

Authentic Prayer

SESSION 6



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BIG IDEA

The key to authentic prayer is humility.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:10–14 (NKJV)

¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

MESSAGE SUMMARY

This week's sermon examined the difference between counterfeit prayer and authentic prayer. Using Luke 18 as the primary text, the sermon explored three essential elements of genuine prayer: the posture of prayer

(humility), the perseverance of prayer (persistence), and the promise of prayer (praying God's Word back to him).

True prayer is not about special words or techniques—it is about communion with God and accessing heaven's resources for earth's needs.

COUNTERFEIT PRAYER

- 1) *Prayer to Google* – seeking answers from online searches and technology
- 2) *Prayer to Self* – seeking answers within (e.g. “believe in yourself” and the Human Potential Movement)
- 3) *Prayer to the Cosmic Consciousness* (e.g. Zen Buddhism, etc. “You are a co-creator of the universe and the reality of time and space”)
 - Counterfeit prayer -- whether directed toward technology, self-help philosophies, or vague spiritual forces -- always falls short because it limits us to human resources rather than connecting us to God and the resources of Heaven.

AUTHENTIC PRAYER

- Authentic prayer is fundamentally an act of communion with God and a means of bringing heaven's resources to bear on earth's needs

1) THE POSTURE OF PRAYER

- The posture of authentic prayer is humility, as demonstrated by the tax collector in Luke 18 whose simple, broken cry was declared more effective than

the elaborate, self-congratulatory prayer of the Pharisee.

- The promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 confirms that humility is the prerequisite God identifies for hearing prayer and healing the land.
- The story of King Manasseh in 2 Chronicles 33 illustrates that even the most wayward individual, when he humbles himself greatly before God, receives a hearing and restoration.

2) THE PERSEVERANCE OF PRAYER

- Perseverance is a non-negotiable element of authentic prayer, as taught through the parable of the persistent widow, whose relentless appeals to an unjust judge serve as a contrast to the certainty that a just God will answer those who cry out to him continually.
- Though God may appear to delay, his answers, when they come, arrive with speed and completeness.

3) THE PROMISE OF PRAYER

- Authentic prayer is most powerful when grounded in the specific promises of Scripture, as every human need corresponds to a divine promise, and God's promises are "Yes" and "Amen."

ICEBREAKER

Can you recall a table grace or childhood prayer that you learned? Can you still recite it for the group?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Pastor Mark mentioned three counterfeit prayers that are prevalent in our culture (prayer to Google, prayer to self, and prayer to the cosmic consciousness).

Which of these do you feel is most obvious in our culture? Which ones come up in your daily life?

2. The main key to authentic prayer is humility. In Luke 18:10-14 we see the tax collector has a humble heart and the Pharisee has a proud one.

How might we cultivate a spirit of humility?

3. Hard times can either make you desperate for God or hard towards God. Although King Manasseh was usually an evil king, he humbled himself when he was in distress and God was moved by his prayer (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).

When you go through tough times, what is your usual response? If needed, what steps could you take to improve this?

4. Below are some other examples of people in the Bible who prayed after being humbled.

Person	The Humbling	The Prayer
Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1–19)	Hannah was childless in a society that placed high value on women who bore children.	She cried out in anguish for God to see her suffering and to give her a child.
King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:34–37)	Because of his pride over building Babylon, God struck him with a mental illness that drove him away from human society to live and eat grass like an ox for a period of time.	At the end of this season, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes toward heaven and blessed, praised, and glorified God.
King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:25–26; Isaiah 38:1–5)	After recovering from a terminal illness and later falling into pride regarding his wealth, Hezekiah faced God's impending wrath.	He humbled himself for the pride of his heart (along with the people of Jerusalem) and turned his face to the wall to weep

		and pray for mercy and for his life to be extended, which God answered.
King David (2 Samuel 12:1–13, Psalm 51)	After committing adultery with Bathsheba and arranging the death of Uriah, David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. He finally owned up to his sin.	In response, he wrote Psalm 51, a prayer of repentance, confession, and pleading for a clean heart.

What stands out to you about the way that these people experienced humbling situations and how they prayed?

- 5.** Think of a difficult time in your life where you were humbled. **Did it change your perspective towards prayer? Share how you prayed during that time.**
- 6.** Share about a situation that you had to pray about for a long time before it was answered. **Why do you think God took so long to answer your prayer? What were**

perhaps the benefits of it not being answered right away?

ACTIVATION

Invite each person in your group to share one prayer request that they have been waiting a long time for an answer. Is there a promise from Scripture that God has given for this situation? *(In the Take It Home section below we have listed some of God's promises, and group members may have others to share.)*

Take time to pray together as a group for the needs that have been shared.

TAKE IT HOME – Becoming more familiar with God's promises

In your prayer times this week, be purposeful in applying the promises of God to your requests.

Here are some examples to get you started:

Emotions / Peace, Comfort & Freedom from Fear/Anxiety

- **Philippians 4:6-7** "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving,

let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

- **Psalm 34:18** "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit."
- **Isaiah 41:10** "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."
- **Isaiah 26:3, Psalm 147:3, John 14:27, 1 Peter 5:7**

Finances / Provision

- **Philippians 4:19** "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
- **Malachi 3:10** "'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'"
- **2 Corinthians 9:8** "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."
- **Matthew 6:33, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 34:9-10**

Relationships (Marriage, Family, Unity, Love)

- **Proverbs 18:22** "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord."

- **Ephesians 6:1-3 / Colossians 3:20** (children/parents): Honor your father and mother... that it may be well with you.
- **Isaiah 54:13** (children): "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children."
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

Healing (Physical & Emotional)

- **Psalms 103:2-3** "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases."
- **Isaiah 53:5** "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."
- **James 5:14-15** The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.
- **Exodus 15:26, Jeremiah 30:17, Matthew 8:17, 1 Peter 2:24**

Protection & Safety

- **Psalms 91:1-2, 4** "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.' ... He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge."
- **Isaiah 54:17** "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in

judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord..."

- **2 Thessalonians 3:3** "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one."
- **Psalms 121:7-8, Proverbs 18:10**

Strength, Courage & Endurance

- **Philippians 4:13** "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
- **Joshua 1:9** "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
- **2 Corinthians 12:9** "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."
- **Isaiah 40:31, Deuteronomy 31:6**

Guidance & Wisdom

- **Proverbs 3:5-6** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."
- **James 1:5** "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."
- **Psalms 32:8** "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye."
- **Isaiah 30:21**

Hope, Future & Salvation

- **Jeremiah 29:11** "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

- **Romans 8:28** “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
- **1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **John 3:16, Hebrews 13:5**