

Get Serious. About Prayer. 1 John 5:14-15

With a message on prayer, that's an appropriate start
I have such mixed feeling about preaching on prayer
It's one of the SD's necessary to train yourself for godliness . . .
But I sometimes wonder if our time would be better spent praying, instead of talking about it

But after preparing for this message, I concluded from my own heart . . .
That being reminded and refreshed of what I already knew about prayer, spurred me on to get serious about it
To actually do what I already knew was right and best
I trust you'll find the same as a result of our time in the Word this morning

If you're like me, you fail to pray for two reasons –

1. You don't want to
It's not because you don't know how, or don't know you're supposed to
But because you don't *want* to
If you're like me you're lazy, busy, distracted
Frankly you'd rather do something else; Anything but pray
Am I right? Am I alone in that?
2. You don't think it matters
When it comes right down to it, you're not convinced it does any good
That God really changes things as a result of your prayers
That's a self-fulfilling mindset – the less you pray, the less change you'll see
The less change you see, the less you'll pray because you don't think it matters

So I hope to convince you otherwise this morning, and encourage you to . . .

Take advantage of it (1 John 5:14-15)

Turn to 1 John 5:14-15 – we're going to do a little Bible study on prayer this morning
Look at some of the key passages on prayer
Some, I'll have you turn to so can mark them in own Bible
Others I'll put on screen for the sake of time; 1 Jn 5:14-15 is one of them (read it)

3 main reasons to take advantage of prayer, starting with the fact that God hears you
14 - *If we ask anything according to God's will . . .*

• He hears us

God actually hears us; Us; What a privilege
To personally communicate with God – to express to him your thoughts, fears, concerns, joys, struggles . . . anything, anytime
That's prayer . . . **Prayer is personal communication with God**
That's something to take advantage of

It's like having an open invitation for lunch with the President, anytime you want
Any time you want you can tell him what's on your mind; ask him a nagging question
“Hey Mr President, cancel your gigs and meet me at Taco Bell”; “Glad you called”
Whether you like him or not, you'd take advantage of that in a heartbeat

That's exactly what we have with God – an open invitation to talk to him, personally, any time, confident that he hears us

Not only that, but . . .

• He answers us

Take advantage of prayer because he answers us
He's not some bump on the log idol who *can't* answer us
Nor is he some far off deity who *won't* answer us
Read v15 – When we ask according to God's will, he not only hears us, but answers us

That's not original with John

Look at Lk 11:9-10 (p869) Jesus said – *And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.*
No wonder James said . . . *You do not have, because you do not ask.* (James 4:2)

Implication – if you do ask, he answers

That's something to take advantage of

Something that's dependent of course on asking according to God's will (1 Jn 5)

Which begs the question – “How do we know what God's will is?”

Well, sometimes the Bible is explicit about that, and we can know it for sure

Like we *know* it's God's will to love our neighbor – that's explicit

So there's no question that if we ask God to help us love our neighbor, we're asking according to his will

And we can expect him to answer with increased love

Short of that, we pray/ask in *faith*, doing our best to discern God's will

And while we may ask at times for things *outside* of his will, we can rest assured that he will always *answer, according* to his will

But ask we must

It's something to take advantage of

He hears us, he answers us, and . . .

• He helps us

Don't know how to pray? Not sure what to say to the “President of the universe”?

Doesn't matter

Rom 8:26 (p944) – *Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

Did you get that? The HS will eliminate any word deficiency, any inadequacy, any lack of understanding . . .

Or anything else when it comes to personally communicating with God

The HS totally helps us and takes care of it – what more could you want?

It's something to take advantage of it – on your own, or with other believers

Privately, or as a church at designated times

Like on **Sunday mornings from 8:15-8:45**

Or in between services from **10:30-10:45** – I need your prayer as much as anybody at that time, as I get ready for another service

Not to mention the hearts of those who are on their way to the 2nd service

Wednesday mornings from 6:15-7:15 is another time that we pray together as men

We've been doing that for about 2 years now, and *it's just what we do* on Wed a.m.'s
About 10 or 15 of us – mostly staff, elders, and deacons, gather
No frills, no lesson, no small talk – we just walk in, bow our heads, and start praying
When we're done at 7:15, we walk out, say good-bye, and trust that our day, our
church, and our lives will be different because we took advantage of the opp to pray

Will you join us for one or more of those prayer times?

Will you get serious about prayer and take advantage of it . . . consistently?

Not just for a week or two, but for good, forever – seriously

It's an incredible privilege we dare not neglect, or take for granted

Take advantage of it, and . . .

Make time for it (various Scriptures)

• **As much as you need**

Like Moses, who spent 40 days and 40 nights on the mountain, praying

Not once, but twice

In **Deut 9:25-26** he's recounting it to the people, and says – *So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights, because the Lord had said he would destroy you. And I prayed to the Lord . . .*

Closer to home was a man named EM Bounds, who said (**quote**) . . .

The gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long."

Which is why for the last 17 years of his life, he woke up at 4 a.m. every morning to study the Bible and pray

If you're going to get serious about prayer – you have to make time for it

As much as you need

• **On a consistent basis**

Like Daniel, as recorded in **Dan 6:10**

When Daniel knew that the document [the law that banned prayer to anyone but the king] had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Daniel made time for prayer on a consistent basis – 3 times a day

Not just when trouble started, but *previously* as well

The point is not that you have to pray in exactly that manner, or with that frequency

The point is, you have to consistently, day in and day out, make time for it

Time to listen, to talk, to draw near; Even under stress and strain, like Daniel

• **No matter what**

Like Jesus in **Lk 5:15-16** – . . . *great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*

It didn't matter who needed him, or how many – Jesus made time for prayer . . .

No matter what

Most of us would do much better if life were like kindergarten and our prayer times were scheduled just like our nap times were

But they're not; Which means you have to *make* time for them, no matter what

No matter what's going on; No matter who's grabbing for your attention

No matter how busy you are

You have to make time for it, because it won't happen by itself

You'll always be too busy to pray

And you'll always be too busy *not* to pray

You'll always be too tired to pray

And you'll always be too tired *not* to pray

We need the strength that God supplies in prayer

Make time for it – no matter what . . .

On a consistent basis, as much as you need . . .

• **Even when it's hard**

Heb 5:7 – Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears

It was hard at times; A labor; But it was labor that needed to be done

Once again, **EM Bounds**, who wrote 7 books on prayer said this . . .

Spiritual work is taxing work, and men are loath to do it. Praying, true praying, costs an outlay of serious attention and of time, which flesh and blood do not relish. Few persons are made of such strong fiber that they will make a costly outlay when surface work will pass as well in the market.

I don't need to ask you which you tend toward – surface work or hard work in prayer

But I can tell you from experience which one yields more godliness in *my* life

In fact, which one yields godliness at all

Get serious about prayer and make time for it even when it's hard

Take advantage of it – it's a privilege we can't afford to neglect; and finally . . .

Just do it (1 Thess 5:17; Col 4:2)

Not just sometimes, but . . .

• **All the time**

1 Thess 5:17 (p988)– *Pray without ceasing*

That's pretty straight forward, don't you think?

Does that mean be on your knees 24/7?

Obviously not, because you wouldn't be able to fulfill the other parts of Scripture

Rather, it means – make the HS the constant companion of your thoughts

Have a constant, ongoing conversation with him, every waking hour

No matter what you're doing or who you're talking to

You always keep a running dialogue with him

It's like carrying on two cell phone conversations at the same time

Where you're asking for help *while* someone is laying out their issues

Or thanking God for the awesome time you're having, *while* you're having it

Or, for those of you who love to text more than you like to talk . . .

It's like having 5 different text-conversations, the HS included, all at the same time

He may not be the primary focus, but he's always one of the participants

He's always there; You're always keeping him in the loop

That's what it means to pray without ceasing; To pray all the time

Something we should do . . .

- **More and more**

Col 4:2 (p984) – *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*

Different than the constant prayer of 1 Thess 5:17, this is talking about times of dedicated prayer

Assuming that we already do it, we should persevere in it all the more

We should just do it – more and more

Nowhere is your commitment to a dedicated time/place to get with God, more important than w/ prayer

Under **My Plan for Godliness**, you can circle, underline, **highlight #3** . . .

Anything you can, to – Establish/maintain a consistent time and place to meet with the Lord

If you don't *establish* that from the get-go, you'll never pray consistently *or* steadfastly

And you probably won't pray at all

And if you don't commit to corporate times of prayer, you'll never pray more and more

You must *commit* to a time/place, and stick to it, no matter how you feel – in order to pray more and more

In order to continue steadfastly in prayer

And thank God, the more you just do it, the more you *want* to do it

The more you pray – the more you *want* to pray

The more dedicated time you spend in God's presence, the more you want to be there

So whether it's on your own, or with others – let me encourage you to get serious and . . .

Pray more – make it a part of your plan for godliness . . . and just do it

You can start with our **Week of Prayer** tonight from 7-8 p.m., right here

We're going to . . .

Commit the ministry year to the Lord – reaffirming all we do is for glory of his name

Commit ourselves to the Lord – acknowledging our need to get serious and train ourselves for godliness

Ask for God's blessing on our church and ministries – we're never going to stop doing that; we're going to do it more and more, all the time

Because without his blessing, "we got nothin"

People will be here praying every night this week – Sunday through Saturday

Same time, same place; 7-8 p.m.

Will you pick at least one of those nights, and come and pray? *No matter what?*

There's so much to pray for – the various prayer cards (fill one out); all the different ministries; staff; leaders

So much to pray for and so much to be gained by doing so together

Take advantage of it, make time for it, and just do it

God blesses that; And he'll bless *you* for it as well

Close

PwtP's; Week of prayer

Next week – Bill Merrifield . . . what it means to get serious about living for Christ

Membership Explanation

This is Membership Sunday for the 25 people you've seen listed on your bulletin insert these past few weeks

If you're one of those people, would you stand and remain standing for a few minutes?

As more and more people make a formal commitment to membership here at Harvest, it's good to emphasize its purpose so as not to dilute its importance

Bible doesn't say much about how to *formally* express our commitment to one another in the body of Christ . . .

But idea of commitment is obviously there – we belong together in mutual partnership

So at Harvest, we have chosen to express that commitment in a formal, public way through membership

We live in a society where few make commitments and even fewer keep them

And a formal membership helps to counter that, and actually solidify our commitments

It also serves to tighten our bond between each other, and increase our unity . . .

Moving us from mere spectators, to participants

I know that's the desire/intent of each and every one of you

That you want to be as fully vested in God's work here as you possibly can

That you've made those formal commitments on the back of the bulletin insert

And I want to *commend* you for that

We're making the same commitments to you

So *welcome* to membership here at Harvest Bible Chapel

We praise God for you, and . . .

We're excited to *partner* with you in glorifying him and building up the body of Christ

Let me pray