and made him the wisest man who had ever lived.

The Lords Prayer, 68 power packed words, the example Jesus gave us for prayer.

Peter prayed a one sentence prayer and a lame man was healed.

In Acts 16, Paul prayed a 14 word prayer to set a woman free from demonic possession who was trying to disrupt his ministry.

Often a short prayers are marked by urgency, they are passionate pleas for God to intervene. And quite often it is those passionate please for expediency that get the attention of God.

Story of Ian in the old building...

Before we go, there is one other short 9-word prayer in the Bible that I want to show you.

Luke 23: 39-43 (ESV) One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him,^[a] saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."⁴² And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."⁴³ And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The simplicity of the gospel summed up in a 9-word prayer. 9 words was all it took to change the final destination of a man who dared to utter a short prayer.

He didn't pause to consider how his prayer should be worded or whether he was gifted to pray, or qualified to pray... He simply knew his time was short and his urgent, passionate plea moved the heart of Jesus and this thief became the first to be covered by the blood of the Lamb. His salvation is proof to us that it isn't the

length of the prayer that matters. The only unanswered prayers are the ones never prayed.

We are created for relationship with our Father. His desire is to spend time with us and for us to communicate with Him. Have you ever wondered what God and Adam talked about during those walks through the garden? Do you wonder if Adam responded to God's instruction to cultivate and to guard the garden by asking questions? Questions like, "Abba, what does it mean to cultivate, how to plant a seed, what should I use for fertilizer, what do you mean to guard? What exactly am I watching for and guarding from?" I do. And I can just imagine the Lord placing his arm around Adam's shoulder and saying, "Son, let's take a walk, let me teach you something."

The instructions to cultivate, watch over and guard have not waived. God's expectation for us today is the same as for Adam. We are to be on guard against the attack of the enemy over our homes. The absolute best way to do that is to proactively build a hedge, setting offensive boundaries that protect from any attack against your home.

Testimony of Tim & Jana Allen

As I close tonight, I simply want to encourage you to pray. If all you can think to say is "thank you", then start there. Say it multiple times a day.

"Lord, thank you for this beautiful day."

"Bless my family today."

"Fill my heart with peace."

"Give me with your wisdom."

"Help my unbelief."

"Fill me with joy and gratitude."

"Help me to be kind and patient."

"Protect my home and loved ones today."

These are all examples of short prayers that can be spoken in a matter of seconds, but that can have a huge impact on your mood, your attitude, your home, and your family.

And again, I invite you to join us on Tuesday evenings at 5:30 here in the Jr high sanctuary and on Sunday mornings at 9:30 here in the main sanctuary.