



We've just finished up our first series, Praise Victoriously, and now we're starting our new series, **Pray Continuously**. Over this series, we're going to bust a few myths about prayer and look at the truth of prayer to help us grow **stronger**. Prayer is part of the believer's daily life. It's so much more than a routine or religious saying that we do at the beginning or end of a day. Prayer is communicating with God and how important it is as Christians that we learn to pray continuously! This doesn't mean that we are on our knees all day long, but it's about having openness and a heart towards God, engaging with Him regularly throughout the day, being attentive to His voice in our lives! Prayer is the wood that keeps the fire burning in our relationship with God. To keep the fire going, we need to keep adding logs to it through prayer, and the amazing thing is, the more we pray, the more we want to pray! Prayer is our: **Promised Rights Accessed, Yielding Eternal Reward.**

What is your understanding of prayer? What does prayer look like in your life?

Myths of prayer - Read James 4:3

- 1. All prayer is heard:** The Bible says we can pray amiss when we don't pray according to and in line with God's will.
- 2. It doesn't matter how you pray because God knows your heart:** God gives us templates on how to pray, like the Lord's Prayer (see Matthew 6:9-13) to help us pray effectively.
- 3. It doesn't matter if you pray because you are under grace:** Prayer is communicating with God - like any relationship, if we want it to grow, we need to be in regular communication.

How do we know we are praying according to God's will? How can we use a template or pattern from the Word of God to help us pray?

Truths about prayer (Read Hebrews 4:14-16)

1. Prayer is God's set up for Him to access this life - see Psalm 145:18

We communicate with God through prayer. God is always looking to partner with men and women to see His Kingdom established. When we pray, we are not only talking to God but allowing our hearts to hear from Him.

2. Fervent and effective prayer is answered - see James 5:16

Our prayer is powerful. The more we understand this, the greater our commitment to praying becomes.

Why can we approach God boldly in prayer? What does this look like?

3. Churches that pray God's way breakthrough - see 1 Timothy 2:1

God answers praying people that are praying according to His purpose. His desire is that His church would be a House of prayer.

4. Prayer is God's system to bust into your circumstances - see 1 John 5:14-15

We can come boldly to God, knowing our rights and inheritance as a Child of God. As we come to Him, we give Him permission to break in.

5. Prayer is your number one tool in changing you and turning things around - see 2 Chronicles 7:14

Prayer brings God into the very midst of your moment. It's a powerful weapon that we can access to see things change. Prayer changes your viewpoint. Whenever you get with God, there is a lifting up of your head

What prayers have you seen answered in your walk with God? Encourage the group with some stories of God breaking through as you have brought Him into your situation.



We're in the second part of our **Stronger** Teaching Series as we look at **Pray Continuously**, learning to engage with God and stirring our faith into action through prayer. Throughout this series, we will talk about personal prayer, agreement prayer, corporate prayer, intercessory prayer and template prayer. If we're going to be people who **pray continuously**, we need to go back to the original context of the Bible. We'll never truly understand prayer until we understand Genesis, God's original plan and design for humanity. When we begin to realise this truth, we start to engage in prayer with faith, and this is where our prayers become effective, and we see them answered!

Read Genesis 1:26-28 (NKJV)

We were made in the image and likeness of God and were given dominion over the earth. When God said this in Genesis, He handed over authority to humanity. We must understand that God is sovereign and can do whatever He pleases, but He is bound by His word. God's character and nature mean that if He says it, He does it. Knowing this, we can read Genesis and begin to understand the importance of prayer. God never does anything without a person, so prayer becomes our opportunity to invite God back into our lives to see His power move in and through us.

Why does God move through people? Share a story where you have seen the transformational power of God activated when you came to Him in prayer.

When we study God's Word from Genesis to Revelation, we see that what changes situations, transforms lives and turns nations is prayer. When we study people in the Bible, we see that those who knew God and had a heart after His, such as Moses and David, were people who prayed, interceded, and stood before the Lord for personal moments and for their nation. So if we're going to get **stronger** in 2021, we must become people that pray. We've got to become people who are hungry for God, who don't start and stop in our pursuit of Him but instead learn to **pray continuously**. **Are you someone that often starts and stops things? How can we become people that are committed to a life of prayer, rather than starting it for a season and allowing it to fall off the radar?**

Read Luke 5:15-16

Jesus is the perfect example of a life of prayer. In this passage and others throughout the Gospels, we see a glimpse into what Jesus' lifestyle of prayer looked like. It says that He would often get up early, before dawn, and go and pray to the Father for hours at a time.

Why do you think Jesus got up and spent hours with the Father before doing anything else, and how do you think this impacted His ministry? How do/can you set time aside in your daily life to pray?

Read Mark 9:14-29

In this story, we read that the disciples could not cast out an evil spirit, but then Jesus comes in and does it. When alone with Jesus, the disciples ask how He did it, and Jesus' reply is prayer. We see elsewhere in the Gospels (Luke 11:1) that of all the things the disciples could have asked Jesus to teach them, they asked Him to teach them how to pray. The disciples began to understand that a life of prayer, like Jesus had, was necessary to see things change on earth. When we pray, we invite God into our moment and things like depression, anxiety, powerlessness, the sense of being beaten up or worn down begin to shift because God repositions us and shows us that we are in heavenly places with Jesus. We begin to see, think differently, coming into the place of authority that we have been given, and operating with the power of the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us.

How do we learn how to pray? Is there anything you have done, read, watched, followed etc. which has helped you grow in your understanding of prayer and how to pray?



As we journey through the second part of our **Stronger** series, **Pray Continuously**, we're learning what it means to pray effectively. Last week we looked at God's original design for humanity (found in Genesis 1:26) and began to unpack the root of prayer. We saw that God handed over dominion of the earth to humanity but that we need to invite Him back in through prayer to see His power move in our lives.

Read Hebrews 11:3

As Christians, we are encouraged to live by faith, not by sight. This demonstrates to us the importance of what is unseen. God made all things that we see by things we cannot see. This same principle operates in our day-to-day life; things like love are invisible, but they materialise in action - what is unseen produces something that is seen. Prayer can be invisible because we are dealing with things in the heavenly realms, yet prayer manifests the power and presence of God into a moment to transform our lives.

What do you think it means to live by faith and not by sight? What other scriptures help you with this?

There are many reasons why we pray. Here are a few to discuss:

1. **It keeps our heart awakened to God**
2. **It keeps us dependent on Him**
3. **We declare Him as our God every time we pray, reminding us that He is God and we are not!**
4. **It strengthens our devotion**
5. **It deals with our errors, mistakes, sins and weights and realigns us with God**
6. **It positions us to be filled with the Holy Spirit**

What are some of your main reasons for praying to God, and why?

When we pray, it gives God access to many things in our life, including:

1. **Anxiety (see Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)** When we pray, God's peace floods our heart and mind.
2. **Persecution (see Matthew 5:44-45 NIV)** We are told to pray for those who persecute us.
3. **Those in authority (see 1 Timothy 2:1-2 NIV)** We are instructed to pray for leadership.
4. **People we love (see Job 42:10 NIV)** The Bible is full of examples of Jesus, the Apostle Paul and other great leaders praying for those they loved.
5. **When we feel like giving up (see Luke 18:1-8 NIV)** Praying isn't a one-off event; we're taught to pray regularly and consistently over things until we see them move.
6. **Power over evil (see Matthew 6:13 NKJV)** Praying leads us into the presence of God; when we are full of His presence and power, it makes it much harder for us to fall into temptation and the ways that lead to sin.

As a group, choose one or two of these points to reflect on. Read the associated scripture and discuss how you have seen God's power operate when you have prayed over these areas. If someone in your group is struggling in one of these areas, pray for it together during the prayer section of your group.

When we pray, it opens our eyes and hearts to discover more of what God desires, including:

1. **That none should perish (see 2 Peter 3:9)**
2. **That nations would turn to him (see Psalm 2:8)**
3. **To seek and save that which is lost (see Luke 19:8-10)**
4. **That we would flourish in His Kingdom (see Luke 12:32)**

Why do you think it's important as believers that we understand God's desires? How can we learn more about God's heart?



Today we're going to look at **personal prayer** and **agreement prayer**.

Personal Prayer (Read Matthew 6:6)

Your personal prayer life is your relationship with God, your day-to-day quiet time with Him. We read throughout the Bible great examples of men and women who had a powerful personal prayer life, such as Hannah (see 1 Samuel 1). She cried out to God for her own life, her own needs and desires, and God heard her. Personal prayer is where you are engaging with God daily, spending time in His presence and telling Him everything that's in your heart; your struggles, challenges, sin and pain, but also your gratitude and thankfulness. It's where we just get real with God and are open and honest with Him. To pray effectively, we must remove the distractions, take our eyes off the business of life and lean in and focus solely on God, allowing our heart to connect with His heart.

What things in life can distract you during your personal prayer time? What can you do when going into prayer time to limit or remove these distractions?

Like anything in life, prayer is a journey: we start in infancy and grow into maturity. Often when we first start in our walk with God, it can seem like every prayer gets answered, but as we grow, we might find that we don't always get our prayers answered as quickly or as often because God wants to see us grow, mature and become all that we can be. God uses trials, storms and challenges to produce character and Godliness in us. His hand is on us the whole time, strengthening us and encouraging us to overcome. This is why personal prayer is so important, as your personal prayer life will sustain you in trials and challenges. The stronger our personal prayer becomes, the stronger we are in storms. As we become stronger, we are equipped to rescue and help others in their storms; this is the role of the Church.

How have you seen personal prayer sustain you through challenging times? How can we, the Church, be active in helping others who are going through difficult seasons?

Agreement Prayer (Read Matthew 18:18-19 and Mark 11:22-24)

Agreement is a powerful principle in the Kingdom. To receive God's promises over our life, we must first agree with them, saying we believe it's true and receiving it by faith. God is not a liar, He is faithful and true, and He will do what He says He will do. When we speak God's word back to Him through prayer, we are agreeing with Him and His word, allowing it to manifest and bear fruit in our lives.

Why do you think the principle of agreement is so important to God and the ways of His Kingdom?

Read 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16

The power of repetitive sin gets broken off of your life when you confess your sins and stand in agreement with His promise that He has forgiven you and cleansed you. When we learn to confess and agree with what the Lord has said over our life, we will start to see great and mighty things take place in our lives.

Read John 15:7-16

Agreement prayer means abiding (or remaining) in Him and His word. As we agree on the promises of His Word through prayer, we get access to a fruit that remains - fruits of the Spirit, including peace, joy, kindness and gentleness.

What are the fruits of the spirit? Why does God want us to bear fruit?



Today we're going to look at **template prayer** as we journey through our series: **Pray Continuously**. The Bible records the prayers of great men and women of faith to help us understand how to pray to God. In this study, we'll look at a template of how we can pray when we've been in a tough place for a long time.

Read Psalm 13:1-6

1. We get honest with God

Psalm 13 is a real open and honest prayer to God by King David as he walks through a difficult season in life. Seeing a prayer like this in scripture encourages us that it's okay to cry out to God and get real with Him in our times of struggle; in fact, God invites us to do just that. David felt forgotten by God, but He also knew the truth that God was with him. If we feel forgotten, or abandoned, or lost, we can cling to the truth of the Word that God will never leave or forsake us. We can be encouraged that we have a Lord and Saviour who walked through and experienced the pains and trials of life. In our seasons of difficulty, God is building character in us, and this character is invaluable for our future.

Why do you think it's important to get open and honest with God?

Read Matthew 7:7-8

In Psalm 13, David asked God, 'how long?' Sometimes we can be walking in a 'how long' season, wondering when the answer to our prayer will come. However, we can be encouraged that many great men and women of faith in the Bible had to wait a long time to see the promises of God fulfilled in their life. This is an encouragement to us. It means that if we are in that place of 'how long', we can trust that if God spoke it over our lives, He will make a way. We are encouraged through the scripture to keep asking. When we ask and ask again, it begins to shift asking into seeking, then we shift from seeking to knocking. It's a template we can follow to see the answers come.

Who are some people in the Bible that had to wait a long time to see the promise God spoke over them fulfilled? How does their story encourage you?

2. We get specific in the ask (Read Ephesians 1:18-19)

In his time of difficulty, David got specific with God. He prayed for God to look on him, to answer and to bring light to his eyes. Asking God to open our eyes is a powerful prayer. This is a prayer that Paul prayed over the Church in Ephesus because he understood that the enemy tries to close our eyes to the things of God. However, when our eyes are open, we see the great things God is doing in and through us, despite the difficulties. When we open our eyes to see God in our season, even if nothing has physically changed around us, it brings us a greater strength to be able to walk through what we need to walk through.

What are some specific prayers you are asking God for? If you are comfortable, share these with the group so you can pray over them together in your time of group prayer.

3. We make a decision to trust, rejoice and praise God

David expresses his openness and pain, then brings a 'but' - 'but I trust'. In this template prayer, David got honest with God, asked God for his needs, but then chose to line up his confession with the truth and walk in righteousness and praise. By the end of this prayer, we see that David decided to walk in what was right, rather than what he felt. God's plan is greater than our plan; His ways are higher than our ways, so as Christians, we are called to trust in His unfailing love, knowing that He will work all things together for good and bring us through our trials so that character is established in our life. In our difficult seasons, it's important that we rejoice and praise God for all the great things He has already done in our lives in the past.

Share with your group a few things in your life where you can look back and see the goodness of God.



Read Romans 8:26-27, 34

Today we're unpacking **intercessory prayer**. Romans 8 says that both the Spirit and Christ are interceding for us! To intercede means to intervene on behalf of another, going into battle (spiritually), or standing in the gap, for someone who can't do it for themselves. Intercession is tapping into the desire of the Lord so that He will act. Many great stories in the Bible help teach us about the power of intercession. One of these is found in Exodus 17, where Moses was standing on the edge of the battle, and he prayed, lifting his hands, interceding for the Israelites.

What do you think is the significance of lifting our hands in times of prayer and worship?

Read John 17:9-26

In this powerful chapter, Jesus is in a place of intercession: in his biggest moment, we see Him standing in the gap, praying for other people. This is a picture of what God wants us to pray about. Here are six things Jesus prays in John 17 that we can pray over others as we intercede for them:

1. That we would be protected by the power of His name (see John 17:9-12)

Here Jesus is praying prayers of protection. When you pray and intercede for people, one of the things the Holy Spirit will lead you to pray for is protection over people by the power of His name. There are many prayers of protection, including protection over health, finances and faith.

Why are prayers of protection important? What areas of protection can and should we pray over others?

2. That His joy would be in us (see John 17:13)

Joy is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit. When we intercede for people, we can ask for God's joy to fill them. When God's joy overflows in our lives, it begins to spill out onto others.

3. That we would be set apart (see John 17:17-19)

Jesus prayed that we would be sanctified; to be sanctified means to be set apart. As Christians, we're not meant to be the same as everyone else; there's a mark on us that separates us from the world, that identifies us as followers of Christ. We walk differently because we are set apart by and for God. It means living a devoted life, living to and for God.

What does it mean to be 'set apart'? How can we live a sanctified life?

4. That we would be one with each other and one with God (see John 17:20-21)

This is the heart prayer of Jesus. He is praying that any Christian would become one with Christ and the Father and one with each other. When we are walking as one with Christ, our life displays it so that others may know the message and believe in Him.

5. That we would be in complete unity (see John 17:23)

Where there is unity, there's a blessing. In Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, the people were of one heart and one mind, and we see such incredible moves of God take place through this unity. To get stronger, we need to be in complete unity, remove all division and divisiveness, and stand in unity with God, His Word, and His Church.

What things can we do to help us to live in unity with other believers?

6. That the world would know that God loves them as much as God loves Jesus (see John 17:25-26)

You are no less loved by the Father than Jesus is! What an incredible truth to grasp for our own lives and to help others understand. Paul prayed a similar prayer over the Church in Ephesians 3; that they would know the breadth, width and depth of the love of God for them. When we understand just how much God truly loves us, it solidifies our life.

What helps you to understand how much God loves you? Share with the group scriptures, worship songs, messages, experiences etc., that help you grasp God's love for you.