

Message Transcript

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT | EQUIP FOR BATTLE

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Our God is holy, holy, holy. That means that He is One of One. There is one God who spoke creation into existence. There is one Son who left heaven, lived a perfect life for you and me, went to a cross, defeated sin and death. So now we sing holy, holy, holy. That was good.

Hey, go ahead and grab a seat and open up your Bibles and get to Ephesians, chapter 6. We'll start in verse 17 today.

Welcome. We doing okay? Hey everyone at the campuses, everyone watching online, in additional seating, welcome as we continue in this three-part series under the banner of Equip for Battle. This is a core line from our church's Mission Statement. At Traders we're all about becoming durable disciples, ready to face whatever battles come our way.

And I don't have to convince you that life is a battlefield. We all carry the wounds of war. When I'm up here today, I don't want to try to convince you that I can offer you a life that is void of battles. If anyone tries to sell you that life, I want you to do one thing, run. That is a cult. Alright?

That is not what Jesus came to offer. That is not what He said He was going to provide. He didn't say remove them from the battle. He said, "I want to make them battle proof."

Jesus, this is my paraphrase, said, "Hey, the world when you go into it, you're going to have to face all kinds of trouble. The world hits hard. But I want you to take heart. I overcame the world. And because I did, you can overcome as well."

That's what this series is about. How do we overcome as followers of Jesus? And not just how we overcome personally—that's kind of what the last series was, but relationally. Because spiritual battles don't just affect us individually, they often hit closest to home in our marriages, in our families, in our friendships. So, what does it look like to strengthen our relationships in such a way that no matter what comes, no matter what the world or the enemy, the devil, throws at us we will overcome? How do we do that?



And there is going to be an anchor verse that we hold onto throughout this series. You'll hear it. And it comes from Nehemiah, chapter 4. And just a little context. Nehemiah hears the word that Jerusalem is in ruins. This is the city of God's people. And the walls are no longer standing. And he gets so convicted that he just starts to pray, and pray, and pray. And then God opened up a door for him to be the one to go back and re-establish the city and to build the wall. All of this happens. He gets to go. And while he is there, even though God is leading him, he is still facing all kinds of battles from the outside. But Nehemiah calls them all together, and I want you to look at what it says in chapter 4, verse 14. He says:

"Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, 'Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!'" (NLT)

That's what this series is all about. How do we fight for the people who we love most? You guys in? We've got one over here who is definitely in. So, how do we battle proof our relationships? What we're going to focus in on today—because we know that in a spiritual war we fight differently—so were' going to look at, "Hey, what does it look like to pray for the people in our lives?"

I would argue that prayer is the best thing that we could do for our relationships and it's probably the thing we do the least for those that we love the most. And Jesus modeled it so well. When you read the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, He is always somewhere praying. They'll just write it down, like early in the morning He would go and pray. And sometimes He would pray all night. What was He praying about? We don't know all of the details, but there is one prayer in John, chapter 17, where it moves from not just Jesus praying to God, it's God praying for us. And we get an insight into how God prays for me and you, which is kind of trippy when you think about it.

Look at this in John, chapter 17. I'm just going to grab three lines from Jesus' prayer for me and you. He said:

"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one." John 17:15 (NLT)

Once again, not to remove them but to make them battle proof. And then the next one:



"Make them holy by Your truth. Teach them your word, which is truth." John 17:17 (NLT)

Once again, look at our prayers. Is that what we are praying for? Or is it more happiness than holiness? And then finally, Jesus praying for us, He says: "I pray that they would all be one, just and you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me." John 17:21 (NLT)

We put all of that together, He said, "Hey, I'm praying that the church would realize that there is a real enemy and it's not one another, it's the devil. And I pray that they would stand shoulder to shoulder and stand against him. And I pray that they would be tethered to Your truth, that they would know it and that they would become holy."

And then, at the end He says, "I pray that they would be one just as You and I are one. That they would be battle proof. No matter what comes their way, they are going to be together and united." Why? "So that the world will know that You sent Me."

He's saying, "Hey, there is going to be a 2,000-year gap between what I do in My ministry and Me resurrecting from the grave. People are going to have some questions. And the proof that we're going to be able to give them is the church—a diverse group of people coming together, laying down differences, but standing together united in the Spirit of God, covered by the blood of Jesus." That is who we are as a church.

Jesus had a real life with real battles but never sacrificed His prayer life. Jesus wasn't exempt from the battles, but He was battle proof. Did you notice in His relationships how tender He was? How open He was? And how He even prayed for those who He loved?

Peter—there is this small snapshot and you almost read past it. But Jesus is talking to him, and He says, "Hey, Peter. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat." But then you hear what He said, "But I have prayed for you." We have a God who prays for us, a God who modeled what it looks like to be in direct connection with God. He modeled what prayer should be. So, today we're going to continue—for the past month we've been studying in Ephesians, chapter 6, the armor of God, going piece by piece through it. And I just want to pick up where we left off, verse 17.



Paul immediately goes from the armor of God right into prayer. Take a look at this. Verse 17, he says:
“...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,”

That’s what we covered last week. And then immediately:
“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.” (ESV)
Immediately he’s connecting these two things together, continue to put on the armor of God and then there will be this constant connection through prayer that you have to call upon. Paul connects them with prayer.

And if we’re going to battle proof our relationships, if we’re going to implement what the Bible commands us to do, we’re going to have to be serious about prayer as well.

Here’s all I want to do today. We’re going to read a few Scriptures, we’re going to look at the life of Jesus and we’re going to look at the commands in Ephesians 6 of what it looks like to pray and just to hold it up as a mirror and to say, “Hey, does my prayer life mirror Jesus’ prayer life?”

In Ephesians 6 we see these commands of what it means to pray and pray in the Spirit. Is that what my prayer life looks like? And there is no shame here. There is no shame, no condemnation—this is an invitation to know God better. I know when I was studying this past week and I’m learning more and more about prayer and focusing on it, I was challenged and convicted that I have room to grow in my prayer life. And that is okay. There is always more of God to be known. There is always more of His love to be received. And I hope that you receive that invitation today.

So, we’re going to battle proof our relationships, it starts with prayer. Let’s start with a definition of what prayer is. It can be such a big term. And we are like, “I want to know exactly what it is.” So, I just took a stab at trying to take it all of the way down to the foundation of what is prayer? And here it is:

Prayer is a conversation with God. It’s talking and listening, not to get something but to know someone.

Prayer is learning to share our hearts with God. It’s stepping into this new level in our relationships where we go deeper with Him, where we know more about Him and we offer more of ourselves to Him.

Paul adds this line in verse 18. Maybe you caught it, and you haven’t been able to stop thinking about it since you read it. He didn’t just say: pray. He said, “Pray in the Spirit.”



What does that even mean? What does that look like? And theologian and pastor, John Stott, I thought, did a great job of separating what it means to pray in the Spirit versus saying our prayers. And I was challenged with that this week. Is my prayer life more saying my prayers or is it praying in the Spirit?

Saying our Prayers versus Praying in the Spirit

And here's a little bit of difference that you can pick up on. When we think of saying our prayers, it's kind of the templates we were given, the times of day we are supposed to pray, like saying our prayers is usually what happens at the dinner table. Everyone knows that you sit down, and you do that uncomfortable look around like, "Are we praying for this before we eat?" We should. We should."

And then you bow your heads, and you pray. But are you really praying? How well can you really pray when your head is over a bowl of macaroni and cheese? Are you really thinking about God? When you've got barbecue chicken sitting right there, are you really thinking about God or are you thinking about getting to that first bite? Are you saying your prayers or are you praying in the Spirit?

Maybe for you, if you're being honest, your prayer life is more like my flossing life, when it comes to going to the dentist. They sit you down and they are like, "Can you tell us when the last time you flossed?" And you are like, "The last time you did it for me. That was the last time."

And if you're being honest you're like, "Hey, I want to pray. I just haven't figured out what that looks like for me. So, the last time I prayed is when you said, 'Hey, close your eyes and bow your head.'"

But is that the prayer life that God wants for us? I would say most of us, whether we believe in God or don't believe at all—our prayer life could be reduced to, we pray when things are outside of our control, "Help me do this." But that's not praying in the Spirit, at least not completely. I know because I prayed like that before I even believed in God, because what's it going to hurt? You get yourself backed into a corner and you just start praying to a God you don't even believe in.

But I think God has a different version, He has a different idea of what it means to communicate with Him, to be in relationship with Him, to have a prayer life with Him. It's not as clean as, "I've got it, I've got it, I don't got it." Like a hail Mary pass. And then that's our prayer life.



I like the way Dallas Willard talks about prayer. He says, "Prayer is talking to God about what we are doing together." That's different. Isn't it? It's not like complete this pass down the field, it's like, "Hey, what are we going to do?" God is sharing with us what He wants to do in and through us. It's how He wants to use us to be a part of the process.

Does that describe your prayer life? That's what God is inviting us into. That's what it looks like to pray in the Spirit. It's this partnership between us and God that He is inviting us into.

I love the way Blaise Pascal talks about it. He was this French mathematician, inventor, who had this radical conversion experience and became a prolific Christian writer. And he had this unique take on what prayer is and why God introduced it.

He said, "God institutes prayer in order to lead His creatures in the dignity of causality." What does that even mean? Sounds good. Causality just means the ability to cause something to happen. So, Pascal is saying that God invites us into the process to give us dignity. Even though He doesn't need us, He invites us to play our part.

And it kind of works on two different levels. There is a certain space where, because we are created in God's image, we've been given dominion over the earth. There are a lot of things we can do, and we have permission to do. The example I heard is, say you are walking out your back door later today and you walk, and you see your garden or there is a mulch bed there and a weed has popped up.

Most of us aren't stopping in that moment and going, "My Father in heaven, is it Thy will for me to pluck this weed from the garden? Speak now to your servant." No. You're like, "I'm pulling the weed. There is a weed that shouldn't be there that is there. I have dominion. I'm pulling this thing out. I can fix it. I'm going to do it." But causality really comes into play when things aren't that basic and aren't that easy, that we can't just sense. What I'm talking about now is pretty much every relationship you have. We can't fix people. It never seems to work, does it? Even when we try. Because we try to come at them from the outside in. What do you do when someone in your life, who you love, who doesn't know Jesus? How do you help?

What does it look like when someone you know and love struggles with addiction or anger or anxiety or depression? How do you help them in a real way? Because, if you've lived with anyone who has experienced that, you've been on the other side of it, you know that there is only so much you can do. It won't be an outside in fix. We try to fix them that way. It doesn't work.



When we try to fix ourselves from the outside in, it doesn't work. It has to be this internal fix, a transformation of the heart, soul, and mind. And only God can heal from the inside out.

That's a big part of our Mission Statement. We just want to clear the way to get as many people to Jesus as possible, and we want to partner with God and say, "God, whatever You want to do, however You want to do it, however You want to lead me, I want to be available and willing to Your way."

Through prayer He offers to partner with us. That is what is happening when we are praying in the Spirit. This is a gift. We have the Spirit of God within us. Ephesians, 1—earlier in this book says that the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance, meaning that inheritance when one day we are in heaven with God: no more sin, no more pain.

The inheritance is that that same Spirit that made that possible has come to live in us, leading us. Not just showing us the way to the pearly gates one day. He is showing us the ways of heaven, showing us the ways of the Kingdom, showing us the ways of Jesus. The Spirit of God within is the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave. And He's going to help bring insight and He's going to help bring power that we didn't have access to before.

If I could take it all into one sentence, one definition, here's what I would say: Praying in the Spirit is where God reveals mysteries we could never know on our own.

Praying in the Spirit is where God reveals mysteries we could never know on our own. The word mystery is different in biblical language because mystery to us is give us enough time, like a who done it, and we can figure out who did what. It's a mystery that we can solve. The biblical term for mystery means it can only be revealed to you. The only chance we're going to have access to certain things is if the Spirit of God relays it to us. So, He will reveal mysteries and:

It's where He empowers us to do what we could never do without Him. And that's where it can kind of seem like, "That's a lot. I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I can do what you are calling me to do." But He's never asking you to do it alone. He's saying, "I'm going to reveal to you, to give you insights to what I want you to do. And then I'm going to empower you to do the work—what I want to do in you and through you."



When you think about this, when you start to get really practical about it, if there is a God who is holy, holy, holy, above all things, His ways are above our ways. What chance do we have of making sense of what God wants to do? Once again, that's where the Spirit comes into play. The Spirit teaches us. He translates God's language for us so that we can make sense of it.

It's like you've ever been an adult and tried to have a conversation with kids and you realize how it can go pretty poorly pretty quickly. It's like you're trying to have a real conversation with them but a lot of it kind of goes over their heads. They are not getting it.

And I know, for me, I'm a dad now and I love having a family. I've always had these pictures of dinner time. I wanted to have these amazing conversations around the table because I grew up in like the sitcom era with the TV dad and the great conversations and throwing out questions. I'm going to speak truth into your life right now and the music is going to go. I had all of these pictures of what life was going to be like.

I remember one night we're sitting at dinner, and I turned to my oldest and I said, "Hey, babe. I just want to know where you are. What do you want to be when you grow up?" And she (typical of the oldest) looks right at me, and she says, "I want to be an astronaut." And I said, "Babe, it will be difficult. But listen. You have everything that you need to be an astronaut. I believe you'll be an astronaut." Beautiful moment speaking life into her.

And then I turned to my son who is two years younger—he's still two years younger. But he's two years younger than she is. And I said, "Hey, bud. Same question to you. What do you want to be when you grow up?" And this man looks at me dead in the eye and he said, "I want to be a lizard, Dad."

But I didn't give up on my guy. This is my guy. I'm not going leave him believing he's going to be a lizard one day. So, I said, "No, no, no bro. You don't get it. Campbell wants to be an astronaut when she grows up. That's what she wants to do with her life. What do you want to do?"

And I promise you we had this conversation. He looked at me, eyes open. He had a light-bulb moment, "Oh, I want to be a space lizard." "Alright man, we're going to try again in a couple of years."

But I feel like, if I'm being honest, that has to be what God is like when I'm praying. He's trying to talk to me, asking me questions, and I'm like, "Space lizard." He's like, "Alright, no. Holy Spirit, run that one back. Help him understand what I'm trying to do. Translate for Me." That's a big part of what the Spirit of God is doing. He closes the gap. He makes it possible for you and me to connect with a holy God who is different in every way.



Look at this in Romans, chapter 8. Look at what it says about the Holy Spirit. It says:

"And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for."

You ever been there? "I want to pray." You sit down and you're like, "I don't even know what to say." We don't know what God wants us to pray for:

"But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will." Romans 8:26-27 (NLT)

So, when we talk about praying in the Spirit, God is saying, "I'm going to translate. You don't know what to ask for, I'm going to show you what you should ask for. There is going to be stuff that is so deep within you that you cannot even say the prayers. It's just going to come out as groanings that you can't articulate, but I'm going to translate even that for you and hope it makes sense to you." Like a friend who helps you kind of make sense of something that you can't even realize on your own, that's what praying in the Spirit is. We come and we open ourselves up to God and He begins the process. He meets us right there and does what only He can do.

When you receive the Spirit of God, He starts a transformation process HGTV style. You know what I mean? He's coming in. He's renovating. He is knocking down walls. You may be like, "I liked that wall. I was good with where that was." He's like, "I have something better. Trust Me." The Spirit of God is working through us.

And the word that He uses over and over again, especially in Paul's writing, is groaning. We can say our prayers, but the Spirit translates our groanings. Earlier in

Romans, chapter 8, just a few verses before it says, "The groanings come out like birth pains."

I don't know if you've ever been around a woman who is giving birth, but I have. And there is a lot of groaning. I got to experience the birth of a child three times. And maybe you guys are like, "Ryan, I thought you had four kids." I do. I passed out one time. But I was there in spirit for all of them. I just wasn't physically conscious.



I don't know if you've ever been in that space but there are not a lot of articulating words. It is groaning and yelling and grunting. Something is happening but you can't really fully articulate it, "The left abdomen is what I feel right now, the leg." No, it's like groans of something that is happening, "I can't articulate it, but something is coming." That's what the Spirit of God is doing within us. It's like He's just groaning.

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 5 it says, "For in this tent (our bodies) we groan longing to put on our heavenly dwelling," Meaning that when the Spirit comes He's giving birth to a new creation. And when He comes in and He looks around at our life and how we are living, He says, "This is not going to do." He begins to plant this yearning and this ache within us—an ache for heaven.

So, when we begin to pray in the Spirit, we begin to want things that we didn't want before. We desire things we didn't desire before. Things that upset us don't upset us anymore. God is doing a work through His Spirit. And God is the One who is overseeing the job. God is the One who is telling us what we should be praying for.

Prayer is not just trying to bend God's will to ours. In prayer, through the Spirit, we are made aware of God's will. We align to His will. That's what it means to pray in the Spirit.

I love the way that Tim Keller summarizes all of this. He says, "God will either give you what you asked for or what you would have asked for if you knew what He knows."

That's what it means to have faith. We're still going to show up. We're still going to pray for all of these things, "But at the end of the day, I'm going to trust that I have His Spirit. And our God is sovereign over all things. And whatever happens, I can have faith that it is what is best for me, even if I can't understand it in the moment, I'm trusting Him."

I just want you to just hold up that mirror. When you think about praying in the Spirit or saying prayers, which one are you doing? "Am I asking the Spirit to search me? Am I listening to what the Spirit is saying? Do my prayers feel more like groanings sometimes and silence waiting for a word from God, or am I really just trying to get Him on the hook for what I want to do? Am I praying in the Spirit?"



Because remember, this is a partnership. It's what God wants to do in and through us. And Paul is going to home it down even more here in a second. He's going to show us what it looks like to pray in the Spirit by giving a framework and commands to go with our prayer life. Alright?

Look at this in verse 18. He says:

"...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints," (NLT) Now, that's a lot of all(s). Right? Four all(s). If you're keeping track at home. He says I want you to be praying all these prayers with all supplication. Now this is just a way of basically saying, to come not just in prayer but to come—the picture you get is of a beggar. One who is humble and dependent, showing up, knowing unless God shows up this is going to be fruitless, "Unless the Spirit of God shows up and gives me a word, and reveals something to me, and empowers me, I don't want it."

He says, "I want you to come to prayer all of the time like this. Looking to God. Desperate for God to show up."

And he says to keep alert. If you've been around with us you know that this has been on the heart of our church for this season. We're in a season called Awaken where we are just begging, asking God, to awaken His church. We don't want to go sleepwalking through this life.

So, we've been praying over and over and over again, "God, wake up Your people. God, do a work in us and through us. Do something new. We are willing and available.

That's Paul's call here as he is talking about our prayer life. He's like, "This isn't something you do with your head over the macaroni and cheese. This is something that you are fully alert to, that you are completely dependent upon. That's the type of prayer that we are talking about.

And then he gives for all(s). The four all(s) of prayer. And I wrote them down here just for you. It says:

The Four All(s) of Prayer
At All Times
With All Kinds Of Prayers
With All Perseverance
For All The Saints



It says pray at all times, with all kinds of prayers, with all perseverance, for all of the saints. Now, I don't know about you, but like I said, I was convicted when I was reading that because I was like: all? All of the time? I'm good for some times. All the people? I'm good for some of the people.

But that's not what the command is. He gives us this huge vision for what prayer is. We're going to constantly find ourselves with something new to talk about with God. He's going to continue to push us past what we are comfortable with in our prayer life. Because we're going to be praying for all of these things. And what I want to do is I just want to break down each one of these, not to be an exhaustive list but just to give us all a few things we can begin to work through as we talk about what it looks like to pray at all times. What does it look like to pray for all the saints?

Let's do that right now. Let's go through each one of these so we have a framework this week that can change our prayer life.

At All Times

At The beginning and end of Your day

Before a meeting and while you drive

In a good season and in a hard one

In the middle of temptation

So, at all times. At the beginning and end of your day, "I'm giving God my first and the best. I want to sit with Him before I sit with anyone else." Before a meeting and as you drive—we want to take advantage of the little moments. This is where Scripture gets to praying without ceasing.

When I say amen when I'm done praying in the morning it doesn't mean that I'm not going to talk to God again until the next day or until I say amen the next week. What we're going to say is that this is a constant conversation where we are going back and forth in the big things and the little.

In a good season and in a hard one—I know for me, and maybe it's the opposite for you, but I find it easier to pray in hard seasons, when I come to the end of myself I just feel this dependence. But when things are going well, I can trick myself into thinking, "I'm doing pretty good. I'm doing a pretty good job." But what does it look like to pray in good seasons and hard times?

And then, finally, in the middle of temptation. What I hear a lot of times and what I have experienced is when we are struggling with something, when temptation comes, often things like guilt and shame come up too. And the last thing we want to do is go into the presence of God.



So, when we get tempted by something or we're struggling like, "Okay, I've got to figure this thing out. And then once I get it figured out I will go back to my prayer life, then I'll go back to serving, then I'll go back to being in a relationship with God. But He wouldn't want me right now. I've got to work through this."

That is a lie from the pit of hell. What that should trigger, when we feel temptation, when we get overwhelmed, is a moment to say, "God, I need Your help. I'm coming to You like a beggar. I know unless You show up, I'm going to fail again. But I believe that through Your Spirit, by Your power, we can make it through this together."

That's what this partnership is. Do you pray all of the time? Not just when it's good but when it's bad. Not when it's convenient, but all of the time.

With All Kinds of Prayers

Adoration and praise

Confession

Lament

Thanksgiving

Spoken or silent

And then the second one is this: prayers—with all kinds of prayers. And this is maybe where you have the same prayer that you pray over and over and over again. It's the prayer you pray on your birthday. It's the prayer you pray on Jesus' birthday. It's the prayer you pray for dinner. It's a version of the same thing, saying the same words.

What would it look like to diversify your portfolio a little bit? To have different conversations with God. Let me give you a few headings for what that can look like.

Adoration and praise—it's just a moment to pray and to worship God, to celebrate Him for who He is: holy, holy, holy.

What does it look like to pray prayers of confession? When was the last time you confessed to God? You sinned. You messed up. You did something you shouldn't have done. You did something that grieved the Spirit. Do you take time to repent? Do you take time to confess and offer that back to God?

Do you lament? I think this is one that when I think about our church and the church in the west—really there is no space... What does it look like to be sad before God? And to just sit with tears and to sit in silence to sit with groanings for this world that we live in? We have a whole book dedicated to it. But do we have language for it personally? What does it look like to be sad before God?



What does it look like to have thanksgiving? To realize that every good thing that we have has been given to us from God—do we take time in our prayer life to say, “God, I want to give you full and complete credit for everything that You’ve given me. And I thank you.”?

Spoken and silent—there are spoken prayers for sure, but there are also times... What would it look like to just sit before God and say, “I don’t know what I want to ask for. I don’t know if I need anything at all. All I know is that I just want to be with You and be before You. And I trust that that’s the best place I can be. So, I just want to sit here quietly before You.” Do you make time for those kinds of prayers?

With All Perseverance
For your loved one who is lost
Daily for healing
For your church
When you don’t feel like it

And then with all perseverance. With all perseverance. This is for your loved ones who are lost, this is daily, for healing, if you are struggling or someone you know is struggling. It’s praying for your church. It’s praying when you don’t feel like it, when you have to persevere.

I think a lot of times people think, “Oh, the ones who pray all of the time, or read their Bible—they must really enjoy doing that.” Sometimes. But sometimes you have to persevere through it. Discipline will lead you to passion. But we have to come to that spot. We have to persevere through it.

I think we have this very tainted view, I guess we could say wrong view, of God and what it looks like to ask Him for things. We have this idea that somehow it’s not okay to ask God for things over and over and over again.

I think we’ve all had that moment with our parents where we were going to the grocery store, or any store in general. And right before you got to the doors they stopped you and they said, “Hey, listen. We’re about to go in here. Don’t look at nothing. Don’t touch nothing. Don’t ask for nothing. You got it?”

And then you go in and you make it about 45 seconds, and you start touching stuff, you start asking for stuff, and they say, “Listen. Don’t make me hit you in front of all of these people. Don’t ask for nothing. Don’t look at nothing. Don’t touch nothing.”



That was for a very specific reason. That is not God and that is not how He wants us to interact with Him. That is not what our prayer life should look like. God is not like, "Oh, they are asking for Me. They are asking that again and again and again. I thought I told you no. I thought I told you not to ask Me."

That is not the picture that we have of God when it comes to our prayer life. It's actually the complete opposite. Jesus would tell a story of the persistent widow in a parable where actually the whole meaning of it is how we should always pray and never give up. It's the complete opposite.

It has this story where a judge who is unrighteous, he doesn't fear God, doesn't care for people, and he's on one side. And then there is this widow who is the lowest in the community. She has no reason for him to listen to her. She has nothing to offer to the equation. But it says that she comes and she's persistent—over and over and over and over again.

At first the judge just ignored her. He says, "Why would I listen to her? Why would I give in?" But then, eventually, he gives in. It says that she keeps asking for justice, she keeps asking. "She's wearing me out." And so, finally, he gives in. And this is where Jesus turns it and makes it very crystal clear of what this is about. He says, "So, don't you think that God will surely give justice to His chosen people who cry out to Him day and night?"

It is a call for us to persevere. It's a call for us to request over and over and over again, to not grow weary because, here is the thing, there are good things God will do if we pray. And there are bad things that He will stop from happening if we pray. And the only way we can know is if we pray. We want to give God no rest.

We want to lift up the things that are breaking our hearts. We can ask for as much as we want and we're trusting that He is going to align our will to His. I remember hearing a woman talk once about her prayer life. She prayed for everything all of the time. And I said, "Does it really matter? Does it really help? When you look back and don't see that your circumstances change." And she was very honest. She said, "Sometimes my circumstances change, but always my heart changes." Always.

When we think about what God is really trying to do in these moments, He's trying to transform us from the inside out. Persevere when we pray.

For All the Saints
A friend who is grieving
Before a tough conversation
In the middle of a season of grief
For the ones who've hurt you



And then finally, for all of the saints: a friend who is grieving, pray for someone before you go into a tough conversation, in the middle of a season of grief, for the ones who have hurt you. It's not enough to try not to hate them, we're called to love them. What would it look like to pray for those who have hurt you? What does it look like to pray for the church in general? What does it look like to pray for Traders Point? What does it look like to pray for the people in your group?

The word that the Bible uses for this is:
Intercessory Prayer
And the way that I will describe it for our series is:
To battle on your behalf

Here's what we are committed to and commanded to do—to pray for one another. This means that when you share your life with me, when you let me in on what you're going through, your struggles, what you're offering to God—I'm making sure that you're not the only one.

I'm taking you and your problems to the throne room of God. I know that Jesus is the only One who can change anyone so I'm showing up persistently, day in and day out, praying for my brothers and sisters. I'm bringing their problems. Their problems are now my problems. And we are bringing them to the foot of the cross.

Does that describe your prayer life? Prayer, if we allow it, it's the most unselfish thing we can do.

Martin Luther said that the human heart is hopelessly curved in on itself. Sin has this ability to turn us in on ourselves and make us selfish. Prayer fights against that urge—especially intercessory prayer.

We're showing up like humble beggars saying, "God, I don't know anything. I need You to tell me everything." And then we're showing up in prayer, not just asking for ourselves but for those that we love. Mirrors up. Does that describe your prayer life? Are you going to battle on behalf of those who you know? Are you praying for the relationships in your life?

Here's just a litmus test for you. And you can answer this honestly:
If God answered every prayer you prayed this past week for the people you love...what would actually change?



Would we just have a bunch of people who got to their destination safely? Would we just pray a lot for a whole bunch of macaroni and cheese? Do our prayers mimic and mirror Jesus' prayers? We're they prayers of holiness and unity? Were you going to battle on behalf of your brothers and sisters? If God just decided that today that He was going to answer every prayer, would it really change anything?

I want my prayer life to be so real and so dependent that if God chose to answer it, the world would change, relationships would change, the world would come to know Jesus. How big are you praying in this season?

It's going to move our hearts to have a bigger vision. Among other things, God can do more than we could ask or imagine, so the least we could do is bring Him what we can ask and what we can imagine and let Him fill in the gaps. Are we praying at all times? With all kinds of prayers? With all perseverance? For all of the saints?

I want to prepare you. If you say yes to that, if you begin to mirror Jesus' prayer life, if you follow these commands and pray all of these things, we can see from Scripture where it's going to lead us. It's not a mystery of what happens when we take our prayer life seriously, when we intercede for others. It immediately leads to evangelism.

When we begin to pray it shows us what this is going to look like. When you pray, we're not meant to stay camped out in our quiet time all day. Because of all of that time that we go in prayer, all of those groans, they stir us to go. So, if we choose to pray like this, I want to show you what the next prayers are going to look like. They are Paul's prayers in verse 19. Look at what he says. It says: "...and also for me," he's asking for prayer, how humble is that? "...and also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." (ESV)

He's spending all of this time in prayer. He's living out all of these kinds of prayers. And where does it bring him to? More people need to know about the gospel. He says, "I'm an ambassador."



What happens in prayer is not just that it's about the words we say or who we are talking to, it's about the space that we inhabit. When we are in prayer, we have proximity with God. We are in His presence. We are experiencing what it means to be citizens in heaven. And when he moves outside of that, he's awakened to the idea of more people need to know the gospel. More people need to know about this relationship. More people need to be saved.

And then he kind of does a play on words here with ambassador in chains. There were two meanings for chains, just like there are for us. There are prison chains, which Paul was in at this time, and then there were golden chains like we wear today, but a lot bigger than this one.

And a lot of times when you would move and you would be a representative of your government, you would show up at a party and you would wear all of the chains. It would signify the riches that your country and your government had. You were showing people who you were.

And Paul uses this to say, "Yes, just like they do that with gold chains, I do it with chains that are around my wrists, because my God did not come draped in gold. He went to a cross and was crucified. So, the appropriate insignia for me to be a representative of heaven is these chains on my wrists.

Think about how different that is. He prays, not that my wrists would be unchained, he prays that his mouth would be opened. How different is that? It sounds a whole lot like Jesus' prayer when He says, "Not my will but your will be done."

Paul is saying, "I don't want to do my own thing. I want to partner with You. And I believe, right now, in this moment what Your Spirit wants to do is work through these chains. So, open my mouth that I may preach with the boldness of the gospel."

There is this urging and this groaning that is always going to have this evangelistic leading. That's where it gets us to our vision as a church. What we're behind right now in this season. When we talk about it, it is: Taking ground for the Kingdom across Indy and beyond

Because we believe that as we get into this Awaken season, as God stirs within us with groaning that we can't even articulate, as He leads, it's always going to be to go. From the Garden it was to go and to have dominion over everything. From the church when Jesus launched this thing He said, "Go and make disciples." And that is still our mission today.



So, am I praying in the Spirit? It's not just that you're spending a whole bunch of time with a whole lot of coffee. It's where are those prayers leading you? Where is the Spirit charging you to go? Are you praying for boldness to declare the gospel? Are you being prompted to share the gospel with others, because the more time you spend with God, the more you want to share God with others. Do you have that?

That's what I want to pray for right now. That's what I'm going to lead us to as we close today. It's to pray that you would experience what it means to pray in the Spirit. And I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray for two people—two groups of people. This is an all skate. Okay?

For you, if you've never experienced the Spirit of God, you never received that, I pray that today is the day where you would accept that invitation. And I also want to pray for all of us who maybe our prayer life has grown stale and religious and we're saying our prayers, but we are not praying in the Spirit. I want to pray for you that God would awaken you in this moment and you would learn what it means to pray in the Spirit.

So, right now at all of our campuses, would you close your eyes and bow your head as we pray together?

Father, we believe. We believe in the gospel. We believe in the Good News. We believe that You sent Your Son. We believe He lived a perfect life. We believe He went to a cross. We believe that He defeated sin and death. We believe that He paid the penalty for our sin. And we believe that He rose three days later defeating sin and death. We believe that He is offering an invitation, which is His Spirit.

So, God, I pray for everyone now who have never placed their faith in You. God, I pray that they would believe, they would confess with their lips that you are who you say you are. You are God. I pray that they would repent of the life they were living, and they would lay that down. God, I pray that in this moment they would speak it, they would confess it, that what they want is for You to be Lord and Savior.

And I pray in this moment all throughout our city and around the world, whoever is listening to this that Your Spirit would fall in this moment as a result of that confession, as a result of saying that You are Lord and Savior. Let Your Spirit fall. God, I pray that from this day forward our prayers would be different. You would intercede on our behalf. You would translate the groanings. You would transform us from the inside out. And we would have faith to trust You along the way.



Father, I pray right now for all of us who have been coming to church, all of us who have been saying our prayers, all of us who know that they are actually stale and it's quiet and it's boring. And we are starting to doubt and wonder if this is real. What's the point?

God, I pray in this moment that Your Spirit would awaken us. God, I pray that Your Spirit would lift us in this moment. God, make it unmistakable that You are alive and make Your Spirit fall fresh and awaken Your people.

God, help us to pray and to live in the Spirit. God, I pray that we would lay down prayers of happiness and pick up prayers of holiness. God, I pray that we would lay down prayers of making things easy, but God that we would have prayers of evangelism, prayers of reaching those who are far from You, prayers of telling the gospel to those who we love the most.

God, we pray for Your Spirit. Jesus, I pray all of these things in Your perfect and holy name. And the church said: Amen.

Can we celebrate everyone who prayed that prayer today? Church, let's stand to our feet right now. We're going to continue. This is just more prayer, more worship. We're going to sing our prayers now, because I hope that you are where I am. We are that humble beggar coming to the end of ourselves and saying, "We need a move of God. We are hungry. We are desperate. God, we want You to act. We want You to do a transformative work in us. We want You to make us holy. Transform us from the inside out. Church, let's lift up our voices pray in our singing that we need a move of God. Are you all with us? Let's sing together.

