



Need to have a few right beliefs in order to pray well. If I don't believe this chair will hold me, I won't sit in it. In the same way, if I don't have certain beliefs about myself and about God, I won't pray. 2 categories of beliefs when it comes to prayer.

### Beliefs About Ourselves...

- We are desperate for God at every level. (Col 1:15-17)
  - Health, intelligence, guidance, friends, food *ad infinitum* Not just for forgiveness. You might already have that.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by[a] him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Col. 1:15-17) Every rock, every tree, every grain of sand on the seashore, every atom owing it's existence and present function to God's sustaining power.

Acts 17 says God gives us life and breath and everything. Every one breath. Close your eyes. “Every time you draw your breath, you suck in mercy.” —Watson

This is true for all people—believers and unbelievers. But there is a unique sense in which believers are desperate for God for spiritual effectiveness and power and experience.

In Jn. 15, Jesus says, “5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing...7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

Examples of a prayer filled day and a not prayer filled day.

- Apart from a sense of *felt* desperation, our prayer lives will never prosper.
  - “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” —Jesus

Seems I always start out strong but then I forget! Depression prayer!

A felt sense of hunger leads to eating. A felt sense of need and weakness leads to prayer. As meat offers the pleasure I seek in food, prayer offers the pleasure I seek in God. This really is the key...

People with strong prayer lives are those who realize how weak they really are. The people who pray the most sense their need the most—the people who are the most realistic. In our culture is admirable to be independent and strong by yourself. In God's economy that's joke. It's honorable to regular confess and realize that you can't do anything.

“What a man is on his knees before God is all he is, and nothing more” McCheyne

My biggest prayer is not that you'd learn edgy new techniques and methods, but that you would see the urgency and feel the need. Because when you feel your need, prayer won't be a discipline it will be a need. And when it's a need, it will be passionate, intimate, and fulfilling. This is what we need to believe about ourselves. But there's more...

We have to talk about what we believe about God. What you believe about someone will determine how you interact with them. If you think someone is critical, then you'll always be on eggshells around them. If you think someone is very understanding, then you'll tell them when you've had a bad day.

### Beliefs About God...

- God \_\_\_\_wants\_\_\_\_ us to come to him. (Rom. 8:15)

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” “Abba” Father. We're not subjects in a kingdom. We're sons and daughters of a king. J.I. Packer, “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father.” Was hard for me to believe that God wanted to be with me! How much? We'll be with him forever! (1 Thess. 4:17) Some family members I'm ready for them to go after a weekend.

- God genuinely \_\_\_\_listens\_\_\_\_ to us. (Ps. 55:17)

“Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.” (Ps. 55:17) You have to believe God listens. Rebecca and I—God listens with his eyes—and gives us his 100% undivided attention! Not like Bruce Almighty! If every person prayed, they would receive the same attention as if one person prayed. Should this surprise us? \$10,000 stereo system. Would we expect him to listen? Of course! We'd be surprised if he didn't!

- God \_\_\_\_satisfies\_\_\_\_ our deepest cravings for joy. (Ps. 16:11)

(Ps. 16:11) Prayer is communion where we drink deeply. Come with thy sins to the fountain, “Come with thy burden of grief; Bury them deep in its waters, There thou wilt find a relief. Come as thou art to the fountain, Jesus is waiting for thee; What though thy sins are like crimson, White as the snow they shall be.”

Prayer is where we come to the fountain. We're not just coming with our hand out we're coming with our arms open! Our goal is not just to make requests but to linger in the presence of the God that we love. “Could we be content to meet a loved one only in public?” —Spurgeon

### Five Implications For Prayer...

- Pray **big** —God's power is infinite (Js. 5:16-18) ○ An infinitely *rich* and *generous* God is saddened when his children only ask for pennies.

Look at this text (Js. 5:16-18) 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.” And the text goes out of his way to show that he was an ordinary man! Which means that you and I have access to power that's beyond our wildest dreams.

Beggars in the slum across from the mansion. You have not because you ask not.

We don't glorify God's infinite wealth by only making penny sizes prayers. You have access to the God of the universe! Is this how we think? If God answered your prayers this week, would your life change or would the whole world change?

Ask God to radically change your friends life. Ask him to be a part of it! Ask for God to bring revival in our country. As for God to make you as satisfied with his glory as a saved sinner can be. As holy as a saved sinner can be. So we pray big...but we also...

- Pray small—God cares about *everything* (1 Pet. 5:7) o Each strand of your hair matters to God. (Lk. 21:18)

1 Pet. 5:7 tells us to cast all of our anxieties on him because he cares for us! Too often, we think that prayer to God is something reserved for significant issues. Health, school, career, spouse. My Dad saying, "Don't come get me unless the house is burning or someone is dying." Lk 21:18 God cares about hair follicles. Mt. 6 tells us that he cares about grass. About every sparrow. Ezekiel 4:12-15, **And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung."** 13 **And the Lord said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them."** 14 **Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never defiled myself. From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth."** 15 **Then he said to me, "See, I assign to you cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread."** God literally listens to Ezekiel express concern over the kind of poop he's going to cook his bread over.

Pray for the weather. Pray for your car to start. Pray for the package you ordered to arrive. Pray for your meeting. Pray for your worries. Your attitude. Pray for the person in front of you in line. Express sorrow that no one liked your facebook post and then repent for drawing your identity from others praise and approval.

So we pray big and we pray small. We ask God to bring Christian revival to our world, and pray for your goldfish.

And if you are praying for small things, then you guaranteed the third implication which is to...

- Pray often—Give God no rest (1 Thess. 5:17 Isa. 62:7)

If we have full access to God, and God is interested in interacting with us on the fate of our world and our pet goldfish, and if this God is the fountain of joy and satisfaction and prayer is one of the primary places we taste that, to not avail ourselves to that privilege would be foolish. Jesus understood this and that's why he was constantly in prayer. It was so important to him that Luke 5:16 tells us that Jesus that even though crowds came to him to hear him teach and be healed he would withdraw to desolate places to pray. He lived praying and he died praying. We're silly to think that we could make it with less prayer.

1 Thess. 5:17 says Pray without ceasing. From the second we wake up in the morning our lives are marked by constant awareness and dependence on God to provide and protect and establish us. A few practical tips. In seminary I put "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad

all our days.” (Ps. 90:14) on the ceiling above my bed so that I would see it right when I woke up. Bathroom Mirror. Dashboard verses. Lunch check-in. Countries at dinner. Talk to God all the time. You’ll get better at it. He’s not going to get tired! Isa. 62:7. ~~On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.~~ Big. Small. Often...

- Pray honestly—God can handle it. (Ps. 39:13; 44:23)

One thing I love about the prayers of the bible is that they are so real. You read some of these prayers and they’re not tidy prayers that are causally recited. Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!” (Ps. 39:13) “Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?” (Ps. 44:23) Maybe you’re asking, I appreciate you talking about how we can speak to God in a honest way, but, take Ps. 39, even if it’s well intended, isn’t it a sin to tell God to turn His face away from you so that you can smile?

Yes. It is. And that’s why it’s amazing that he keeps these prayers in the Bible! Prayers that are shot through with doubt and worry and questioning. He could have just edited those out: “I’m going to take that one out. I don’t want anyone thinking they can talk to me like that!”

But he keeps them in there, not as an example of sinless perfection, He realizes that sinners will never express themselves perfectly and yet he keeps these prayers in here as an invitation for us to bring our imperfect sin-stained expressions of grief and pain to him. If God only accepted prayers with perfect manners, and motive and delivery, prayer wouldn’t even be an option for us. Pray big. Pray small. Pray often. Pray honestly. And...

Pray with faith—Trust His goodness and power. (Js. 1:5-7)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”

We’re going to do a whole sermon on how faith relates to prayer. When we pray our faith is not in the quality of our prayer but in the quality of our advocate. We’re not naturally good prayers. That’s why the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray—because we need help. And we have it. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:25)

“Not only the Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because<sup>a</sup> the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27) “He didn’t mean that!” Whole Trinity on board here.

Travis didn’t have an advocate! Do you?