



WEEK 3

FBCO 21-DAY PRAYER GUIDE

WEEK 3: DAY 1 Prayer – Part 1

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

*42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.*

First off, congratulations on completing two weeks! Hopefully, you are experiencing new things in your walk with the Lord as you spend more time with Him in prayer. Remember, God loves having fellowship with us, His children. He looks forward to hearing from you and spending time with you. So, press on, and continue developing your prayer life!

We come to the final discipline that these first Christians “were continually devoting themselves” in doing, and that’s – PRAYER!

To start this week of prayer off, let’s look at a few verses to help us see the priority that God wants us to place on prayer, beginning with Acts 6:4:

*“4 But we will devote ourselves **to prayer** and to the ministry of the word.”*

Luke records the top two priorities of the disciples, the men personally trained by Jesus; and the First priority Luke lists is – **Prayer!** Let that sink in...it was prayer that Luke recorded as the Disciples’ top priority. Please hear me, in *no way* am I trying to lessen the importance of God’s Word for our lives, but we do need to take a hard, honest look at the time we spend in prayer in comparison to studying God’s Word. As with most things, balance is the key...so, how balanced are you *with your Bible reading and prayer disciplines* taking place in your life?

Let me share something from my life that really drove home this point. While in my 20s, I traveled with a Christian touring group. We would be on the bus anywhere from 2 to 6+ hours every day driving from location to location. I was hungry to know God’s Word, and so used a majority of this time to read the Bible. After being on the road a month and having spent a ton of time studying God’s Word, something hit me hard!

Instead of feeling like I had really grown in the Lord

from this serious time of ingesting God’s Word, I felt “the same”...*that there was no noticeable change in my life.*

So, I called my Dad (who was an active Senior Pastor at that time) and asked, “Dad, I’ve been faithfully reading the Bible every day, but I don’t feel like there’s any difference in my life, why?”

I’ll never forget his response: “**Mark, how’s your prayer life doing?**”

Me: “Um, I really haven’t prayed a ton...but I’ve been reading a lot!”

He then shared the importance of prayer, and what it does for your Bible reading/studying life. This is where I heard the idea of “**pray, read, pray.**”

Pray first for God to remove anything in your thoughts that might serve as a roadblock from you fully understanding what you’re about to read; then read the Bible; and then pray again for clarity in understanding what you just read & that satan would not be able to “snatch” anything from you.

Another verse that was helpful to me in prioritizing prayer is Phillipians 4:19:

“19 And my God will supply [o]all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Paul writes this famous and amazing promise to the Christians at Philippi “my God will supply all your needs!” Since “All Our Needs” will be supplied by God, here’s a question we need to ask ourselves: “When I have a need, **who do I go to first to supply that need?**”

Reflect on just this past week, when you had some need come up, what did you do?

Did you immediately think to pray and ask God for

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His help, or did you look somewhere else? If we take the time to reflect on this, we might be shocked as to how far down the totem pole God is when it comes to seeking a solution to a need we have.

He wants to be your *first person* of resource to ask for “all your needs.” **He wants to be your first person of resource** you go to!

So, let **prayer** be your first response!

God is the One who stands by and **Is Able** to “supply all your needs!” Stop experiencing a lack in your life because you didn’t think to pray and ask God for His answer...go to Him first!

Finally, here’s one more reason to put prayer as your top priority in life. Have you ever struggled with temptation, wondered what to do, or been overwhelmed in your thoughts?

Read with me in Hebrews 4:15-16: “*15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace” is another way of talking about prayer! Prayer is how we approach God’s throne while we live life here on earth. Notice the manner in which we are to come: “with confidence.” Another translation renders the word “boldly.”

Because of what Jesus did at the Cross, we can now do something that was previously impossible, we can come into the Holy Presence of God to make our requests (our prayers) for the purpose to receive both His mercy & grace to help us in our time of need!

Wow...access to our Holy God, you and I are able to directly come to His Throne with our prayers, and do so in full confidence.

I like to connect the following thought with the verse: “without faith it’s impossible to please God.” God wants us to fully believe that God is more than capable of doing what we need Him to do. **So, don’t let doubt keep you away from asking Him,** with confidence, with boldness, with faith, come before Your loving Father in heaven, to seek His help in your time of need! **He waits for you to seek His help out!**

PRAYER:

Dear God,

Help me to make prayer a whole new priority in my life. Help me to start my day with You so that nothing would catch me off guard at the beginning of my day. Forgive me when I’ve looked at so many different people or places for help, when I should have come to You first!

May You always be the First Person of resource I go to. Help me to hear with better clarity what Your thoughts “sound” like in my mind. Give me clarity so I know what is from you, what are my own thoughts, and what are the thoughts satan is trying to slip in.

God, I ask that You would help me, and my church, to become dedicated to prayer. Help us to see the importance in doing it, and make it a priority to do so. Burn up our excuses, and help us to take the time, to make the time to pray that we might experience the fullness of Your resources as You supply All Our Needs According to Your Riches in Glory!

Thank You for the promise of being there for us and meeting our needs. We bless and praise You as our Awesome, Loving God who gives to us exactly what is needed in a perfectly timed way, to the Praise of Your Name...

AMEN!

WEEK 3: DAY 2 Prayer – Part 2

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

*42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.*

Yesterday, we began this week of prayer looking at the priority Jesus' disciples placed on it. They considered it their top priority, and we would be wise to do the same. So, let's continue our journey and look at additional verses to stoke our fire toward a passionate prayer life!

One of my favorite verses to empower my prayer life is found in John. Let's read from John 14:13-14:

13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Through the centuries, God has inspired song writers to sing of the power and majesty of His Son's Name: JESUS! Hillsong's "What a Wonderful Name" or the hymn "All Hail the Pow'r of Jesus' Name" are two examples. Think of the lyrics of either of these songs. They inspire a sense of awe, wonder, and gratitude that the power of Jesus' Name is something He gives us permission to *Use On Our Behalf!*

In these two verses, Jesus speaks clearly about the use of **His Name In Our Prayer Life!** He says, that in whatever we ask, we need to do so **In His Name**. As if that instruction wasn't clear enough, He repeats it one more time with, "If you ask Me anything **in My Name**, I Will Do It!"

It doesn't get any more clear...in our prayer life, we use Jesus's Name in bringing that request to His attention.

But, we need to notice what Jesus says in between these two clear phrases, because it helps us to gain perspective. Jesus also says, "so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

What did He mean by this?

Here's a suggestion. Take those words and form them into a question:

"Does my prayer request, if answered by the power of God, bring Glory to God?"

Maybe, another part of us growing in our prayer life is to expand our thinking beyond ourselves, and to really pray for others. As we grow in our concern for our fellow brothers and sisters, our prayer life becomes more "Kingdom-oriented" than "self-oriented."

There's something powerful about that. It has God's heartbeat in mind, and Jesus hears those prayers and works on our behalf for the purpose that God would be glorified.

At the same time, God wants us to bring the things in our personal life that matter to us, and to pray about them. So, bring your prayer concerns, and those of the people you know, and ask in the Name of Jesus for His power to come in response to these needs. As Jesus hears our prayers and works on our behalf, God will receive the glory, your faith is strengthened, and a new testimony of God's faithfulness is birthed.

So, Child of the King, you've been given the privilege to use His Name. Therefore, Pray in the Name of Jesus over the prayer requests you want to see answered.

The King is waiting to hear from you!

PRAYER:

Dear God,

Thank You for giving me the invitation and the right to use Your Name as I bring my prayer requests before Your attention. Open my eyes to understand what all is available to me in using Your Name. May I use it well, use it appropriately, and use it that God would be glorified when the answer comes.

Lord, help my Church become a place that upholds and uses Your Name in our prayer life both individually and collectively together. As we look forward to the Thirst Conference, we ask in Jesus's Name that You inspire people from the North, South, East, and West of our location to be drawn by the Power of Your Holy Spirit to come and attend. Lord, we also ask in Your Name, that You would draw us into a deeper relationship with You. Open our eyes that we may see what You need us to see in order that we can fully live the life You want for us.

God, we ask in the Name of Your Son, Jesus, for an incredible four day experience with You during this Thirst Conference. Change us, as only You can. We ask this in Jesus's Name...

AMEN!

WEEK 3: DAY 3 Prayer – Part 3

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.

For today, let's look at a verse I memorized a long time ago, and I've probably recommended it to more people than most verses from the Bible. We go to Paul's writings...Philippians 4:6-7:

"6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all [a] comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

How often have you worried about something, only to realize later the absolute waste of all that energy and emotion as it churned away in your thought life creating the worst possible outcomes in your imagination – only for the situation to turn out fine?

Worry, for some, is a way of life, but it's not the lifestyle God wants for us, His kids, to experience. Instead, notice Paul's instruction to us: he begins with a command "Don't Worry;" and then, he tells us Why we don't have to worry!

We have a loving God and Savior who stand ready to respond to our prayers.

Look at the next few words Paul says after the command to not worry: "but in everything..." In other words, for every situation you face in life... ***Every Situation***...you are to come before the Lord in prayer and let your request be made known to Him. God cares about those things that matter to you. Remember, He's a Loving God, and He is interested in protecting and providing for you, His Child! Don't ever forget that.

One point to lift out. Paul specifically tells us the "manner" in how we come before the Lord:

With Thanksgiving!

God wants us to come into His presence with a

spirit of thanksgiving. Don't know if you like the characters from Winnie the Pooh, but think in these terms. God doesn't want a spirit of "Eeyore" upon our lives as we come into His presence to bring our prayer requests. No, God wants more of a "Tigger-like" attitude. Tigger is that lovable character who has fun bouncing all around. Tigger doesn't worry about anything...he leaves that up to Eeyore. So, come before the Lord's presence with a huge smile, knowing that God's blessing is headed your way!

In one sense, if you are thankful for something, typically, it's because you have already received that "thing" whatever it is into your life. In this case, God wants us to be thankful For Him and the provision He's going to bring to our lives! He expects gratitude on our part. So, let's show Him how truly appreciative we are for having a loving God who is there for us AND wants to supply what is needed.

And as if all that wasn't enough, Paul writes that there is *Still More Coming Our Way!*

The last part of this verse Paul writes, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." God's peace will come in response to your prayers. Don't live in a state of worry, anxiety, or fear; but instead, bring your situation to the Lord, and do so in a thankful manner. All kidding aside, you may be in a highly stressed situation, and there's no way you're going to be a "Tigger" in your thankfulness.

That's okay.

Be completely honest and transparent before the Lord. If your situation is a difficult one, tension is high, and there's a real, potentially scary outcome pending, **Bring It to the Lord in Prayer!** But, be thankful that you have the opportunity to present that prayer request to the Lord!

Our Lord will not disappoint you. He will lovingly cover you with His amazing, protective peace. You can and will experience a peace that *does surpass comprehension!* I've seen it firsthand, and in a very profound way.

On March 8, 2009, I was serving on staff at First Baptist Maryville, when following the worship time & about 10 minutes into Pastor Fred's sermon, a gunman walked down the center aisle of the church, shooting, and killing him. We were shocked to the core of our being!

On national TV, I will never forget when Pastor Fred's wife, Cindy, was interviewed along with another story that had preceded hers. This other story was of a couple who had experienced a tragic loss through some type of medical mishap, and there was absolute angst, consternation, and rage. My Mom, now a retired nurse, gave me insight into how our medical people feel in these types of situations. People who go into the medical field do so because they care about people, and want to help. However, mistakes can happen, and in this case, there was a tragic loss.

But then, Cindy's story was next, and the stark contrast between the response of these two families couldn't have been more radically different. Here one family, through an unfortunate mistake experienced loss, and were angry to the core; while another family, in this case just the wife, had this remarkable difference to her countenance: God's peace completely covering her!

It was shocking how powerfully different the two responses were. One was a natural response by a person who had just lived through a horrible tragedy; while the other response was a God-Empowered response!

God's peace was on demonstration for the whole country to see in Pastor Fred's wife. Cindy spoke, by the power of God, and gave a testimony of the Gospel, under-girded with God's peace, and empowered by His anointing to proclaim the message her husband just one day earlier had been

killed while proclaiming it one final time.

God's peace is real.

And when it comes, it stands out in stark contrast...it's beyond comprehension how a person could respond with peace to a situation that one would expect overt anger. It's these types of situations that God can use to bring glory to Himself, as well as awareness of His power to those who have yet to make Him a part of their lives.

In bringing this to a close, do you have something you're concerned about? Is there a situation that's pressing in on you, and it feels as if hope and peace have been squeezed out of your life? Come to the Lord, in a spirit of thanksgiving, and let Him know about your situation and what you need. His power comes in response to our prayers, and His peace will guard your heart and mind as that situation unfolds in its entirety.

Remember this: God is with you for the *Entire Journey we call Life!* He will be with you every step of the way, even if it's a situation of 10,000 steps! Let Him support you by giving you His peace to make the journey one that you can endure and make it through.

PRAYER:

Dear God,

As soon as fear or worry begin to flood my mind with negative thought after thought, somehow help me by remembering to bring this situation to you in prayer. Help me to have that thankful spirit as I approach Your throne with my request. And in accordance to the promise of Your Word, grant me Your peace. Cover my heart and my mind that both my emotions and thoughts would be protected by you.

God, I'm so vulnerable to thinking worst case scenario after scenario. Lord, please shut down this type of harmful thinking. Instead, may my thoughts turn to You, the One who is greater than any situation or opponent I face.

Thank You for all the times in the past when You've been there for me. Bring those to my mind, that they might stoke the fire of my faith for my situation of today.

God, I also ask that You would cover our entire Church property with Your peace. May our Church be a place where people literally "feel" Your Peace guarding their hearts and minds. Even if they don't fully understand it, God pour out Your peace upon our lives. May it cause within us a desire to want to know You in a greater way.

May Your peace be so strong that it extends beyond our Church's property. May our community be drawn to it. And for the upcoming Thirst Conference, we pray that You would compel people to come out each night who need to be here. Help them to experience You in a way that compels them to want more of You in their lives. God, help all of us see what we truly need to see. Help us to live our lives in such a way that at the end of our days we will hear: Well done, good and faithful servants."

We ask this in the Powerful Name of Jesus:

AMEN!

WEEK 3: DAY 4 Prayer – Part 4

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

*42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.*

Today's devotional hits a subject that some may struggle with depending on your viewpoint. It's the subject of spiritual warfare. For some, references of a devil or demons are explained as the use of metaphors and allegory, as opposed to these references literally meaning supernatural spiritual beings.

I'm of the persuasion that the Bible's references of these beings are real. I can testify that spiritual warfare is a very real battle involving real supernatural beings who are in direct opposition to us, who are natural beings. Perhaps, one of the reasons we struggle with this is because we can't see them. However, they are as real as the invisible wind that blows across our land. Though we don't see wind, we do see its effects. In similar fashion, their "effects" are visible to see if we just open our eyes.

By the way, please don't misunderstand or misinterpret what I'm saying... as if I believe there's a demon under every rock. There's not. But, they are real beings, and they are opposed to God's kingdom, and the people who make it up: that would be you and me.

In case, we're needing a few verses to bring clarification, look at these:

From the Apostle Peter: I Peter 5:8-9

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 [d] But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your [e]brethren who are in the world.

From the Apostle Paul: Ephesians 6:11-12

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of

the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against [e] flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

From Old Testament: Job 1:6-7

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and [b]Satan also came among them. 7 The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

From Jesus and the Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6:13

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from [f]the evil one."

Note: Most translations simply render "deliver us from evil", however, when digging into the Greek, the more accurate rendering should be "evil one" and not simply "evil."

From Jesus: Luke 22:31-32

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has [d] demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

All these accounts speak of satan (I never capitalize his name) as a literal, real being. The account in Job is one where we see an actual conversation taking place. Peter and Paul both exhort their fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord about a very real opponent that is trying to do them great harm. Jesus in the Lord's Prayer states that we need to pray for God's protection from the "evil one." Then, Jesus specifically prays for Peter's protection from satan, who (notice the pronoun) wanted to sift Peter. We

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need to believe these are real beings, and because we belong to the Lord, we are in their target sites!

However, we can have courage and the confidence to face any challenge that the forces of hell throw our way, because “Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world!” (1 John 4:4)

So, how do we go about fighting this spiritual battle that we’re daily living in?

Glad you asked!

Jesus gives us the “two keys of the Kingdom” found in Matthew 16:19:

“19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth [n] shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth [o] shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Binding and loosing are two types of prayers to lift up before the Lord. **Binding** is about asking God’s power to “stop, restrict, restrain, remove, or kick out” anything and everything to do with the forces of hell and their activity in our lives. **Loosing** is about asking for God’s power, the ministry of angels, the Name of Jesus, and all the resources of heaven to come in response to our prayers for our protection, empowerment, and blessing.

Remember from Day Two’s devotional, *there’s power in the Name of Jesus*.

So, combine using the Name of Jesus, with the two keys of God’s kingdom Jesus mentions: binding and loosing.

Ask yourself this question: Have you ever really given much thought toward praying prayers of protection from the forces of hell? I’ve found that most Christians don’t really think along these lines. If that’s the case for you, it begs the question what type of spiritual attack has taken place in your life, and it’s gone undetected by you?

Bear this question in mind:

Why would Jesus give us these two Kingdom Keys?

Answer: They have to bring some type of value to our lives, otherwise, it makes no sense for Jesus to mention them. These two keys do just that: they bring God’s protection and provision into our lives, and we would do well for ourselves and our family members & friends to pray these types of prayers over their lives.

If anyone needs more material to further strengthen our need to put this before our eyes, consider this: two chapters later, Jesus says the same thing! For Jesus to repeat something, we would be wise to fully check this subject out in the Bible.

In Matthew 18:

18 Truly I say to you, whatever you [q]bind on earth [r] shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you [s]loose on earth [t] shall have been loosed in heaven.

19 “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them [u] by My Father who is in heaven. 20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

Following the repeated material, Jesus says two more famous phrases, “if two or more agree on earth about anything that they ask, it will be done” and “where two or three have gathered in My Name, I am there in their midst!”

Note that the context for these two famous phrases is in connection to “binding and loosing!” There’s something powerful to our prayer life when we come together and pray prayers of binding and loosing over our lives!

As you pray today, and into the future, take advantage and use these “Kingdom Keys” to your prayer life. Pray prayers of God’s power to bind the forces of hell from coming against you and your family. Also, pray prayers of God’s power to protect, provide, and supply you and your family with exactly what is needed. When you begin to see God’s power come in response to your prayers, it will stoke your

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fire to pray even more.

We live in an active spiritual warfare battlefield as long as we live on earth. But, you are on the winning side! God, through His Son Jesus, has given you everything you need to not just survive, but to Thrive to the Praise of His Name.

So, “turn” these Kingdom Keys On, and bring His power to your life!

PRAYER:

Dear God,

Open my eyes and my mind to have clear understanding on this idea of using these two kingdom keys you mention. I pray for clarity in knowing how to pray along these lines. God, I ask that You would remove from my thinking anything that hinders me from fully understanding these important principles.

God, help me to be aware of the ongoing spiritual battle that we all live in, and to learn from Your Word all the different ways I can receive Your protection and empowerment. Please keep my family safe as we go about our daily business. I ask, in Jesus’s Name, that You would bind the enemy and his army from coming against me and my family. Stop him at every attempt so that he would not be able to “steal, kill, or destroy” any part of my family’s well-being.

God, I also ask in the Name of Jesus, that You would loose the resources of heaven upon my family’s life today. May we walk in Your power, provision, protection, and strength. Grant that by Your power, we may live well for You today, and bring glory & honor to Your Name.

Lord, we also pray for our Church. We ask for Your protection and provision to be poured out upon this special place. In Jesus’s Name, we pray that the forces of hell would be bound from coming onto this property, and that they would not be able to place their “fiery darts” in our minds. Lord, help us to look to You whenever something doesn’t seem right, and to call upon Your Name with the key of Binding in mind.

Jesus, we also ask In Your Name, that You would loose the resources of heaven to bring Your Love, Life, and Light into our Church. May our hearts be overflowing with the blessing in experiencing more of You! Create a clean heart in us, God, to the Praise of Your Son’s Name. Empower us with Your Strength to live for You in a godly way.

Thank You for these two Kingdom Keys, and may they be something I use for my family, friends, and Church on an ongoing basis to the Praise of Your Almighty Name,

AMEN!

WEEK 3: DAY 5 Prayer – Part 5

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.

Perhaps my favorite book in the Bible is Ephesians. There's so much discipleship content in this one book that pushes us toward a Christlike lifestyle. Here's a verse that both speaks of praying, and connects the idea of growing in Christ-likeness.

Ephesians 3:14-21

"14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom [I]every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the [m]saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations [n]forever and ever. Amen."

Paul begins this section letting his reading audience know, that he prays over them; and he prays specific spiritual directives over their lives for the purpose "that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God!" Wow, let that phrase sink in for a bit..."the fullness of God filling up inside of each of us! Powerful words. Scary words...

So, how does this work?

He begins by praying "that He would grant you" which means we need to declare our dependency upon the Lord because neither you nor I will be able to produce inside of us what Paul's about to say next.

Only God's Spirit working inside of us can do that.

As we daily choose to put these disciplines into practice, something amazing begins to happen, more and more of the Life of Christ is manifested into our lives (II Corinthians 4:10-11), more and more strength from the Holy Spirit is received, and more and more of the Fruit of the Spirit (as listed in Galatians 5) becomes visible in our lives.

Paul closes out this chapter with one of my all time favorite verses:

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."

Do you have a great sense of imagination? I do, and yet, this verse says that God will do "Far More Abundantly Beyond" **what you and I can imagine!** How's that for a loving God and what He does for us!

This is Who God is!!!

He supersedes our expectations, and He delights in our responses to His faithfulness! You are loved by a God who has no limitations in His ability to love you! He will answer your prayers because He's faithful.

The greatest thing He wants is for us to discover what each of us can experience **personally In Him!** Take the time to read through all of Ephesians. It's filled with amazing and mind-blowing statements in what Paul says we can experience in Christ! We may not fully understand it, but that's okay, He does! And...He's given us the Holy Spirit who will give us clarity as we study His Word and pray about it. (I Corinthians 2:10-12)

In closing, when I was studying all of this, what it means to grow in Christ-likeness, and saw the divided opinion about it, I sought the Lord in prayer

about it. Here's what the Lord impressed upon my heart as to the way I should both pray about this, and help others to pray about it. I close with it as our prayer for the day.

PRAYER:

Dear God,

I may not know what this fully means, but whatever the phrase “that I might be filled up to all the fullness of God” means; let that happen in my life! Just as Paul writes “Grant” that I may understand and experience what it means for You to dwell in my heart through faith. Open my mind toward understanding Your Truth in the fullest sense. Create a passionate fire within me that wants nothing more, than all of You I can experience this side of eternity.

Please remove from my thinking, anything that stands in the way of me tracking this down. Please grant me the presence of Your Holy Spirit who searches all things, including the depths of God in order that I might freely know these things that You have given me access.

Thank You for loving me with such an incredible love. Help me to love those around me with that love You give me, that a powerful cycle of love is operating in my family's life, my church family's life, and my community.

God, we ask that You would especially pour out Your love upon our congregation and all those who will visit us for the Thirst Conference. May each person, those who know You, and those who are far from You, somehow experience Your love in a tangible way. May Your Love be so overwhelmingly present, that they are deeply moved to the core of their being. For those who don't know you yet, God, we ask on their behalf, that You would not let them leave our sanctuary without them making the decision to receive You as Savior and Lord of their lives.

May this Thirst Conference be something far more than just an event, may it be a divine encounter with You!

We ask this in Jesus's Name...

AMEN!

WEEK 3: DAY 6 Prayer – Part 6

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

*42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.*

Today's devotional combines the two disciplines of Studying God's Word and Prayer. As already shared from the first week, when I've been asked how to best study God's Word, the pattern is to:

Pray, Read, and Pray.

Let's look at the following from the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 2:10-12:

*"10 [d]For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.**"*

When we asked Jesus to come into our hearts, we received many things from the Lord. One of the best things is actually the "Person" of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says in I Corinthians 6:19 that our bodies are a temple in which the Holy Spirit now lives!

The above verse tells us something the Holy Spirit does: He "searches all things, even the depths of God." When you have a question about something, you typically "google" it. Well, we have something far more powerful than any search engine, we have the Holy Spirit, and one of the things He does is to search the depths of God. He does that for a reason:

"So that we may know the things freely given to us by God."

Here's how we apply that statement to our Bible reading life in connection with prayer.

Pray, Read, Pray.

Pray that you would be able to hear, with great

clarity, how God's Spirit speaks His thoughts into your mind. Pray that if there are things "standing in the way" of you understanding what you're about to read, that God would remove those barriers.

Bear in mind, your prayers connect you to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit has access to everything in God, *For the Purpose, of us "freely knowing the things that have been given to us."* One of God's greatest gifts to us...is His Word, the Bible!

By opening up the pages of this timeless book, we are able to read about God's opinion on any given subject.

Do you want to know how a person gets to heaven? It's in the Bible.

What does He say about marriage? It's in the Bible.

How does He want us to worship Him? It's in the Bible.

It's all there in the Bible just waiting for us to discover it.

AND... you have access to the best mentor in the world: The Holy Spirit!

So, pray first in order that you truly connect to His thoughts. **Then READ God's Word!**

Following your time of reading, Pray One More Time!

This prayer time is about asking God to help you "grab onto" His truth so that you clearly understand what that passage means, how you should apply it to your life, and that satan would not be able to "snatch it away!" That's one of the things from Jesus' parables we need to realize: is that satan wants to immediately steal any understanding of God's truth that would be helpful to our lives. In one sense, it

WEEK 3: DAY 6 Prayer – Part 6

should be no surprise that when people go to study God's Word, that's when their eyes become very heavy, they fall asleep, or they become confused and walk away!

Have you ever noticed that?

Pray for God's Spirit to help you "hold on" to any truth God is wanting you to live out in your life. Pray for God to give you a burst of energy so you're wide awake to not miss a thing!

Let me share with you what has taken place in my Bible reading life many times.

After I pray, and then read God's Word, while I'm praying that second time, a "question" related to what I just read pops into my mind. I've learned to immediately ask, "Lord, what's Your answer to this question?"

Then, wait...be "quiet" before the Lord and allow Him to speak into your thoughts. You will be surprised at how "another thought," just like the question, can come into your mind!

Keep a journal of these types of thoughts.

You will be amazed after several months or years in seeing how many different question/answer thoughts come your way.

I close with this story.

I had the opportunity to go on a Missions Trip to what was still the Soviet Union. In the months leading up to that trip, God prompted me to really pray and study His Word. During one of those times following the reading of God's Word, an unusual question popped into my mind.

It was a really difficult question that you would expect an unsaved person to ask, like "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?" I prayed, "God, if I got asked that question, how should I answer that question?"

It was remarkable how over the weeks leading up to my departure, questions came first, then answers would come second. Then, in addition to these

questions and answers, an entire "sermon" bubbled up from within me as well.

During one particular night of the Crusade, the Evangelist did something differently and he only did it that one night...he asked all of the singers & musicians to come off the stage and talk and pray with the people.

I "KNEW" this was the night for which I had prepared!!

By the time I hit the main auditorium floor, I was surrounded by about 50 people, that would eventually grow to over 100 people strong. A teenage boy came up and said he could interpret. Before I knew what was happening, I found myself opening up my mouth, and immediately that "sermon" was flowing out of me!

At some point in the message, the interpretation got a bit difficult for him, and out of nowhere, this blonde-haired lady comes up and takes over for him. By the way, I had never worked with an interpreter before, but this experience was like a "hand in the glove" kind of perfect fit. I would speak a phrase, she would interpret, and I would say my next phrase... never losing my line of thought in that disjointed way of speaking.

At the end of my sermon, I found myself spontaneously asking, "Does anyone have any questions?" Can you guess what's about to happen next? Question after question, the same questions that had surfaced in my prayer/Bible reading time were now being asked, **but God ahead of time had completely prepared me.**

This scripture about the Holy Spirit having access to the depths of God took on a whole new meaning and understanding. God sees into the future, and He knew what questions would be asked by these people. The Holy Spirit had "access" to this information, and I had access to the Holy Spirit Through Prayer! God's Spirit prompted me to pray and read, so that I would gain access to what was

needed for maximized ministry to take place!

This experience with this rich and compelling prayer time I had prior to this Mission's trip would profoundly impact how I view life with the lessons God taught.

So, pray, read, pray.

Who knows what kind of a journey you're about to have, but God, who sees into the future, knows exactly what you're going to encounter and He wants you to be fully prepared for it. We represent Him, and He doesn't want us to be unequipped. So, let God open your mind up to the possibilities of what can take place through your life as you simply learn what it means to have access to Him through the Holy Spirit.

Let's Pray!

PRAYER:

Dear God,

Help my Bible reading times to be rich with meaning and purpose. Teach me Your ways, and open my heart & mind to anything I have yet to fully grasp. Thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit to help me understand all the things available for me to experience in my relationship with You. Open my eyes more and more toward seeing the fullness and depth of all that stands before me.

Holy Spirit, speak clearly into my thoughts, that I would not miss anything God needs me to have. Thank You for all that You do in helping me have a greater understanding of God's truth.

I also ask that whatever tomorrow holds, and You know what that is, give me the thought on what I need to have from God's Word or His Wisdom to be fully prepared to handle it well.

God, help our Church be a people who are committed to reading Your word, but instead of simply reading it in our own ability, may we first seek to have Your Spirit assist our reading. Remove those things that stand in the way of a greater understanding of Your love. Remove our blind spots and open our eyes that we might fully see all that You desire for us to experience.

God, we ask that You would be with us during this Thirst Renewal Event. Help us experience a sense of anticipation that creates passion and expectancy that something far above and beyond what we can imagine will take place! God help us be a people united behind seeing the Lost saved; and for those of us who know You, burn out any complacency in our relationship with You, and ignite renewed passion and fire within our hearts. May You be glorified in all we do to the Praise of Your Almighty Name...

AMEN!

WEEK 3: DAY 7 Prayer – Part 7

By: Pastor Mark Jones

Scripture: Acts 2:42

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.

We come to our final day of prayer! Thank you for making this prayer journey a priority in your life. I hope you have seen an increased desire to “continually devote” yourself to these spiritual disciplines, especially that of prayer.

For this last devotional, I want to share with you five things that the Apostle John lists in three different verses that pertain to our prayer life. If you aspire to have a strong prayer life, then let John's words stoke your fire as to how to “track” this type of prayer life down.

These five ingredients will only be “touched on” as we don't have the ability to fully explore them, but you will at least be made aware of them. Hopefully, you will be inspired by what these verses promise regarding a prayer life that can be yours, but we need to do it God's way for it to happen!

We come to the first passage from John 15:7:

“7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Before we look at the first two “ingredients,” notice specifically what Jesus promises us: “Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you!”

That's a stunning statement... “*whatever you wish.*”

Part of the problem with this phrase is how we have transformed this phrase into a “Hey God, I want this, this, and this” approach to our prayer life. God does want to bless us, His children, but our prayer life is meant to be something far more than a means by which we “get stuff” from God. So, let's look at all five ingredients before we jump to any conclusions!

The first two “ingredients” from John 15:7 are:

1) Abide in me

2) My Words abide in you

First, “abide” means to “live in, continue in, or remain in” something. In this case, it's someone: God's Holy Spirit! One key way for abiding to take place...is your prayer life. It connects you to God's Spirit, brings God's power to your life, and many other positive dynamics take place!

Second, “My Words abide in you” is similar to the first phrase, but instead of meaning God's Spirit to live, continue, and remain in, John is talking about God's Word! Jesus wants God's Word to be lived out through our lives, and that happens as we continue to both study God's Word, and learn to remain in Him.

If you look at verses 1-6 of John 15, you see that Jesus speaks of being “plugged into” the Vine (which represents Jesus). If we want to produce fruit (think Galatians 5:22), then we need to be connected to the Lord.

Let's aspire to actively engage these two critical ingredients for a great prayer life: **“abide” both in God's Spirit and in God's Word.**

Next, we come to the 3rd and 4th ingredients found in I John 3:21-22:

“21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence [k]before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”

Again, we have the stunning promises “whatever we ask we receive from Him,” but notice the *Next Word...* “*Because!*” The word “because” is a “qualifying” word. We will receive something because we have done something.

Look at the two things John says we need to do:

- 1) We keep His commandments
- 2) We do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

The first one could be summed up in word powerful word: Obey! Do we obey God's commands or not? Obedience throughout the Bible is a big deal, and in doing this directive, it paves the way for a powerful prayer life to take place.

The second phrase could be summed up this way: the motivations of our heart. In saying, "we do the things that are pleasing in His Sight" is talking about the "why" behind our actions. So, what is your motivation for doing what you're doing? Do you do something to "gain attention" like the person praying loudly at the street corner, or do you do what you're doing from a desire to see God's kingdom advanced? Big difference, and only God is able to see into our heart and know what's the motivating force behind what we do.

So, obey, and let your motivation be pure!

Finally, we come to the last ingredient, and it puts the previous four ingredients into proper perspective, as well as help us have an accurate understanding of the phrase "Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

Let's read I John 5:14-15:

"14 This is the confidence which we have [I]before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

I believe this is the "Cornerstone" ingredient for us to have a powerful prayer life! Look at that italicized phrase again: "*If we ask anything **According to His Will.***"

There you have it: we're not praying about our will or our desires; instead, we're praying about God's will to be done! That's the key ingredient to put into perspective when viewing the phrase "Ask whatever

you wish, and it will be done for you."

Why would Jesus say such an amazing statement about prayer? It's because He's thinking in terms of us praying for God's will to be done. AND....when the other four ingredients are operating in our lives, then nothing is going to resist these prayers.

We hear the famous verse "the prayers of a righteous person avails much," but have you ever wondered what is involved in "being" that "righteous person?"

I would suggest these five ingredients make up the "heart and soul" of a righteous person. By the way, I realize that we are all positionally declared "righteous" by the Blood of Jesus, but do you know there's a second way we need to view "righteousness?"

Let's look at II Corinthians 5:21:

*"21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we **might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"*

The verb Paul uses here is not declaring a positional idea for righteousness, it's a "state of being" verb that he uses.

The five ingredients we looked at are spiritual components that are produced in a life truly surrendered to the influence of the Holy Spirit. If we want to experience this type of life in Christ, then we need to commit ourselves to actively and daily following the four spiritual disciplines of Acts 2:42. As we do so, we will discover so much more from the Bible, because our time spent with God's Spirit in our Bible reading times will give us insight and infuse in our very being these God-created ingredients.

We can't produce these things in our lives; only God's Spirit is able to produce them. The Holy Spirit creates awareness first, then passion to track them down second, and finally, Christ-likeness third as we learn what "abiding" in Christ or "walking" in the Spirit is all about.

WEEK 3: DAY 7 Prayer – Part 7

So much awaits for us to discover, and the pathway by which this takes place: is through prayer!

My hope is that you will aspire to become a living conduit of God's Power that comes in response to Your Prayers! Jesus says that if we pray for God's will to be done, and do so, in accordance to the manner the Bible teaches, *then this Will Happen!* So, how badly do you want to impact this world for God's glory?

Then, aspire to develop your prayer life more and more. Declare your dependency upon God's power

daily. Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in your Bible reading life. Explore the fellowship God wants with you in the most intimate way possible. Dare to dream dreams for God's glory, and pray they come to pass.

May God use you and your prayers to impact this world in a way that is "more than we could ask or imagine" that the Name of Jesus would be lifted high, and God glorified!

To Him Who sits on the Throne be the Honor and Glory now, and forevermore! AMEN!!

PRAYER:

Dear God,

This was a lot to take in at one setting. Help me to process all of this in a way where the enemy would not be able to steal, distort, or confuse anything You want me to grab hold of and apply to my prayer life. Help me to explore these ideas in a greater way, and I thank You that You've given me the Holy Spirit who searches all things, including You, that I might freely know these things given to us. So, open my heart and mind toward a fuller understanding of how to see this type of prayer life emerge in me.

God, I want to make a difference with my life, and with my prayers. So, whatever the phrase "abide in Me" and "My Words abide in you" mean, let that take place. May Your Spirit give me understanding and even push me toward seeing this realized in my life. Help me to see the power of prayer and how You want to use my prayer life to impact me personally, my marriage, my family, my Church, and my community.

I ask in Jesus's Name, that You would protect and empower this process that nothing would be missed, and that nothing would be "added" to scripture or its meaning. Let Your Word speak loudly and clearly to me.

God, we also ask that You would be with our Church in a specific way: help us become a people who truly pray. Help us see the connection of how Your power comes in response to our prayers. Purify each member that our prayers would be the prayers of a righteous person that avails much.

So God, we ask You, in the Name of Your Son Jesus, to empower all our efforts for this Thirst Renewal event, and beyond. God, reach out to people who do not know You. Somehow, bring them to our Church. Even at the last minute, if there is someone we need to invite, place their name on our hearts, and give us the courage to reach out to them. God we pray that out of Your mercies, You would open these people's eyes and ears that they might make a decision for You during this Thirst Renewal event and beyond.

God we pray that the power of Your Holy Spirit would move in our midst as we've never experienced before. God, let revival come to our Church. Jesus, we are asking In Your Name, that You would move in our hearts removing whatever stands in the way of us experiencing your Kingdom best.

We ask all of this in the Awesome Name of Jesus, that it might be done to glorify God and increase His Kingdom,

AMEN and AMEN!!!