

September 16, 2018 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

PRAYING FOR THE PRODIGALS:
3. “Seeking God’s Face in Prayer”
Luke 11:9 – 13 and Psalm 27:4 – 8

Introduction:

This morning we are joining with local pastors and local churches to share the third of six weeks of messages concerning praying for the prodigal sons and daughters in our spheres of influence. In our spiritual life week meetings in 2016, we had local pastors share the Word of the Lord with us. On Monday night, Bob Landis, pastor of the River Church, spoke on “The Father’s Heart for the Prodigals.”

The Lord did an incredible work in the hearts of hundreds of people that night. There was a call for people to come forward and write names on pieces of paper, then we laid those pieces of paper with the names on them on the altar in our Sanctuary. We then took them and photocopied those names and shared them with all of the local pastors who had preached the Word with us. There were over 300 names written down that night! We have been encouraging prayer for the prodigals in all of our churches since that night.

This series of six messages on “Praying for the Prodigals” comes out of that **Burden of the Lord we all felt that night**. This morning we join with fifteen local pastors and churches to preach a united series of messages. The first week was the call to prayer for others. Last Sunday my brother Merv spoke on “Asking Prayer.” This morning we will look at the topic of Seeking Prayer. Next week we will look at Knocking Prayer as we pray and seek the Lord’s Holy Spirit to find the hearts of those who have turned away from following Jesus.

There is a fundamental truth about prayer that all of us need to see and understand as we begin this morning. **Engaging in Heartfelt, Passionate Prayer** for others is one of the most important things we can ever do on planet earth. Through prayer we are invited to partner with the Holy Spirit as He does His work in the lives of the people we dearly love! The Spirit of Jesus invites us to hear and receive burdens that are on His heart for the people we love in our spheres of influence.

The messages the Lord has laid on the hearts and souls of the local pastors is an extended look at the theme of the Lord God doing a new and powerful work of His Spirit in the hearts, souls, and minds of many people here in our region. The Bible makes reference to God moving in and dwelling with His people, touching and changing lives in what is called “The Immanuel Principle.” **The word Immanuel means “God With Us.”**

We are calling the church of Jesus to earnest prayer, asking God to do a new and dynamic work of His Spirit in the lives of people here in our spheres of influence. We are uniting in prayer, pleading with the Holy Spirit to draw near to us, in more than just the general sense of His omnipresence. **What we long for is His Manifest Presence on the earth touching lives.**

The issue that drives this concept of the manifest presence of God is the deep longing in God's heart to **Know** each of us and to be intimately **Known** by us. The truth is God has always had "a people." It is in the heart of God to bless His people with His loving grace and mercy, in order to make others may see Him working in our hearts and lives and get hungry to know Him too.

The reason for the church is a **Theology of Blessing**, that as people see His life and love poured out on us they will want to know Him too. This is all part of His plan of having maximum global impact. His desire is to use us as vehicles for **World Evangelism**, that all the people groups of the whole earth might have the opportunity to know Him, too.

In Luke 11:9, 10 Jesus is talking to His people about three graduated movements of the intensity and desire found in the human heart expressed to God in prayer: Asking prayer, seeking prayer, and knocking prayer.

Last week's message was about the first level of prayer, as it relates to intensity in our hearts: asking God for things, or about things, in prayer. It focused on being made willing to pray and ask God no matter what the circumstances. Asking prayer flows from knowing we have needs and that He alone can do anything about them so we cry out to Him asking Him to answer us.

It is important for us to recognize that we pray out of our personal prayer lives in the midst of **Enemy Occupied Territory**. C. S. Lewis wrote the following quote in 1952: "Enemy occupied territory, that's what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful King landed in disguise and is calling all of us His people to a great campaign of sabotage!"

I John 5:19, 20 *"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true."*

Ephesians 3:10 – 12 *"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."*

We began with an important truth: **The Bible presupposes an intersection between the Human Arena and the multiple Heavenly Realms. That place of intersection is the issue of Human Will.** Prayer as the expression of our desire to know His will and see His will accomplished here on earth, as it is in heaven, is a confession that is made in the very presence of God's spiritual enemies.

The key decision regarding asking in prayer is to be humble and broken before Him, to be made willing to pray and seek God's face in humble adoring surrender, regardless of how He answers that prayer. What we need to see and understand is a really simple truth about asking God for the souls of others: What makes prayer so **Powerful** is God's **Response** to us as He answers prayer.

Today we move a bit deeper in working to understand the incredible gift of God called intercessory prayer. We are studying prayer level two – **Seeking Prayer**. The words rendered

“seek” in the following text are in the present indicative active and could easily be better rendered, “seek and keep on seeking.” The Greek New Testament word is dzetete – meaning to “boil hot,” and metaphorically “passionate longing.”

Luke 11:9, 10 *“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

I. Prayer Level #2 – Seeking Him:

Luke 11:9b, 10b *“Seek and you will find . . . he who seeks finds”*

Deuteronomy 4:29, Moses was speaking about the people of God dwelling with the manifest presence of the Lord in the Promised Land, *“If from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all you heart and with all your soul.”*

Petitioning prayer, asking God for things is really an important part of what it means to be people of prayer, **but there is much more to prayer than simply asking God for things.** Prayer level two takes us into a deeper aspect of what prayer is all about, when Jesus taught His people; *“Keep on seeking and you shall be ones finding.”*

God is not merely a heavenly storehouse, or resource center, that we are to tap into in order to get Him to do what we want Him to do. Praying with the Lord, seeking God in heartfelt prayer is not about you and me following some formula in order to move God to act on our behalf! It is not about us “putting our faith dollars in, get our provisions out.” He is a living Being, who loves us, and passionately desires to know us and to walk through life with us by His Holy Spirit.

John 14:21 and 23 *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and **show myself to him** . . . If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and **we will come to him and make our home with him.**”*

Prayer that truly matters in heaven and on earth is about going to the **next Level of Intensity, seeking the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.** When we seek Him in prayer we aren’t asking for anything from him but to **Know** him more **Intimately.**

It is the outcome of having apprehended God in His majesty and the means of assimilating His heart of love in our hearts. It isn’t about seeking His blessings or to be touched by Him in some way. It is about seeing the loving face of God, a metaphor for **experiencing His favor!**

There are vast amounts of difference between knowing His **Hand** of calling anointing, gifting, direction, and being used of Him in ministry, and knowing His **Face**, with His countenance of **Favor** and **Delight** in us simply because we are His son or daughter.

Psalm 27:4 – 8 *“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his*

temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord. Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek His face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek."

There is a powerful illustration from the human arena found in the book of Esther, between Queen Esther and her husband Xerxes, ruler of the Medio-Persian Empire. Esther's people, the Jews, were under the sentence of death and her uncle Mordecai had sent a message to her to go to the king and plead for all their lives. He had shared with her that this might have been, in fact, the reason why she was chosen to be the Queen. We read these words about how the king felt when he looked up and saw his beautiful bride approaching him:

Esther 5:1, 2 "On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So, Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter."

Notice the king's countenance was one of embracing love and acceptance. He loved his bride and welcomed her to come into his presence. His first words out of his mouth were, "What is it Esther? What is your request?" May I suggest to us that this is how God the Father, Jesus the Son of God, God the Holy Spirit desires to have us to know Him?!?

Luke 4:18, 19 is a passage about Jesus when He was in His hometown synagogue at Nazareth. He read from the prophet Isaiah 61:1, 2 where we are told Jesus came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Paul echoes the truth in II Corinthians 6:1, 2 "*Now is the time of God's favor, today is the day of salvation.*"

Seeking after Him is a Biblical metaphor for **Choosing** to have **Spiritual Passion** about knowing how God feels about us when we walk into His throneroom and seek audience with Him in prayer. Please remember this one thing. Seeking after God with passion in prayer is not about us overcoming some reluctance in God's heart to act on our behalf. The reluctance is in us, not in the Lord!

Quite to the contrary, **we are the reason we require diligence and discipline.** The issue is our schedules, busyness, and time-constraints, our active preoccupation with temporal life. We have already read from John 14:23 that He promises to make Himself known to us. His Spirit lives in our lives if we have invited Him to be our Savior. He told us the primary function of the Spirit of God in us is to make Jesus real, John 16:14 "*He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you.*"

The real issue as it relates to knowing the Lord more intimately resides in us, in how much we really want to know Him. You and I are as intimate with the Spirit of Jesus as we have chosen to get alone with Him and seek Him in the past months and weeks. We can know the reality and sincerity of our desire only by the passion (burning desire, not emotion) with which we pray.

II. What Are We Seeking?

We are seeking after the Lord Himself, at deeply personal levels, not asking for things, or interceding for others. We are talking about our **Longing** for the Lord God, for more of His **Manifest Presence** by His Holy Spirit, in our heart, soul, mind, and body. In Him are all things precious to us embodied.

Colossians 2:1 – 3 “I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

The apostle Paul was imploring others to follow his example and to seek hard after God, in order that they might be flooded with precious things of God. We are seeking after Him to know the secret things or mystery of God. We want to be with Him and to experience the things that are hidden from them who do not yet know Him, in any personal or experiential way. **We want to know His presence and power, His mind and His heart revealed to us, in us.**

Ephesians 1:17 – 19 “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, . . .”

Please notice with me, the serene beauty of what is being said here. Paul prays for his readers at Ephesus, and since it is recorded in the Bible for us, for you and me. He asks the Lord to open the **Eyes** of your **Hearts**, that is yours and mine. The bottom line is that if God were to show Himself to us in all of His majesty and power, our physical eyes could not handle it and our physical bodies would be overwhelmed by His glory on earth!

Biblically speaking, when Moses saw the countenance of God his face was transformed, radiant, dazzling, brightness so that the Israelites couldn't look at him. Or when the Apostle Paul met just the light of Jesus' presence on the road to Damascus he was struck with blindness that lasted until Ananias came and laid his hands on Paul asking God to restore his sight. He was overwhelmed by the visible presence of the glorified Jesus!

The point I'm driving at is this. We see God in our spiritual person, we experience seeing Him in majesty and glory, with the eyes of our hearts, not our physical eyes. Think about what **the eyes of our hearts represent: Windows** to be enabled to see our **Desires and Passions!** It is a picture for us enabling us to see our own gateways to our foundations for decision-making.

We experience seeing God in spiritual images, in floods of loving mercy, grace, and visions of His radiant smile of favor to us. Seeing Him with the eyes of our hearts, that is meaningfully touching God and being touched by Him, can have dramatic and life-changing consequences.

III. Choices to Be Made:

Having seen the beauty and majesty of God, experiencing His holiness with the eyes of our hearts, the gateway of our decision-making, we experience powerful and dynamic power, and we're permanently changed in our desires. We deeply want to follow hard after God, with ever-increasing glory arising to Him from our lives.

II Corinthians 3:16 – 18 *“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

Later on in that same passage Paul writes, 4:6 *“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”*

Consequently, choosing to seek after the Lord passionately implies four clear choices to be made:

Choice #1 – Devotion to Him, at the very core of our being, whole-hearted devotion that goes way beyond going through the motions. Devotion to the Lord from the heart brings me into face-to-face friendship with God, in the face of Christ Jesus. He illuminates my heart with His presence through my devotion to Him, which leads me to the need of making choice #2.

Choice #2 – Discipline of my will and my ways. As the light of the glory of Christ Jesus arises in my heart, I will invariably see things in me that I don’t want to be there anymore. He is the Holy Spirit and He purposes to make us holy, not merely in standing but in experience. I will go through the process of surrendering myself to the discipline of the Lord because I am His son in Christ Jesus, and I desire to be made into His likeness.

Choice #3 – Desire to be passionately, consistently given to the Lord. I will express deepening and heartfelt love, adoration to the Lord, delighting in being with Him, who has set me free and who is causing me to go on living free of sin, the fleshly desires that can rule me, the world’s allure, and the enemy’s attacks.

Choice #4 – Death to my fleshly, selfish, sinful desires and self-interest! I choose to live daily crucified by faith with my Lord Jesus, considering myself alive unto God and dead unto sin. There is a classic picture of this found in Moses’ life in the Exodus. God and Moses were on the mountain alone, and Moses asked to see God’s face. God’s response is just as true today in the spiritual sense as it was that day in the literal sense. God only countenances us with His richest favor at the places of our death to self and the flesh!

Exodus 33:19, 20 *“And the Lord said, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’”*

Conclusion:

Practical suggestions for seeking God passionately:

- 1.) worship, praise, and adoration**
- 2.) open myself up to the Lord, with a desire to adequately repent**
- 3.) inviting Him to commune with you according to His Word, His whispers to you as you pray, and leading you into fasting and prayer**

PRAYING FOR THE PRODIGALS:
3. "Seeking God's Face in Prayer"
Luke 11:9 – 13 and Psalm 27:4 – 8

Introduction:

We are in a series of messages on "Praying for the Prodigals." The series was birthed out of a message Bob Landis shared at Cedar Grove at our spiritual life week meetings in November 2016.

This series of messages being preached by local pastors comes out of the **B**_____ of the **L**_____ we felt that night.

E_____ in **H**_____, **P**_____ prayer for those we love is one of the most important activities we can do.

The Biblical pictures of "The Immanuel Principle," a term meaning **G**_____ **W**_____ **U**_____.

Local pastors are calling the church to united prayers, asking God to dwell on earth changing lives by His **M**_____ **P**_____.

The reason God has always had a people is a "**T**_____ of **B**_____." He desires to use us in His work of world evangelism!

Luke 11:9, 10 Jesus taught on three graduating levels of prayer: Asking, seeking, and knocking.

It is important for us to know we are praying from the midst of **E**_____ **O**_____
T_____ ... C. S. Lewis quote 1952. I John 5:19, 20 and Ephesians 3:10 – 12

The Bible presupposes an intersection between the human arena and the multiple heavenly realms. That place of intersection is the **H**_____ **W**_____.

When we intercede for others what makes prayer so **P**_____ is the Lord God's **R**_____.

This morning we move a bit deeper in understanding the gift of God we have been given in intercessory prayer for others. We are studying prayer level two: **S**_____ **P**_____.

"Seek and keep on seeking God in prayer. The Greek word is dzetete: "to boil hot," a picture of passion for God! Luke 11:9, 10

I. Prayer Level Two – Seeking Him: Luke 11:9b, 10b, Deuteronomy 4:29

Asking God for things in prayer is important. But there is much more to prayer than simply asking God for things. "*Keep on seeking and you shall be ones who keep on finding.*"

God is not merely a heavenly storehouse where we get God to give us what we need. "Put your faith dollars in, get your provisions out!" John 14:21, 23

Prayer that truly matters in heaven and on earth moves us to the next **L**_____ of **I**_____ seeking to know the Lord with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. We seek to know Him more intimately!

There are vast amounts of difference between His **H**_____ of calling or anointing and His **F**_____ of favor and delight in us. Psalm 27:4 – 8

The beautiful picture of the throneroom encounter of Esther and Xerxes, Esther 5:1, 2 ... Notice the king's countenance of favor and delight!

Luke 4:18, 19; Isaiah 61:1, 2; II Corinthians 6:1, 2 Seeking God in prayer is a metaphor describing **C** _____ to have **S** _____ **P** _____.

II. What Are We Seeking?

We are seeking the Lord Himself. We are talking about **L** _____ for the Lord, to experience His **M** _____ **P** _____ on earth!

Colossians 2:1 – 3 Paul writes about seeking Him, to know His presence and power, His heart and mind revealed to us. Ephesians 1:17 – 19 Paul prays for his readers that the Lord will open the **E** _____ of our **H** _____!

We see God with our spirit, with spiritual sight. The eyes of the heart are **W** _____ to be enabled to see our **D** _____ and **P** _____.

III. Choices To Be Made: II Corinthians 3:16 – 18 and 4:6

Choosing to seek the Lord passionately implies four clear choices to be made:

Choice #1: **D** _____

Choice #2: **D** _____

Choice #3: **D** _____

Choice #4: **D** _____

Exodus 33:19, 20 Moses seeing God on the mountain

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. As you think about God searching and reaching for hearts for people, do you think most people in our culture really understand this truth about Him?
2. Why do you think so relatively few people engage in heartfelt, passionate prayer for others in their spheres of influence?
3. What are some of the key reasons why people turn away from following Jesus in life, then find themselves imprisoned and struggling with doing things they know are wrong?
4. Do you think most people today truly know they are walking in a world that is under the influence of the enemy Satan and sin's power to enslave people? Why would people not be able to see and understand this Biblical truth?
5. What do you think the Biblical passages mean, that call us to seek the Lord in heartfelt prayer? What does "seeking prayer" look like and sound like as it pours from a person's heart, soul, and mind?
6. What do the Biblical authors mean by the phrase, "the eyes of your heart?" What are the eyes of our hearts to be fixed on? Why?
7. In order for us to engage in seeking prayer there were four things listed in the message. Which one or ones touched your heart more deeply? Why?
8. Read together aloud David's charge to his son Solomon when he installed him as the next king of Israel. I Chronicles 28:5 – 10. What stands out to you in his words of calling to his son?
9. Read together aloud Isaiah 55:1 - 11 and discuss insights you have regarding the role passion and desire should play in our walk with the Lord our God.
10. What are some things the Lord God spoke to your own heart as you heard the message? What are some ways you can grow your passion to express your heart in your prayer life with the Lord Jesus at the Throne of Grace?