



Why Pray? Six Reasons to Awaken Ourselves To A Life of Prayer

Last year I was reading a book on the topic of prayer, and the author (who is a pastor in New York City) retells a scenario when he and his wife were probably in their 40's, and they were going through some immense difficulties. The twin towers were attacked, and that affected everyone deeply. Then his wife was struggling with the effects of Crohn's disease, and finally he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Finally, his wife came to him and asked if they could pray every night. But when she came to him and made this request, she used an illustration to help make her point. She said,

Imagine you were diagnosed with such a lethal condition that the doctor told you that you would die within hours unless you took a particular medicine – a pill every night before going to sleep. Imagine that you were told that you could never miss it or you would die. Would you forget? Would you not get around to it some nights? No – it would be so crucial that you wouldn't forget, you would never miss. Well, if we don't pray together to God, we're not going to make it because of all we are facing. I'm certainly not. We have to pray, we can't let it just slip our minds.

The author goes on to write, "For both of us the penny dropped; we realized the seriousness of the issue, and we admitted that anything that was truly a nonnegotiable necessity was something we could do. That was more than twelve years ago, and Kathy and I can't remember missing a single evening of praying together, at least by phone, even when we've been apart in different hemispheres."¹

Something like this convicts me. How about you? Add to this, about a month or so ago in Sunday School, Joel Koedyker was showing a video where the speaker recounted a story where an Asian pastor came to the United States, and after his tour of different churches in America, people asked him his thoughts on the church in America, and his response was something like, "It's amazing how much the church can do without the power of the Holy Spirit." His point was that there were programs, productions, worship experiences, but true gospel-focus and prayer was essentially non-existent. This pastor could say that the church had to be working in their own strength if prayer wasn't a vital part of it.

Yet I would imagine that we in America tend to work the other way around. We tend to think the end justifies the means. If there's external growth. If there's external experiences that look positive to us, that must mean God is at work. Is that true? I think the Asian pastor is correct. And this point is reiterated by the 19th century preacher, C.H. Spurgeon who wrote, "**A prayer-less church member is a hindrance. He is in the body like a rotting bone or a decayed tooth. . . . Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the church.**" – Spurgeon ² If a singular prayer-less member is the locust that devours the strength of the church, what would it mean for a church to be prayer-less?

¹ Keller, Timothy. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. New York: Dutton. 2014. pp. 9-10.

² <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/545540>

Now, as you hear all of these things you might be thinking, “Wow, Pastor Timothy, I came here to be encouraged, but way to go being a downer!” Or maybe you’re feeling guilty or maybe paranoid that your wife is going to talk to you again about when you’re going to pick up the slack spiritually. I think many times when we hear about prayer, we feel an immediate sense of guilt. And honestly, we feel it because, for many of us, we know we’re not seeking the Lord in prayer as we ought to. But even as I start with these stories, I want you to know that God doesn’t simply want you to feel guilty. A sorrow that just feels guilty and says, “I’ll try harder to prove myself” is a worldly sorrow that does no one any benefit. Please listen carefully to me right now, God doesn’t want you to merely feel guilty.

So, why did I start with these stories? Because a godly sorrow and a worldly sorrow start from the same place – recognizing our weakness and sins. As a pastor at Ventura, I have a great concern that we all *together* understand our desperate need to commune with God in prayer. I’m including myself in this. When I read biographies of Christians in the past, I’m impelled by the Lord to self-discipline and growth in prayer. When I hear believers around the world indicting the church in America, I say, “Lord, what am I blind to?” I still feel so weak. And as I think about our church living in an increasingly resistant culture, I wonder, “God, are we resting on our laurels or on Jesus Christ?” If we’re resting on Christ, we’re going to grow in desperate, dependent prayer.

We’re in this life together, Ventura. And I hope that as followers of Jesus, we want to be convicted of areas of sin because when God convicts his children, he doesn’t do it to shame them. He does it to grow them. He convicts out of love. So, as I start this series, I want to start with God’s convicting words from Scripture. My hope is that through this series we can say with the apostle Paul, “I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.”³

This morning, the sermon is called *Why Pray?* Before I get any further into the sermon this morning, I think I need to define the word “prayer.” I think we could boil down prayer into two kinds of definitions. One is a broad definition and another a narrow one. The broad definition is “our communication to God.” This includes supplication, thanksgiving, adoration – any communication from us directed to him. A narrower definition is “asking.” In the Scriptures, prayer seems to always (or almost always) lead towards requests because prayer is a confession of our need for God. One other thing to remember is that prayer in and of itself doesn’t matter. Prayer has power because of the God addressed in prayer. Prayer apart from God is wishful thinking. It’s no more than a lucky rabbit’s foot. But prayer to God on the basis of Jesus, has great power, according to the Bible.

Now, as we move through this series, I also want you to know that I’m focusing both mornings and evenings to this topic. The evenings are going to be very practical, hands-on applications to our lives; so, I’d encourage you to come back tonight (and each Sunday evening). The mornings are going to give application points, but the morning messages seek to give broader teaching on prayer itself. In addition, we also have books on the back table you can purchase to study the topic of prayer more. After this series, we plan to have a prayer week in June, and also as we get to the end of this series, everyone can get a Reflection Booklet where you can study personally on this topic. We want to make this very tangible for each of us.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 2 Co 7:9.

Now, my intention this morning, as we start the series, is to lay out six reasons why we ought to pray. This sermon is written to that part of our beings that raises “skeptical thoughts” to God and seeks excuses rather than God. But even as we see our sinfulness this morning, I want us all to be astounded by the God who overcomes pride-filled, unrelenting, prayer less people. And when he does, if you’re someone who’s entrusted yourself to Jesus and he is your Lord and Savior, you’re in a process of God strengthening your dependence on him. God has promised to work in you and grow you in prayer. So **this morning while we see our sin, I also pray that we see a tender, gracious God who promises to grow and heal us through the means of prayer.**

Now let’s start with the six reasons why we should pray.

1. Jesus lived, died and rose again so we could pray.

When was the last time you’ve pondered all the rights and privileges that Jesus gave you when he saved you? And if someone were to ask you what those blessings were, have you ever included *prayer* in that list? I know for me that the first time I heard someone teach that prayer was a blessing purchased by Jesus, I thought, “What? Really? Where’s that in the Bible?” That may be what you’re thinking. Listen to the words of Jesus in John 15:16: “. . . **I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.**”⁴ He chose us to bear fruit and to have answered prayers. One person by the name of Milton Vincent, who wrote the *Gospel Primer*, a book that’s being used in one of our Sunday School classes now, that “God is radically committed to my life of prayer. . . . He. . . permitted the brutal rending of His Son so that I might now have a way into the Holy Place through the torn flesh of Jesus.”

This is the teaching of Scripture. Hebrews 10 says, “¹⁹ **Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,** ²⁰ **by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh . . .** ²² **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . .**”⁵ We have been given access to God because of the crucified Lord who drained the dregs of God’s wrath and gave us a perfect standing before God. Therefore, this is what it means to pray in Jesus’ name. We pray on the basis of Jesus and for Jesus’ glory. God hears us because he accepted Jesus’ sacrifice!

Now, we draw near to God on the basis of Jesus. And to draw near to God, to be in his presence, implies to be able to know and worship him, while it also includes the freedom to pray. In 1 John 5:14, the apostle writes, “**Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**”⁶

Jesus died so that we could be in the presence of God and to be able to pray with confidence. Therefore, it’s no wonder that the Bible says to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Is prayer an insignificant blessing? No! We were created for communion with God. Our very beings were made for God and to know him. And prayer is vital communication and communion with God. But we, left in our sins, we could never gain that communion back, and you know what? Left to ourselves, we don’t want communion with God. Ever since Adam and Eve’s sin, people throughout the ages have wanted to go about life their own way. Even when people have tried to be spiritual, they’ve thought God has to

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Jn 15:16.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Heb 10:19–20, 22.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version*. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2009), 1 Jn 5:14.

submit to their way of doing things. That's how we are, left to ourselves. We tell God he has to accept our terms. That's how sinful we are. Yet, there was One who came completely on God's terms. One who depended on the Spirit his entire life, and then One who suffered the punishment we deserved. At his death, he gave to all who would trust him for forgiveness of sins, but not just forgiveness of sins. He gave us a righteous standing before God. He reconciled us to God! That's the greatest blessing of all – to know God. Now we can grow in knowing God through his communication to us (through the Bible) and through our communication with him (through prayer). Jesus died to give us prayer.

I hope that seeing Jesus' purchasing of prayer through his death causes us to see the eternal privilege of prayer. It was because of love that he died for us, and because he loved us with an everlasting love, he has given us prayer. So, the first and foremost reason to pray is because our Savior died to give us this precious gift.

I pray you know this Savior. If you don't, God calls you to turn from your sin and pride and lay yourself at Jesus' feet – trusting he's done it all to rescue you and give you eternal hope. The Bible says, "Now is the time of salvation." You don't have to wait until some other time to call on Jesus. Right now in your seat, you can come to the One who suffered to give you the complete acceptance of God. If you don't trust him, nothing else in this sermon is going to make sense. All the prayers in the world won't matter if you don't trust Jesus. I urge you to see, savor and embrace Christ.

Now, as we move forward this morning, I want you to see that if you've been set free by Jesus, the Holy Spirit works through prayer to grow your dependence, repentance, obedience. So, if you're a Christian who says you know you ought to pray because of Jesus, let's also see the blessings that come to us through communion with God through prayer. So, why pray, Christian?

2. Through prayer, God increases our wisdom.

I know these are two reasons, but they combine in one passage. Our recent Fighter Verses for memorization came from James, and James says, "**²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God. . . .**"⁷

How many of you here have gone through a significant season of many trials, pains and difficulties and you felt like if someone had a way to measure the amount of wisdom in you, the device would come back and say "100% full of wisdom?" I don't think *anyone* can respond that way. It's interesting, isn't it, that James could list any number of things we could be lacking in a trial, but the things he mentions that are needful are faith, steadfastness and wisdom. *If any of you lack wisdom? Well, we all lack wisdom!*

What's the answer to that? James says "pray." You see, in the midst of trials, we want to make deals with God. We may pray, "Ok God, I'll submit to you, but you have to give me this or that." Or we think, "I prayed and prayed and submitted over and over again, and God still hasn't given me this thing." Whoa, wait a second. Why are you praying? Are you praying for a life that glorifies God, a life that says God is the greatest blessing no matter what? A life that says, "I couldn't live this apart from the Lord?" Or are you still brokering with God?

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Jas 1:2–5.

That's where wisdom comes in. Wisdom is the ability to see all things in light of eternity. Wisdom is seeking "... the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." It is setting "your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."⁸ When we see Christ, we can live wisely and endure through whatever comes our way.

That's why James says "pray." Prayer draws us near to God. Prayer is our entrance into the throne room of Heaven, and in prayer, we learn to confess God's infinite greatness and goodness even when what we see around us doesn't make sense. As we pray, God shapes our minds to align with eternity – not merely the temporal. God grants wisdom to those who would be humble before him and trust that he's in control. And that leads me to the third reason for praying.

3. Through prayer, God increases our reliance on God.

James says "**the testing of your faith.**" As I said a couple of weeks ago, too often in the midst of the difficulties of life, we feel that it's a bad thing that we're out of control. But James says that when these difficulties come, they come as God's messengers to remind us that we never were in control to begin with. That's why James says that trials test our faith – meaning that trials test in such a way as to increase our awareness of just how much we need God. As a Christian is made more aware of his lack of control (sometimes very painfully so), the Christian begins to cling even more on God.

But oftentimes when we feel "out of control," we still squirm at trusting God. We don't like it. But think about the biblical message. Paul writes, "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. . . ."⁹ How did we receive Jesus? Through faith. So, Paul says we are to live our whole lives in reliance on him. And in prayer we confess our utter reliance on him. Again, praying in Jesus' name means that God accepts our prayer because of Jesus. We're confessing who we need in order for God to hear and answer. When Jesus gave an example prayer to the disciples, Jesus calls us to pray that God would be set apart in our hearts as above all. Jesus calls us to ask for his Kingdom to come and for obedience to him. Jesus commands us to pray for our daily food. Jesus summons us to pray for forgiveness and to confront our own tendency to be unforgiving to others. Jesus tells us to pray that we would resist internal and external temptations.

This covers just about *anything*. In prayer, we confess our neediness. Jesus said, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."¹⁰ Apart from Jesus, we can do *nothing*. And in prayer, we are to joyously affirm that. Our Savior who loved us and gave himself for us wants us to know him to greater degrees. He didn't come to give us greater self-confidence and self-reliance. He came to increase our God-confidence and God-reliance!

In prayer we say, "Lord, I need you! Lord, I want you! Lord, I'm depending on you to do everything." Psalm 71:1 says, "In You, O Lord, I put my trust. . . ."¹¹ So, every time we pray, it's not to impress God, but we pray so that our hearts will be reminded of just how absolutely and gloriously impressive, good, holy, gracious, just, kind, infinite our God is! May prayer confront our tendency to depend on us and may we pray in such a way that God increases our reliance on him.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Col 3:1–3.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Col 2:6.

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Jn 15:5.

¹¹ *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ps 71:1.

But, of course, you could say, “I’m not that needy. I can do some things on my own.” That leads me to the fourth point:

4. Through prayer, God confronts our pride.

While it’s true that you work to get a paycheck and then you choose to spend that paycheck on food, that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t pray for your daily bread. Who is giving the rain and sun to nourish the grass which nourishes the cow? Who is keeping the truck drivers safe who transports the cow? Who is making sure that certain diseases aren’t traveling to you when you eat meat? Who is making sure you still have a job tomorrow? Prayer confesses that if God stops any of these activities, we would not have food.

I think of King Nebuchadnezzar who, before he went completely insane, boasts in all of his work – thinking he made his kingdom what it was. Finally, over years, Nebuchadnezzar realizes his foolishness. He comes to his senses, and then confesses the greatness of God. He admits any good that exists is from God! So he says, **“I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”¹²**

Like Nebuchadnezzar, we must all confess that anything we have, we’ve received from the Lord. And in being called to ceaseless prayer, we are always humbly acknowledging that God is *God* and we are not. We need to be humble. But you could say, “Pastor Timothy, Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t a follower of God at first, but I am. I don’t need any more humility!” Well, let’s listen to the Apostle Peter’s words, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**¹³ Peter is talking to Christians here, and he says that laying our anxieties, our burdens, at his feet is equivalent with humility. We need to daily do this because pride loves to creep in. You see again here that when we think we’re not in control, we become anxious. But Peter says that the solution isn’t to try to figure it out all right away. No, the first thing to do, the humble thing to do is to cast that burden at the Lord’s feet.

Now, as I say all of these things about being humble and not being prideful, you could get the idea that being humble is a drudgery. You may be hearing me with almost a sinister tone, as if God is against us because we’re so lowly. But that’s not humility. Peter says, “Humble yourselves because God cares for you!” What?! The fact is that we can’t do anything on our own, and God doesn’t want us to live life depending on us because that will never save us. No. Instead, God wants us to know reality. And the reality is that the God of the galaxies, the God of the infinitesimally small, the God over all things unseen and seen – this God wants us to know that He’s the God who provides *everything*! When we realize that all we have is a gift from him our joy should increase. Our love should flow like a river from our hearts. We rebelled against God – just like Nebuchadnezzar - yet God in his great mercy loved us and gives us all good gifts from above. And now, he listens to us. He inclines his ear to us and hears our prayers. If you are his child, God has accepted you in Christ. Now don’t act like a rebel by embracing pride again. God

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Da 4:34–35.

¹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Pe 5:5–7.

resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble! Our God is great, and our God is good. And, through prayer, we confess both and draw our hearts to greater humility.

Now, we go to the fifth point as to why we should pray:

5. **Through prayer, God impels our obedience.**

You might have already heard me use the word “impel” earlier. It’s a word I learned last week, and I find it quite helpful. To compel means that something comes alongside and takes you somewhere. To propel means something is behind moving you forward, but to impel means something works along with you to move you forward. This fits the picture of Philippians 2, where we read that *we* are to work out our own salvation because God’s at work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure!

God isn’t interested in robots. He works in his children in such a way that our desires, our wills, our affections are changed from the inside-out! And, I would say that through prayer, God impels that kind of obedience – an obedience from the will and desires of the heart.

Do you remember when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and the disciples continued to fall asleep? Jesus said to them, **“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**¹⁴ To have a spirit that truly wants and desires to follow Jesus means that you’ve experienced a transformation. These disciples want Jesus. They trust Jesus. But that doesn’t mean that they’re sinless. Jesus says that they have this “flesh” that still dogs them. That flesh is so weak that it could fight against them and constrain their obedience.

Have you ever felt that way? You’re right with the Apostle Paul who says, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”¹⁵ We want to follow God, but we still sin. We struggle and fight against it. It’s so frustrating, angering. How do we counter the temptations? How do we grow in obedience?

Jesus says, “Be on alert and pray!” In other words, recognize that temptations fly all the time from within and without (as Jesus says in the Lord’s Prayer). We need to recognize that. We’ll never be above temptation. Sometimes we have this faulty thinking that if we’re never tempted in an area, then we’re not victorious. What a lie! Be on alert always. Ok, be aware that we’ll always face temptations. Then what? Pray! Next step. Pray!

Prepare for your day in fighting against sin through prayer. Pray “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” This is precisely where Paul goes after talking about his own struggles. In Romans 8, he says that we’re no longer slaves, but we cry out (we pray) Abba! Father! And Paul then adds that even when we don’t know how to pray about what’s going on, the Spirit intercedes for us.

But, here’s the reality, you want to fight sin and grow in obedience? Every Christian should say yes here. If you want to fight sin and grow in holiness, you must pray and pray with alertness.

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Mt 26:41.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ro 7:18–19.

What amazing grace from God. He says “work out your salvation.” He says that without holiness (and that means living a life of increasing holiness), we will not see the Lord. And then, God reminds us, “You can’t depend on you to do this. I will do this. Pray to me, and I’ll give it.” Isn’t that immeasurably gracious? He who began the good work will be faithful to complete it. And, by the way, he’ll even give us the desires to pray! Faith’s voice is prayer, and the Bible says that salvation and even faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. So, believer, be encouraged, God has a hold on you! And he guarantees you will grow in prayer and grow in obedience. So, pray!

Now let’s move into our sixth reason to pray:

6. Through prayer, God grants patient zeal.

Here’s one big tension I find in prayer: patience and zeal. Recently I was at a conference and I heard one man who spoke about people who had died for their faith. He recounts a story about a man who had eleven children. He hadn’t met his eleventh because of his trials, and yet he was tried to be burned. He asked for mercy to at least say goodbye to his wife and to see his eleventh child. They declined the request, but as he walked out to be burned at the stake, he saw his wife and children. Then he went resolutely to death.

In another story, I heard about a husband and a wife. I believe they died for believing that Jesus’ body and blood wasn’t present in communion. They believed Jesus reigned in heaven and there’s no need for another sacrifice. As they gave their children to family members, and the wife was facing death by drowning and having to see her husband taken to be executed, she looked at her husband and said something to the effect of, “Isn’t this the best day ever? We’re going home!” As Platt got to the end of his sermon, he told of how there are countries today with absolutely *no* gospel witness. He talked about how this shouldn’t be tolerable to Christians and then said, “Who’s going to go to this country and die?” He said that might sound extreme, but the reality is that many times people don’t believe until after great sacrifice.

After I heard that message, I said to either (or both) Ben and Joel, “I just want to go! I want to go to one of those countries. But I don’t feel called there. I feel called here to help mobilize and send people.” And it’s at this point that I recognize a tension in my heart: zeal and patience. I honestly say I want the honor of dying for Jesus. But I also can honestly say, I want the honor of patiently living this life in the struggles of affluent America and show he’s more worthy than anything.

How can I say both things? I think through the study of the Word and through prayer, I have begun to learn the tension of zeal and patience. There’s a zeal in my heart for God’s glory to be known, and prayer incites that zeal. Hebrews 5:7 shows us how Jesus prayed when we read, **“who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear. . . .”**¹⁶ Vehement cries. In Amos 7:2, Amos cries out **“O Lord God, forgive, I beseech [you]. . . .”**¹⁷ The Scriptures reiterate even an idea of begging and great desperation in prayer.

¹⁶ *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Heb 5:7.

¹⁷ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), Am 7:2.

Those who know the heinousness of sin, the brokenness of the world around us, and how much we *need* God, will pray with zeal because we want the *same desires* as he has for his glory. Yet, in the midst of praying zealously, some people could say, “I’ve prayed that way and God hasn’t answered me.” As a result, people sit back and offer what I’ll call “lazy” prayers. They’re heartless. They don’t resonate with the desires of the Lord. They are desire-less. In a way, I think people cease from passionate prayers because they’re protecting themselves. If they can’t have those passions realized, they give up.

But that’s not the right response. We need zeal and patience, much like I need to have a passion for missions and a patient trusting in God to send whom he wills. As I think about this, I’m reminded of the psalmist who says in Psalm 130:5-6, “⁵ **I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;** ⁶ **my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.**”¹⁸ A watchman waiting in the middle of the night longed for the morning. There was a zeal for morning, but he had to wait for it. He had to work through his shift. He had to stay on alert the whole time until morning came. You see, the biblical answer to what we might think are unanswered prayers is to say, “Morning’s coming!” You see, the Bible says that God answers exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. I take that to mean that *every single prayer* offered by Jesus’ followers are heard by God and he doesn’t merely say “no.” He says, “Let me do better!” It may not happen immediately, but not one prayer is wasted at God’s feet. The Bible even says he keeps our tears in a bottle. Our deepest yearnings of the heart, when expressed to God in dependence on him, aren’t wasted before God. So weep, rejoice, yearn, praise and fall before God in zealous, patient prayer. Not one prayer of dependence is thrown out.

Do you see how personal our God is? He truly wants us to see that he is our satisfaction, our hope, our life. He wants us to know his love and how he treasures us, his children. **So, why pray? God has decided to give greater wisdom, reliance, humility, obedience and patient zeal through prayer. And, we have confidence he will give this to us because Jesus died to give us this eternally precious gift of prayer.**

¹⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ps 130:5–6.