

Prayer

VBC
Pastor Mike Reid
Psalm 127:1-2
February 7-8, 2004

PLUGGING INTO GOD'S POWER

Introduction

Do you believe in miracles?

How many times have you heard that question asked this last week in the advertisements for the new movie about the American hockey team?

There was an Amish man who observed the miraculous.

The whole family went into the city for the first time and shopped at a big mall.

He and his son sat to rest on a bench near the elevators in a dept. store.

A couple of elderly women got onto the elevator; the doors closed; about a minute later the doors opened and out stepped a couple of younger women.

Then another woman got on; the doors closed; a couple of minutes later they opened again and out walked a younger and strikingly beautiful woman.

He said to his son, "Son, I don't know how that thing works, but quick, go get your mother!"

God promises real miracles to His children.

Story about the Grand Rapids abortion clinic

I have a friend, Kurt, in Grand Rapids. We worked together in the pro-life movement for a number of years.

Every time I or anybody else visited him or attended pro-life meetings in Grand Rapids, he took us downtown to pray for this building.

It had been built as a church over 100 years ago.

Changed hands often...

Jewish synagogue; Theater; A group of Lawyers (Do you see the downward spiral?)

Eventually, it became a busy abortion clinic (thousands per year).

Kurt's conviction – this building should be for pro-life community.

Prayer with whoever passed through.

I prayed, on a couple of trips to Grand Rapids.

5 yrs of steadfast prayer

I honestly never thought much about it

Last Sept., a Christian businessman whom Kurt had never met nor heard of called him.

"My partner and I want to buy this building and convert it into a ministry center.

If we gave it to your ministry, could you use it?"

They were doing business downtown near the abortion center
became incensed that this church building was being used for evil.
It should be a ministry center.
Someone told them about Kurt.

This pro-life ministry is now the landlord of an abortionist until his lease expires in
April.
They are praying for his salvation, and for those who work for him.
I'm just guessing those are prayers that God is hearing and taking very seriously.

I'm not a great prayer.
I am learning.
God has deeply convicted me about it for some time.

As I've looked around, I've observed I am not alone.

Read Psalm 127:1-2

1. Our efforts, without God's help, are futile.

Apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

But we get side-tracked.

Culture of Doing –

Nike's slogan "just do it"

This ad has worked so well because it totally resonates with our American culture.

We are a doing people. Achieve. Push. Accomplish. Check it off the list.

We've gotten too absorbed into this Do, accomplish, control mindset/culture

A better slogan would be, "Just pray it."

It is "in vain" or "useless"

What's he saying? He's not against hard work

He's addressing the issue of our dependence upon Him.

Some of us have "control issues"

God's promises are clear.

But I wonder, do we really believe the promises of scripture?

Promises on overhead:

Mt. 21:22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Jn. 14:14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Jn. 15:7 ... Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

The average Christian struggles with a crisis of faith.

I know at times I do.

Our prayer or lack of it demonstrates how much we believe prayer actually makes any difference.

Mk. 9:21-24

(Father with a demon-possessed son.)

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed,

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief."

I like this guy's honesty.

He mouths what easily could be our own confession of weak faith.

Jesus accepted the man's candid response and granted his request.

God loves it when we honestly come to Him and say,

Lord, I believe you;

Well, mostly I do.

Well, actually, I struggle with my faith in you sometimes.

But Lord, help me grow in my faith.

And He loves to honor our prayers for help.

There are a number of Villagers who can attest to that.

Ken Hamlin –

He was my first hospital visit last September.

10:00 service, choir –

Had inoperable cancer; then chemo burned esophagus (hospital);

Changed chemo treatment 2x after that;

BUT a bunch of churches praying –

I learned he is cancer free.

Even before his chemo treatment was done.

His Dr. said in his entire career had never seen such a remarkable turnaround.

2. God will give us what we need.

He mentions our basic needs

Shelter, Safety, Food

He commonly works in tandem with our efforts.

"Foolish is the man who builds without seeking God's help."

There is a haunting question that some here are probably asking now:

What about when I ask God and He says "no"?

You don't have to go long in the Christian life before you learn God doesn't always give what you ask.

What about when:

The request is legitimate, even righteous, the asker is genuine, with good motive,
Yet there seems to be no answer, or the answer is simply no

e.g. Dan Roth at Harvest losing his wife Lisa Friday to liver failure.

For every story of a miracle cure from cancer, there is someone he does not heal.
It can be cause for misunderstanding and frustration.

Liz – who had cancer - she also had a bunch of people praying

She died last year; many told her if her faith was strong enough God would heal her
Some can rather immaturely regard God as a sort of Genie;
if you rub Him the right way you'll get what you wish.

Part of our dilemma is our earth-bound perspective.

We are stuck in "time"- God is not.

We see only the material, temporal – God sees eternally.

Roxanne L. – "I'm stepping into eternity with my heavenly Father.

That's not all bad, you know."

God always gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him.

Daniel's buddies got it – Dan. 3:17-18

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

(They would not bow down and worship a giant idol king Nebuchadnezzar built.)

3:17-18

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from
it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.

But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your
gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Paul – 2 Cor. 12:7-9

(He had some "thorn in the flesh", some physical handicap or ailment)

Vs. 8. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Vs. 9 But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,
for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Sometimes His answer is "I know what is best for you."

God always gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him.

but His best isn't always plain to our earth-bound eyes.

One thing is certain –

God is more concerned with molding us into X's image
than He is with how we are feeling along the way.

3. God calls us to rest in Him.

God calls us to rest in him

He promises to take our worry or our heart ache and replace it with rest.

Read Mt. 11:28-30 –

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you. Let Me teach you,

because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light."

Prayer is God's gift to us – to give us rest in Him.

And I should emphasize prayer is much more than petition.

The prayer that gives us rest is the act of

crawling up onto God's lap and finding comfort there.

Enjoying His company.

Spilling your guts about everything.

It includes sitting still, listening, enjoying His company.

We have been created for a life of "nearness to God"

And prayer is a natural part of that relationship

Wherever you are, he invites you to join him

Prayer is My gift to you.

It's not meant to be something to make you feel guilty

God isn't wagging his finger at you ("Pray more!")

He calls us to intimacy

To come as we are.

To satisfy our longings

Some here know exactly what I mean.

You have established some healthy patterns of prayer.

Read Helen's letter:

"Recently, one day I was complaining to the Lord that I want to go home to heaven.

My body has frailties and the work that I used to do is no longer possible for me.

But I very clearly heard Him say, "I need a prayer warrior."

So, I believe that as long as I am here on this earth, that is my purpose in life.

To pray for people is the work He wants me to do.

So, I have started a list which I keep taped to my desk where I can see it each time I sit there.

A list of people whom I know need prayer, and some who need Jesus as their Savior.

Each morning, I scan it and pray for many.

I know God will answer in the way He knows is the best for them.

Because He loves them.

Some of you would like to do more, to pray in constructive ways.

Some prayer opportunities:

Regular prayer meetings every week at Village (email me)

New Saturday prayer meeting at 4 PM to pray for the worship services
(Friendship Card)

Pray regularly for one of Village's pastors (Friendship Card)

I have a prayer team that regularly prays for me.

Some here are new at this.

Still figuring out how to follow this powerful God who says I love you

Find a quiet alone place

Tell Him what's on your heart

Maybe get a copy of Village's worship CD

Sing worship songs you know

Some are still on the sidelines

Up to now, just coming to church, mostly as an observer

You're missing the chance to participate in God's miracles

Accept Jesus' payment on the cross for your sins

for you.

My starting out prayer was, Jesus, I give up (my life to you)

Tell him your heart; be honest with Him about your heart

This passage is for everyone.

Unless the Lord builds your life, you labor in vain who build it (who live it)

For He grants rest to those He loves.