



Intercessory Prayer
Women's Discipleship Class – September 4, 2019

Verses Covered This Week

Ephesians 6:17 – 19

1 John 5:13 – 15

Matthew 16:17 – 19

James 5:16 – 18

1 Kings 18:36 – 46

Romans 8:26 – 28

Luke 22:42

Ephesians 1:16 – 17

Ephesians 2:17 – 22

1 Timothy 2:1 – 7

Luke 18:1 - 8

So we're going to cover intercessory prayer tonight. Now intercessory prayer is not, and we'll do another session on prayer. But intercessory prayer is literally when you simply pray for someone else. Now so it's not a trick question, am I allowed to dictate to God about what I want at any time in my life. Now you're sure? You are correct. So why do we do that at the most important part of our walk with Him? Because that is exactly what we do. I was with someone a few days back, we were discussing someone, that person looked at me and said, "Well, just pray for their healing." What we generally do is we come into our prayer time, we have our itemized list, and we sit down with God and we say, "OK, God. Here's my list. Do this, this, this, this, this, this, this, and this." And then we go home. So in the most important part of our life, we dictate to God what He is supposed to do in my life about my request. So we violate what you just said in the most important moment that we have as Christians. And this is particularly true with women. If I have to pray, have somebody pray for me, I ask a woman every time. If I ask a man to pray for me, I'm going to get, "Sure. God take care of Chris. Amen." That's what I'm going to get. If I ask a woman to pray for me, I'm actually going to get a prayer with some kind of detailed substance. So I want you to pray correctly.

Now here's my next question. I won't ask you to answer it, because you'll answer it incorrectly. I've heard all my life, and I did hear growing up, that when you pray, that there are number of different answers that you can get from God. You can get, "Yes." You can get, "No." You can

get, “Wait.” In my case, once in a while, God, you can kind of hear Him going, “You are kidding Me, right?” So that’s what I grew up hearing. It’s not Biblical. Now we’re going to walk through tonight what the Bible says about Biblical prayer, at least intercession. We’ll come back another time and look at prayer in general. But I want you to understand. This is going to be the easiest lesson to understand tonight. We’re going to walk through Scripture. It’s very clear. It’s very up front. It’s very simple. There’s nothing complex about tonight. But you’ll quit doing it in a month because you won’t like it and because it’s hard to do. As a matter of fact, I think it may be the hardest thing to do. And what happens is, Satan robs you of the most powerful tool you have. So, off we go.

Go to Ephesians 6:17 – 19. Now remember we’ve talked about that we’re led by the Holy Spirit of God in our life so we can bring glory to God. We’re led objectively. So what is that? The Bible. We’re subjectively by Him speaking to our heart always in accordance with Scripture. But He has to speak things beyond the Scripture such as, you’re called to preach, you’re called to marry this person, you’re called to marry that person. So there is a definite direction from the Holy Spirit that has to occur beyond the Scripture, but confirmed by Scripture. So here we go, Ephesians 6:17 – 19. Listen to what he says.

¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication,

Prayer, there, a general word for prayer. Supplication, the word for intercession. So I pray in the Holy Spirit. Now what would that mean? One meaning. What would it be? If I pray in the Spirit, what does that mean? I’m going to pray His direction in my prayer. Otherwise, I’d be praying in my spirit. If I pray in my spirit, I pray what I want. But if I pray in the Holy Spirit, then He’s the one that’s going to direct my prayer. And that is, to me, a simple interpretation. So here we go. Go to 1 John 5:13 – 15.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life.

What’s the first criteria for prayer? You’ve got to be a Christian. Have to be a believer. Why? Because I have no contact with the Father outside of adoption. I can’t go to Him. He’s not my Father. So I’m adopted through Jesus Christ. Now I have a connection, I have a relationship. Now I can go to Him. So I have to be a believer. Now listen.

¹⁴This is the confidence we have toward Him that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵If we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we’ve asked of Him.

So, I have to be a believer. I pray His will. If I do that, He hears me and He answers me with, “Yes.” There it is. 1 John 5 says I have to be a believer; I have to pray His will. If I pray His will, He hears me. So if I don’t pray His will, does He hear me? No. If I don’t pray His will and He doesn’t hear me, does He give me an answer of “Yes?” No. So when we get answers of, no and maybe and that’s always been our game plan, it’s a denial of this Scripture. If I pray His will as a believer, He hears me, He answers me, He gives me a yes answer every single time that I pray His will. There is no, no. There is no, maybe. There’s always yes if I pray His will. Let me show

you something. Go to Matthew 16:17 - 19. Now this is the famous passage where Simon Peter says, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷He says, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Now I want you to listen. How many of you have New American Standard? How many of you have English Standard? I’m scared to have this. How many of you have the NIV: the Not Inspired Version? How many of you have that? What other versions do we have in here? Listen to Matthew 16:17.

¹⁷Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, on this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound on heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that He was the Messiah.

Now I just read you to English Standard. Now in the footnotes in my Bible, it says where He says, “I’ll give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.” Obviously the key to the kingdom of heaven would be what? It’s how I unlock God’s kingdom in my life. Right? That would be the point of a key. I unlock it. I open the door to the kingdom. Here it is. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound. Now if you read that straight, literally, right there which is what the charismatics do. And I don’t hate charismatics, so don’t go out of here saying I do. But they would take that to mean I decide what is bound on earth and what is loosed. My footnotes say a different translation: or shall have been bound or shall have been loosed. That’s the Greek. The English does not say what you bind shall be bound. The English says whatever shall have been loosed, will be loosed. In other words, the key here is that it’s whatever God shall have already decided to be loosed is what I loose. In other words, I have to figure out what He’s already decided and then I can step in and achieve His will. I don’t get to just bind whatever I want to bind. That’s the English. But it’s not the Greek. That’s why it’s in the footnotes in the ESV. I think it’s in the footnotes in the NASB. It should be in the updated version at least. But the reason for those footnotes and the reason it’s not in the text that way is it’s poor English. It’s hard to do that. But that is the Greek. So the idea that Jesus is telling him, I’m going to give you how to unlock it, and whatever you bind shall already have been bound. In other words, I’m going to let you, just like you now have discovered about me from My Father, He’s going to declare to you what He wants bound and what He wants loosed. And you will work off that. Not your decision of what’s bound and loosed; but His.

Now go to James 5:16 – 18. Now listen carefully.

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayers of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

He uses an illustration from the Bible. What makes you righteous? OK. The blood of Christ. What makes the prayer of a righteous person work? Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. What does that phrase mean? Yeah, just like us. He's no different. He's not any better than you or I. He's not any more spiritual. He prayed fervently. Now we're going to look at that. It's going to be one of the last things we look at. Now I want you to catch this. Elijah's prayer controlled the weather. Now that's what the text says. It was his prayer. If he just stands there and doesn't utter anything, the weather isn't altered. His utterance, verbalizing to God, whether it was out loud or in his head, but he verbalized to God, he prayed and the weather was altered by his prayer. Now this with this and this is demonstrated when you go back to this story. And that's in 1 Kings 18. We're going to look at 36 to 39 and then we're going to look at 42 to 46. Now this is the story where he gets the prophets of Baal, brings them out to Mt. Carmel, takes them up there, Northern part of Galilee. As a matter of fact, when you stand on Mt. Carmel, there's a great Air Force base that you don't see because it's underground in Northern Israel, but he brings them up to Mt. Carmel. They have been awful. Now listen carefully to what he says. At the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near. Now, let me back up. He's already given them; they worship a different god. I love Elijah. I actually put this in my dissertation because Elijah is, what's the Greek word: sarcastic. Look in verse 26.

²⁶Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they limped about the altar which they made. ²⁷It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.

He's got them with a sacrifice and he says, "I want you to call to Baal and get him to burn your sacrifice." So they took the bull that was given to them, 26, they prepared it, called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "Oh, Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. Why? Because he's not home. They limped around the altar that they had made; because they had cut themselves. That was part of their sacrifice. So they're limping now. I love Elijah. At noon Elijah mocked them saying, "Cry aloud, he's a god, either he's musing, in other words he's in his man cave thinking, or he's relieving himself. That is what you think that says. Or he's on a journey or perhaps he's asleep and must be awakened. And they cried aloud and cut themselves. So finally, I love the last verse in 29. No one answered. No one paid attention because there's no one there. So he gives them a shot. And now he has them pour water all over his wood three different times. The trench is filled. Now listen carefully. Now this is a connection. OK. We have a connective story. It's two part, but one connection. We're going to see the fire and then we're going to see the rain. Now the rain is based on James 5. But listen to what happens.

³⁶And about the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

So why is he on this mountain? Why is he praying what he's praying? God told him to. He can't orchestrate this sacrifice on his own. He can't call down fire from heaven on his own. He has to do it in response to the direction of God in his life which he does. And sure enough,

³⁸Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

I love these people.

³⁹And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.”

So they’re wonderful people, very repentant right here. So Elijah kills the prophets and then look in 42 to 46.

⁴²So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

What’s he doing? Ok. He’s praying.

⁴³And he said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” And he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go again,” seven times.

Why does he keep telling him to go? Because God has told him to pray until he sees a particular object. Same thing here. Pray for the sacrifice and I want you to pray for this because it’s a part of the connection story.

⁴⁴And at the seventh time he said, “Behold, a little cloud like a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.’” ⁴⁵And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and winds, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

James quotes Elijah and it sounds like if you just read James, hey, he prayed, the weather was controlled. But the weather was controlled for the same reason the sacrifice was burned. Because God told Elijah what to pray and when to pray and how long to pray. He prayed until he saw the hand. He prayed the sacrifice down. Elijah’s prayer, which changed the weather and brought down the power of God, was not out of his own volition, it was out of the Father’s will. All the way back to Ephesians, John, Matthew, James, here. This is the Old Testament illustration of Elijah’s ability to control the weather. You don’t have the ability to control the weather unless God tells you to pray to control the weather. Then you have two things. I have to have His will and I have to pray His will. I can’t just know His will. I’ve got to pray His will. If I know His will and I don’t pray His will, then the weather’s not changed. If Elijah just stands here and looks at this sacrifice and he doesn’t ask God to do something, nothing happens. But he has to have two things. He has to know what God wants him to pray and then he has to pray it. If he doesn’t pray it; it doesn’t happen. If he doesn’t know what to pray; it’s a gamble and he will guess. Which is why when you pray and you get a yes and a no and a maybe, you’re getting the no because you’re guessing and you get it wrong. And you’re getting a yes because you’re guessing correctly.

So this is the scripture. And sure enough it continues. Go to Romans 8:26 – 28. Anybody know Romans 8:28? What's it say? Anybody know?

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

Look at the verses before it.

²⁶Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we don't know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷and He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

You have the third person of the Trinity who will only pray what God the Father says to pray. Co-Equal, co-eternal. But God's will is prayed and when God's will is prayed in your life by the Holy Spirit when you don't know how to pray, God takes something good and works it out of something bad every time. Only because the Holy Spirit's interceding for you as He lives inside you based on what the Father wants. Same thing you're taught. Now look in Luke 22. I get this question all the time. So I'm going to forestall it here. Look at Luke 22:42. Jesus in the garden. As people say, what about this prayer?

⁴¹And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done."

He asks here for God's will. He asks if that will that He knows is still legit. Is there any other way to do this? I know this is what You want. Is there another way we can do that? No, then I will do exactly what You want. So even Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, is locked into what the Father says to Him. Now there is, then, a simple procedure. I have to pray God's will. And here's your problem. I can't pray, "Lord, let Your will be done. My wife's sick, let Your will be done." And then go home and everything's works out. No, no, no, no, no. Elijah prayed to request with great specificity. You don't get just to pray in general terms. When the Bible says, let your requests be made known to God, that is a plural word meaning your requests have to have specificity. You have to know exactly what God wants you to pray and you have to pray it. And you have to be careful with this. When I had just gotten called to preach and we were in Shocco Springs, Alabama, my youth choir. If I remember right, there were 54 kids on the trip with us. And the guy, the last night, asked those of you who have surrendered to Christ come forward. And so another guy that I had talked to the entire night before, Bill Lee, he talked to me about getting his life right with Jesus. So we went up, he stood over here, I stood here. And I watched out of 54 kids coming on the trip with us, 49 made decisions for Christ. It was incredible. So when it was over, there was a guy I didn't see, my best friend David Gill. Now all through the service I had this overwhelming feeling that I needed to pray for David Gill by name. So I prayed the whole time. Never saw him at the invitation. So they took the kids to the back. So I went over to talk to Bill and I said, "Man, it was incredible." And then Bill looked at me and he said, "You know, Chris, I felt compelled to pray for David the whole time we were in here." So we walk out together out of the back of the church. David comes around the corner and he looks at me and he says, "Man, I've never meet Jesus. I need to. Will you take me up in the room and share with me how

to do that?” Now I don’t know how to answer this part of the question, but if I had not prayed and Bill had not prayed, would he have come under conviction? I don’t think so and I think that’s why God pushed us to pray. Either He pushed us to pray because our prayer affected his life, or He pushed us to pray because He’s given us busy work. So you don’t get to pray the way you want to.

Now this sounds theologically easy to understand. But it’s one of the greatest tools of the enemy. So you’re going to have to quit Facebook praying. Because when I see a request go out on Facebook, everything I see is always, we’re going to pray for his healing, we’re going to pray for this, we’re going to pray for that. No. You don’t get to do that if this is all true. What you have to do is come back to here and say, “Alright, Holy Spirit, I’ve got a request that came to me, someone close to me, how do You want me to pray for that person?” I don’t get to tell Him what to do because He’s God and I’m not. I have to wait for Him to tell me what to do. Maggard. I’m using her tonight. I’ve used her before so I’m not breaking any confidence here. Sherry had a best friend in the church, Donna. Donna got cancer. Sherry felt led to pray for her best friend Donna Francis the first time she got cancer. She prayed that she’d be healed. And Donna was. And for a period of time she was in remission. And then she got a second notice several years later that said cancer’s back. So I wound up doing Donna’s funeral. Sherry spoke at it. But Sherry didn’t say anything to me at that time about praying for Donna to be healed. So when it was all over and the funeral was over, I sat down with Sherry and I said, “Alright, tell me. Did you pray for Donna to be healed this second time?” And I’ll never forget her answer. She looked at me and she said, “No. I knew He wasn’t going to heal her.” I said, “So what did you pray for?” She said, “I prayed for her family.” See what Satan does, he gets us praying for a woman that He’s about to take home and we have no right to even think we can overrule that will. So we waste our prayer time. And I’m sorry, but that’s part of it. You misuse your prayer time praying for something God’s not going to answer when there are people in the family that need your prayers that are not given because you’re praying for something outside of God’s will because you’re now praying under the Holy Spirit.

So obviously there are two ways in which we’re going to know the will of God in our prayer life. We’ve been talking about them. What are the two? Bible and Holy Spirit. So David Gill would be an example of what? Holy Spirit directly. Sherry not praying for Donna the second time for healing would be an example of what? Holy Spirit telling her what to pray and how to pray. But there are prayers in the Bible, for example, that Paul prayed that we then pray for each other. Now go to Ephesians 1. Now we’ve been through this. I want you to listen to Ephesians 1:16. He says:

¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remember you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in full knowledge of Him,

So you have the right for people you love to pray Ephesians 1:16 & 17 in their life. That they have wisdom and knowledge and a full understanding of the Father. If I’ve got kids, that’s what I’m praying over my kids. That they will absolutely know. So I’ve got an objective prayer direction that’s given to me in Ephesians. Then you go over to chapter 2:17 – 18. I have another objective prayer that he gives me. Here’s what it says.

¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access to one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Again, I have this relationship with Christ. He moves out of that all the way down to chapter 3:14. Here's what he says. Based on that premise of my walk with Christ, exactly 1 John 5.

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

He wants you in chapter 4 to have God's power. You pray for that. And look at what he says. He wants you to understand the power of God and the love of God. He prays for them basically that they understand who Jesus is and that they understand His power and they understand His love. If I've got children, as a matter of fact, this is what I pray over my grandchildren now. I've got one grandkid that needs all three of these because he's like his grandfather. You have an objective basis to pray for these. So if I pray for these for my children and they're under my authority and care, then I've got that. Look at 1 Timothy 2:1 – 7.

¹First of all, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions,

So I have to pray for those in high positions, right. Now let me help you delineate that. Obviously I think you pray for Trump. Seriously, I would pray for him that someone would "break his thumbs". That's my prayer. That he would no longer be able to Tweet at all. So that's my prayer which I think is Biblical. All kidding aside, I'd for him to shut up. If I'm praying for my president, that's the main flaw I see in him, I'm praying for him to just shut up. So that is part of my prayer. Then I pray for my governor. You pray for Abbott. Then I think you pray for anybody in high position that's connected to your life. For example, if your kids are in high school, you pray for the principal and the superintendent. If your kids are at Brazos Christian, you pray for the people there. If your kids are involved in 4H, you pray for whoever the head of 4H is. If they're in the band, you pray for the band director. You pray for the authorities that are most connected to you. So you're not going to pray for every authority. So what do we pray? Listen to what he prays.

That we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

And then he goes back through Jesus being one mediator. So here's what he prays. He says, "I want you to pray for leadership so we have a quiet life so we can do evangelism." That's his

prayer. Now I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands, but seriously, when was the last time you prayed for your governor, for your president, for those of us that lead this church; me, the staff. You pray for us and you pray that those that are in charge of the country you live in, you pray for their leadership so that you can have a quiet life. Not so that you can be happy, but so that you can do evangelism with minimal difficulty. This is exactly what happened. The church prayed and Constantine, in 315 A.D., embraced Christianity and all of a sudden a quiet life came and evangelism was much easier. Now the church became corrupt in a few hundred years, but there's a period of time where this is the case. So you have a biblical basis to pray.

Now one last thing and then I'll open it up for questions. Look at Luke 18. How long do I pray for something that I know is God's will?

¹And He told them a Parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

So what you do, when you know what to pray, then you pray until God answers you or tells you to stop praying. When I was in Midland, we had a lady whose husband built our house. We were real close to the family. As a matter of fact, their son's a pastor, he's coming in a group that Nathan and I mentor in January. And so Linda came to me and she said, "I'm trying to win Jeannie Prince to Christ. I want you to pray with me about this. She's just a burden on my heart." She went to lunch with Jeannie once a week. They talked, shared, talked about Jesus. So one Saturday night, Linda calls me at about 6:00 on a Saturday night. She said, "Chris, I don't know what to say. But my burden for Jeannie is gone. I have no desire to pray for her anymore. It left today about 10 minutes ago. I can't explain it." I said, "Well, all I know to say is don't pray then." Great pastoral advice, but that's all I had. So next morning at the 8:15 service, Jeannie Prince walked down and asked Jesus into her heart. And you need to understand. If anybody's saved at an 8:15 service, only the Holy Spirit can do that. So God told her to quit praying because He'd finished using her prayer. Now you listen to me. If Linda had not prayed for Jeannie, I don't know that she'd be saved. Her prayer, under God's will, in time, on God's time, she didn't quit, and it honored God's power. You can control the weather, you can impact people, you can change the lives of your children, you can change the destiny of different people. But you have to make sure you pray inside the will of God.

Now ladies, you have to pray objectively from the Scripture. For example, and I don't mean to be harsh here, I just want to tell you not to misuse your prayer time. But a lot of moms that say to me, "I'm praying for the spouse of my child." That sounds good, but it may not be God's will for your kid to marry. So you're spending your time praying for something that isn't going to happen. You're misusing your prayer time. I would say, "God, I want these things in my child's life so that he will make the right decision whether it's marriage or singlehood." So, again, you want

your prayer going in the correct way. So if you do it Biblically, you don't get to take your list and sit down and tell God what your list is. You get to take your list, which He sovereignly has given you, and you get in your prayer room and you sit down and you go, "OK, Father, I need Your Holy Spirit to tell me how to pray for this situation." Now that includes your spouse. If my wife were to tell me tomorrow that she's got cancer, that would kill me. And we would wrestle through it. But even with that, I'm not going to pray for her healing. I'm going to ask God to absolutely show me what I'm to pray for in regard to her life so I don't misuse my prayer as much as I love her. Now this is how difficult this is. It's an easy thing to understand. You will find yourself not wanting to do it. Because it's hard, difficult, requires a dependency on the Spirit. And you don't always have a perfectly clear answer. I don't want you to think you do. There are times I've gone into a hospital room and known what to pray and what not to pray. There are other times I go in and I have no idea what to pray. So I simply give them to the Father. You say, "Father, I trust them to Your heart and to Your love today." And then I go back and try to process how I need to pray for them. Now this is difficult. Not hard to understand, but I've had more than one person call me two or three months after this and go, "I just can't do it." And I get it. All I'm saying to you is you can have a prayer life like Elijah or you can have a prayer life that's minimal. And that's up to you.

Questions

Q. I'm going to butcher this. I just remember hearing it over and over when I was younger in the church. But somewhere in the Old Testament I believe it said that if you pray and believe that God can move that mountain for you, it will move. It said it will physically, literally move.

A. Yes, that's correct. Christ said that. But, again, one rule of interpretation in the Scripture, the first rule you come to, you always take difficult passages and interpret them by clear passages. These passages are clear. I have to pray His will. So if His will is for me to pray that mountain out, and I trust that, then He'll move that mountain. But it has to be my prayer. It goes back to Elijah. I mean this was massive. He burned up the massive sacrifice. He put water on three times. And then changed the weather with his prayer. Because God told him what to pray. So in a sense, he did move mountains. But it was based on what he knew. And I think the principle still holds true there.

And that's a great question, by the way. Because you can think, and based on that, Luke 18, the unjust judge, you can think your fervence will make a difference, when it's your fervence based on His will.

Q. Like in your Sunday school classes and I'm sure there's other groups of women that have a prayer list and there will be multiple things on it. I certainly hope I haven't been doing this wrong for a lot of years. When we have those individuals, are we still to take them one by one and then really ask the Lord to tell us how to pray for them?

A. No. I don't pray for someone not in my circle of life. I mean, I get 4,000 requests man. I can't pray for everybody that comes to me. So I pray for people in my circle. In fairness, if you came to me and said, "I've got an uncle in Tennessee who's got lumbago." Well bummer. For me, the people up there need to pray for his lumbago. It's not my job. It's not in my circle. He's in your circle as an uncle, then you pray for him. And this is the

problem. Here's the thing I learned years ago about people praying. If you ask for prayer requests, you'll get 6,000. If you say, let's just pray them, you'll get 4. Because we only pray what really is bothering us. And I don't care about your uncle in Tennessee. That doesn't mean God doesn't care. I don't. It's not in my circle. But if he's in my circle, and sometimes this circle can be, for example, my son was born with epispadias. It took four surgeries to correct. There may be somebody I don't know, but if I hear their child has epispadias, that hits me and I may pray for them in a way I don't pray for someone else. So sometimes it's that as well. But I don't pray for everybody that asks me.

Q. Isn't it the Holy Spirit that draws... But could the Holy Spirit's work be that if we didn't pray correctly that He would use someone else.

A. There's no question, but I don't want to get to the point. The only problem with what you're saying, there's no question. He may call someone. But I don't want us to get to the point where we go, "Well, He'll use Diane instead of me so I'm not going to pray." I think if you're impressed to pray, I will say this. The moment of his time is right there, and that's why you're being impressed to pray. And if you don't, then it may be later for him to come to Christ. So I think you have to pray at that moment. God's kingdom is dependent and not dependent on me. It is dependent on us in this room when He moves us to pray, then we pray or His kingdom doesn't enact. Now it may be like Esther. Where Mordecai came and said, "You don't do this, you're toast. We're going to get deliverance from another place, but you're toast." And I think there may be some truth to that. If He calls me to pray and I don't, I'm then impacted in a negative way instead of honoring what He said. And then somebody else is called. But I still think the reason He calls me is because it's my prayer He wants. And I think that has to be taken into consideration.

Q. In the Old Testament it talks about God wanting to destroy the Israelites, like Moses prays and it says God changes His mind. So how does that parallel with...

A. No. That passage, you're right, it does say that. But I think it's simply a test on Moses. Not a test to see if he'd intercede and really love the people. I don't think it's the way He generally.... The only time God changes His mind is if His mind isn't made up. For example, He said to the Ninevites, "If you don't repent, I'm going to take you out." They did repent so He didn't take them out. His mind wasn't settled that He was taking them out. His mind was settled He was taking out the people in the Old Testament. So I think that has to be the key.

Q. If you feel like God has told you to stop praying for someone and specifically in the case of someone coming to Christ, you just feel like God has told you stop. If you continue to pray for that situation, are you.....

A. You're sinning. And we all do that. I mean here's the hard thing. It's not hard to keep that, but if God tells me not to pray for my wife to be healed, that's a bad ball game for me. But that's the thing. If I do pray against, I've sinned. And I don't help myself or my children in dealing with the loss of my wife by being in sin.

Q. How then, tagging basically onto that scenario, how would you advocate differentiating between the Holy Spirit's leading me not to pray for this person any longer for one reason or another. Or the reality that I struggle within my own self, or am I just feeling fatigued and lazy? Am I not doing it because I'm choosing not to?

A. I think you've got to be sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit to know when it's Him or you. There's no other answer. And I'm not being mean spirited in that. There really is no other answer. Because I've wrestled with the same thing. I totally agree and I think it's difficult. But I do think in time, I learn to differentiate off those difficult times.

Q. OK. So you're in your closet. You're in your office. You have your list. You have your prayer board. You have your circle of life. You want to go play golf, you've got this, this, this, you've got a meeting. How do you calm your mind down, yourself down. What do you do, Chris Osborne, to come off of I've got all this stuff to do today. But I need to pray for these people.

A. Two things. I will take my favorite two books of the Bible, 1 & 2 Samuel. If I just can't focus, then I'll start reading 1 & 2 Samuel. I won't meditate. I'll just keep reading chapter after chapter after chapter. Sometimes it's taken me both books before I get focused. Or I fast. And we're going to talk about fasting in a few weeks. But I fast because that can restore the spiritual equilibrium that I lose. The other third thing I do is I ask myself, and I ask the Holy Spirit, where am I not trusting Him. Because there's bound to be some area I'm just not trusting Him. And so I don't want to go in there because I'm afraid of His answer. What part of His will do I not want? I mean there are a lot of things, seriously, if I'm just addressing my own sin that I have to address that way.

Q. Can we use Jesus' prayer in Luke 22 to ask God if He is willing to do <fill in the blank> then nevertheless not my will.

A. No. I don't think so. What you have to ask is, I think you can ask, obviously, yes, what is Your will. That's the whole point I'm making. You're asking what is Your will for this disease. And then you leave it there with Him.

No, that's a different ballgame. The only reason I bring Jesus up, it's apples and oranges. He's not interceding praying. He's talking about a cross He already knows He's destined for. He's just wondering if there's another out because He doesn't want to go which is the only way He can be or He's an idiot. Because He's going to become sin. He's not just going to die physically. He's going to become sin. He knew what was happening so He didn't want to do that because He's holy. We've always gone from sin to holiness. We've never gone from holiness to sin. We have no idea what He was facing. So this is a whole different ballgame. That's not intercession. It's asking for another out. But I don't think that would be the correct intercession prayer.

- Q.** So what then, you go for, you say how do I pray for this person specifically? I feel like it's not so hard to get direction from the Holy Spirit on how to pray for someone who's really close to you, like sister or my mom, but when you go for someone that's like not in your super close knit circle and you don't know how to pray for that person specifically, but you ask Him and you kind of get radio silence, or it feels like you do.
- A.** I think that's exactly it. I think you do get radio silence. And if I get radio silence consistently, I take them off my prayer list.
- Q.** How do you know when the Holy Spirit's directing you to pray putting the guilt and the burden upon yourself to make sure that someone you know.....
- A.** Because you have to learn what we talked about last Wednesday night. And that's how to be consistently filled with the Holy Spirit of God. If you're consistently filled with Him, this becomes an automatic residue. If you're not consistently filled with Him, now it's a battle. If I have to discipline myself, I generally don't pray. You just don't have time to pray for 40 people. And that's the hard thing for me because I have a ton of people and some really legitimate requests. But I've learned in my life, let me put it this way. There are times He wants you praying for somebody and not me. There are sometimes He wants me praying for somebody and not you which goes back to Diane's question. I don't think I'm the only one, but I do think there are times He wants me not you. So it could make you silent, but tell me what to do. It's a chess game and I think we have to work off that.
- Q.** I'm sure everybody knows more than I do, but I have this question as far as prayer. If God knows everything from the beginning to the end, where is prayer, when I'm praying, how is that effective? I actually was trying to talk to an Atheist friend of mine and he says, "Why pray? God knows everything anyway."
- A.** OK. But there's a huge difference between God knowing and doing. He knows everything. That doesn't mean He does everything. He knows whether or not I'm going to come to Christ, but that doesn't change whether or not He invites me. If He knows I'm not coming, He will still offer Jesus Christ to me. The greatest example is Peter. God made him the apostle to a nation that hated Jesus and that rejected virtually everything Peter said. He wound up at the end of his life being crucified for nothing. And yet God continually sent him, one of his big three, to preach to people that are going to reject him just to give him an opportunity. So He knew, but God's the only being, none of us can do this, He's the only being that operates knowing everything, but not basing His operation on that knowledge. I would. He doesn't. So the argument's moot.
- Q.** I have a hard time reconciling whenever Paul asks three times to have the thorn removed and the way I read the text God says, "No." So was Paul asking outside of the Spirit?
- A.** No. I think it took three times for him to hear the Spirit. Once he heard the Spirit, he quit praying for that. That's his whole argument. So I think he prayed three times and then heard the Spirit say it. And he may have been, quite frankly, that is the discipline for his arrogance coming out of heaven. It may have taken that long for the discipline to hit him where he finally said, "OK, I'm willing to accept this." (2 Corinthians 12)

Q. So is it correct in saying God did not hear those pleas?

A. No, He heard the please. He responded to them. I'm not sure where you're going because, to me, the Scripture passage is exactly what we're talking about. You're going to ask God why is this in my life. How should I pray for it? And God's response to Paul was, "You're just going to accept it and let me do something with it. You don't get to pray for it anymore." And once he finally kind of got that message, he was golden.