

We Aspire To Be A Praying Church

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: ¹⁶ *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*

What an amazing thing it is to know that the creator and guardian of the universe hears our prayers and urges us to keep coming to Him in prayer. Our confidence and motivation in prayer is fostered, by knowing who God is, what God has done and who we are!

1) Who God Is

Revelation 4:26 *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."* ² *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.*

In his vision John saw Jesus seated on a throne in heaven; what a provocative image this is! Jesus isn't scurrying around, flustered and perplexed by the events of the world, he isn't panicking or anxious, far from it, He is reigning over all that occurs in the cosmos and bringing about all things for his glory. Whilst at times life can seem to be full of chaos and uncertainty, when we come before God in prayer we draw near to the One who is sovereign, reigning and working for our good and His glory.

Philippians 4: 4-7 ***The Lord is at hand;*** ⁶ ***do not be anxious about anything, 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus***

Q. If God wasn't in complete control how would that affect our approach to prayer?

Q. Why is it that peace comes to us as we pray?

Q. In what way can peace guard our minds? Our hearts?

2) What God Has Done

Revelation 4:4 ***Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads***

This number symbolically represents the entirety of God's people, the 12 tribes of Israel (Old Covenant – before the cross) and the 12 Apostles (New Covenant – after the cross). John then sees all of God's people around the throne of Christ, this is what He has done, He has brought us near. The gospel speaks of us once being far away because of our sin, but having been forgiven and declared righteous, we now belong with Him where He is. This means that when we pray, we are not casting our prayers into big empty space, to some distant God who one day might detect our murmurings, no, we have access right now to His throne room by His spirit, He hears us!

Q. When you pray do you have confidence that God hears you?

Q. How does being before His throne give you perspective when you come to pray?

Q. What should our response be if we don't *feel* near to God?

3) Who We Are

Not only has God drawn us near to Him, but also He has given us the right to call Him 'Father'! We come before Him as His beloved sons and daughters, we belong with Him and He loves time with us. Not only that but He is an incredibly generous Father...

Romans 8:32 ***He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?***

If God didn't hold back His Son from us we can be confident that He is able to give us all things, and when he doesn't answer our prayers, it's not because He is 'stingy' but has a better answer for us than the one we desired.

Q. How does being a Son/daughter of God affect how we pray to our Father in Heaven?

Q. Why should the cross embolden us to pray?

Q. God always provides what we *need* even if that isn't what we *want* – why is this ultimately better?

Q. Do we have some examples of answered prayers? Perhaps answers we weren't expecting?