

# Pray Hard

## Luke 18:1-5

It's a Friday night, the lights are hot, and everyone in town is at the high school football game. With time running out, the home team running back receives the ball on the fifteen-yard line, eighty-five yards from a touchdown and come-from-behind victory. Breaking through the line of scrimmage, he sees nothing but open field in front of him and sprints for the end zone. But five yards from the goal line he stops and sits down.

This is a scenario you will probably never see. When a running back breaks clear of the defense and sees the end zone two or three strides away, he races in and revels in the victory! Anything less would seem absurd. Yet something far more shocking happens every day. People quit praying. They pray hard for months or years, and then they just stop. They grow weary, discouraged, or simply get distracted. For all they know they are just five yards from the end zone and prayer is abandoned before the goal is met...when the answer is just around the bend. Our prayers have far more importance than a touchdown. They have eternal consequences.

*“The reason many of us give up too soon is that we feel like we have failed if God doesn’t answer our prayer. That isn’t failure. The only way you can fail is if you stop praying.” - Mark Batterson*

### **Icebreaker:**

Share a time when you worked hard at something but then gave up before you completed it or crossed the finish line. What runs through your mind as you look back on that moment?

Think about a time you worked hard and did cross the finish line. How did that make you feel?

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1) The widow demonstrates how to pray hard when you **DIRECT YOUR PRAYERS TO THE ONE WHO HAS POWER**. Read Luke 18:1-3 together.

A.W. Tozer said, “What comes to you when you think about God is the most important thing about you.” What pictures come to mind when you think of Jesus and what does this reveal about your view of Him as God?

How can your vision of God impact the way you pray and the bigness of the requests you make?

What characteristics of God in vv.6-8 encourage us to be persistent in prayer?

Why does God want us to pray with persistence when he already knows our concerns?

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2) The widow demonstrates praying hard means to **PRAY SPECIFICALLY**. Read Luke 18:3 again.

What specifically did the widow in our text ask of the judge? When you pray, would you say your prayers are more vague in nature or more specific? Explain.

Discuss this statement from Circle Maker: *“If our prayers aren’t specific, however, God gets robbed of the glory that He deserves because we second guess whether or not He actually answered them. We never know if the answers were the result of specific prayer or general coincidences that would have happened anyway.”*

What specific and focused prayers are you praying right now as a group? What is one need, concern, or dream that you have been circling in prayer for a long time, but the answer still has not come?

See Acts 12:5. What prayer do you think was made specifically in Peter’s situation? What was the result? (see v.6-7)

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### 3) The widow demonstrates praying hard means **PRAY PERSISTENTLY**. Read Luke 18:3-5.

Share a time when someone kept pestering you about something and you finally gave in. How does your story relate to God’s desire to help us when we persist in our prayer life? Read Matthew 7:11 and discuss how it relates to the story of the widow.

What factors threaten your ability to pray persistently? What value do you find in the practice of confident, persistent prayer?

Is your current prayer life persistent? Why or why not? What can you do to develop a more persistent prayer life?

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#### **Pray:**

Thank God for being patient and gracious even when we give in, give up, and stop praying. Ask for power to pray hard and pray through...even when you feel weary and discouraged. Confess when you have given up and quit praying and ask for courage and devotion to start praying again.

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#### **Connect:**

Elijah connected action with prayer. He prayed against the prophets of Baal and challenged them to a showdown. Elijah called the widow to bake a loaf of bread. And, he did more than pray for God to part the water of the Jordan...he struck it with his cloak. He took concrete steps of faith. What are some specific steps of faith you know God wants you to take as you are praying for the needs and challenges you face in your life?

***“When you pray through, the burden is taken off of your shoulders and put on the shoulders of Him who carried the cross of Calvary.” - Mark Batterson***