

# Prayer 05 Our Instructions 02

by Bob Clark

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of agreement, faith, and asking in Jesus' name for answered prayer, and highlights the power of prayer in our lives.*

**Duration:** 33:45

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:44, Matthew 6:11, Matthew 9:37-38, Matthew 18:15-17, Luke 18:1, Luke 21:36, Luke 22:40

**Topics:** "Prayer Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses various aspects of prayer and its importance in the life of a believer. He starts by giving examples of Jesus' teachings on prayer, including praying for enemies and praying for the harvest. The speaker emphasizes the need for a close relationship with God, comparing it to the relationship between a vine and its branches. He highlights the importance of abiding in Christ and having His words abide in us in order to have effective prayer. The sermon concludes with a reminder to cherish the privilege of prayer and to seek the Lord's guidance in all things.

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## Transcript

Why don't you join me? Fellowship with the Lord's people and a little hymn of praise. Well, we've been thinking about prayer during the week, and I am hopeful that as we reflect on what we have said and used on those things, and then supplemented, that we'll begin to be moved by the Lord to cherish more and more the privileges that we do have in this exercise of heart. Remember in the earthly ministry of our Lord, He gave exhortations for prayer, and there were six of them.

Is there any chance that we might be able to put all six of those together from memory? You can start out in chapter 6. The Lord exhorted us to pray for our enemies. Then we went to chapter 10. We would pray for the fields were white to harvest, the laborers were few.

We should pray for laborers. In chapter 11, we prayed for our needs. Then we went on to chapter 18, the parable concerning the woman who prayed, and we ought always to pray.

Persistence, right? Ought always to pray and not to faint. Then we prayed in reference to the coming of the Lord. In chapter 21 and in chapter 22, we prayed in reference to trials and temptations.

The Lord gave us six exhortations to pray. Then in Luke's gospel, he gave us three illustrations of prayer in parable form. One was the illustration concerning our needs that we would have for our bread and

having something to give to others.

Then there was an exhortation or an illustration rather of prayer in the framework of the man who was justifying himself before God, and then the woman who just persevered and insisted in prayer interceding. Last night, we thought about the Lord giving us a demonstration of prayer in his own life, and so the many different ways in which our blessed Savior examples his real emphasis in prayer and communion with the Father by his own example and pattern. Now, he also instructed his disciples, and the Lord gave instructions concerning answered prayer, and he makes four statements that I would like to look at and that we would, as we did last morning, just kind of make our own contributions and think about and make our observations and pool our thoughts together in an informal way in order to establish in our mind what it is that the Lord is seeking to establish in our hearts that we can see or we can perceive in some way certain requirements for answered prayer.

That always is a question for us, isn't it? Just what it is that is missing in our prayer life. Why some people seem to say, well, we receive answers, but at another time we don't feel that we are. And there are certain requirements, apparently, and the Lord lays these out in a very simple way.

The first one he speaks of is in Matthew chapter 18. This is a very familiar portion of Scripture, and we are relating it to prayer, but in its proper context, it has a different basic subject or topic in mind. In Matthew chapter 18, we want to read from verse 15.

Something that we observe right away, now I believe that these are going to be given to us in chronological order, and there are four statements that our Lord makes about prerequisites to prayer. And I think it's rather interesting that it's not until the very last week of his public ministry that the Lord makes this statement here, and then in the last few days, and the last few hours of his ministry on earth, meaning that he has given the disciples his own example first, he has given all of his teaching on the subject of prayer first, and all of his exhortations, and now he makes these observations at the end of his lifetime about these four requirements for successful, effective, answered prayer. He's speaking in chapter 18 and verse 15.

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. And if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the assemblage. But if he neglect to hear the assembly or the assemblage of believers, then let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. The Lord is here teaching us that we should avoid offending others.

And if there is an offense amongst his followers, then if we have been the offended one, we should go to that brother with this offense or this hurt feeling, this grievance that we have, and just privately, graciously, draw to his attention that he or she has done or said something that's been hurt or an offense to us. And if that person accepts your observation and your offense and says, well, I'm very sorry, and is repentant of this, you have healed, you have breached a gap, and you have gained your brother. You have a closer

relationship to that individual.

But if he doesn't, then you must get two or more persons, and then they would come. And keeping it, again, in a small company, you would make this rehearsal of the matter again for the purpose of healing offenses, bridging the gap of estrangement or distances between people that the Lord's followers here on earth, and I think this is rather significant, at least as best as I perceive this portion, that here on earth, this group of his followers and disciples would be able to keep a close bind, a close relationship together. Now, should it be that they are still resistant and unwilling to go any further with this, and still unwilling to repent, then all of that little company of disciples that are representative of his believers in this little area that would assemble together, logically, possibly, in a home, or wherever it would be that they're meeting as a group, in any section of the community, and the reason why I'm taking time to say this is because the word church appears here in our King James Bible, and because of that, we think of a well-structured New Testament assembly, and that's not the thought, because there has not been the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there has been no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, there has not been the raising up of elders, and the sealing of the Spirit, so we cannot think in the same language as we do now in New Testament terms.

Our thinking now is we would bring it before the congregation. Well, there was no congregation at this time. There was a handful of people that met in certain areas of the community, and the Lord was allowing for this loosely structured fellowship of believers, not in the church form and government as we think of it, but rather as a group of followers of the Lord, who because of their love for the Lord had this camaraderie and fellowship and union together, and because he knew he was going to be absent on his behalf, they would, of course, logically, if he was still here, they would go to him to settle these matters, but now they go to their brother, take it before the others, and if he still refused to repent of his offense, whatever it was, he or she was just resistant and hard of heart, then just as the Jew in Israel treated the alien, the outsider, the stranger, so they should look at this person as an outsider, a heathen, a Gentile, or as a publican, somebody who is totally unpalatable as far as a social relationship was concerned, for that's the role that the publican had.

The publican had identified himself with his Roman cohorts to make tax collections, and he was imposing upon his brothers and sisters offensive bond. He was identifying himself with a group of people outside of Israel, outside of the people of God, and as a result he estranged himself. Now with that kind of background, then we understand better what he says then, and whatever you bind on earth, if you're acting on my representation and you treat this man as an outsider, then I shall treat him as an outsider also.

And if he has been unwilling to repent after he's been approached three times by the individual, by two or three, and then by all the little group wherever they are meeting, if he continues that way, then what you have bound here on earth, your gracious governmental attitude toward that individual, I will bind in heaven, and I will think of him as the same and deal with him in a such manner. And, in verse 19, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, now this appears to be linked with what has just been said. If there are then some of this group that have just acted in this manner, or possibly a couple of those personal witnesses that were included in this encounter or correction, if they are in agreement and they have a care for that soul and want to see a repentant spirit created in that individual, those two will meet together in prayer.

And if two of them or more are agreed here on earth and they make this intercessory plea and go to God on behalf of this individual or this circumstance, their exercise of heart, their desires, anything they shall

ask, it shall be done of them, of my Father which is in heaven, because where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst. And again, we must not think now of the local churches, we think of it, meaning to remember the Lord, but rather this body of Jewish disciples who are praying, and because the Lord is not there in their midst to exercise authority on this matter of settling a problem, they have gone to God in prayer and the Lord says, because you have this spirit, I will sense your exercise of heart and I will be in your midst. Now, of course we know that this is a lovely anticipation of the time when there will be groups of us gathered together in the form of congregation, and if he is in the midst of a body of two or three wanting to settle some distress between brothers, how much more so will he be in the midst of believers that gather such as this.

But, in this particular portion now, the one stipulation that we have presented to us by the Lord for answered prayer is mutual agreement. Now, it would seem hypocritical to me that if brother A and brother C got together concerning this offense by brother B, they could hardly be in agreement only by saying, let's you and I say such and such. So, it would rather appear, rather than a pre-planned agreement of looking with somebody, it comes as an exercise of heart concerning this matter, and it's a spontaneous expression.

And it might very well be that after witness A and witness C have been called in on the circumstance, what's going to happen? When they go to their home, they're so concerned, and it might be that as they pray in his home and in his home, and they are in agreement, not by planned verbal arrangement, but by exercise of soul. That's the proof that there is a living Christ in the midst of his people here on earth. Even though he is the risen head of the church, or the coming church, and he knows that he's in glory, but here are his people demonstrating that similar spirit in their concerns here on earth.

So, the first requirement that the Lord sets up for answered prayer is agreement. Now, let me ask a question. What does this suggest to you regarding our relationship with our brothers and sisters? Just the whole general theme.

Not in great detail, but what does this suggest about our relationship with others here in this world? Anything come to our minds? All right. There should be a spirit of unity. Right.

And the Lord wants to preserve that. Now, how is this unity and cohesion going to be maintained? That's right. As each one looks to the Lord and is sensitive and concerned about these matters, and if something disrupts this unity, what should we do about it? We should pray about it? Talk it over with the offenders when it's yet a small thing, when it's only an incident.

This preserves a spirit of cohesion and warmth. And where there is genuine concern and an exercise about something that is unsettling, we should turn to the Lord, and if two or three of us are in harmony with these exercises of heart, you will ask, and I will answer. And my Father shall provide that which is the need, and anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst. So it's the very spirit of Christ that should pervade our prayer life, and when we pray in this common denominator of mutual concern and intercessory interest for the welfare of the testimony here on earth, and what we have sealed here on earth, God is sealing in heaven. So where there is a mutual exercise to treat this individual as a heathen, he will be treated as such until he or she is restored.

And where there is a mutual exercise to restore and bring back, then the Lord honors that because that's the spirit of Christ amongst His own. To correct the problem and have restoration. Done at very first, as openly and blatantly attack the person? Of course not.

What's the very best way? What's the Lord put first in these matters? With love. With love. What else? Privately.

What's this? Prayerfully. All these are good exercises of heart for us. Now, it's not very much longer after this in Mark's Gospel chapter 11, where the Lord on Tuesday morning is in the temple.

He has come in on the triumphal entry on the first day of the week. Now, this is Mark chapter 11. He has entered the city on the first day of the week.

He has seen the temple and purged the temple. He has cursed the fig tree and His disciples are with Him early on Tuesday morning coming back and they have seen the fig tree and the fig tree is already dead. In less than 24 hours, the tree has dried up and withered.

Now, we believe, don't we, that this is an emblem of God having judged the nation for their having rejected Him. And it's a symbol, a lesson that they are going to learn. But, for practical purposes, in verse 21, Mark 11 and 21, Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursed is withered away.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God, for verily I say unto you that whosoever shall say unto this mountain Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass. He shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that ye receive them and you shall have them.

And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any, that your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. For you do not forgive, neither will your Father, which is in heaven, forgive your trespasses. So, here again, in the same realm, in the same similar theme, he makes the simple statement in verse 24 that if we pray, believing, there is the second stipulation, faith in what we are praying for.

If we pray believing, we shall receive it. And that believing should be cushioned, should be surrounded with what kind of a spirit in verses 25 and 26? A forgiving spirit. Once again, once again, prayer seems to be linked with what kind of a key? Forgiveness? Graciousness? Concern? This is the environment for intercessory prayer and for successfully seeing our prayers to be effective prayers that avail much.

Beloved of God, God is not just looking that we bend our knee and speak to Him, but He is looking for that which springs from an inner heart of tenderness, of concern, of interest for the welfare of His own and His people. And if you pray, believing. Sometimes, we get greatly moved.

We're in a group prayer and we will pray and we mean well, and yet we pray, oh, that everybody in our city would be touched and saved. Well, that's a really a wonderful exercise of heart. But when we pray that, are we really believing that that is what's going to happen? Not really.

Isn't that true? It's a heart and a feeling, it's an aspiration, it's a longing for the welfare. But how often, now there was a man by the name of Knox, that somehow he believed that he was going to move all of

Scotland. And remarkably so he did.

But you see, he believed it and then he began to implement it. And he prayed and he preached and he traveled and he did and he made a tremendous mark. There was another David Brainerd who was so exercised about the American Indian and so concerned about him that he genuinely believed that when he went to those Indians, they would understand his speech and their souls would be saved.

And there were literally hundreds of those Indians reached in just that short span of his lifetime. But there was much prayer. Hours protracted periods in prayer and the Lord would just seem to lead him to the right tent and he'd go past groups of people and arrive at the right little family and they would be influenced.

But we need to pray believing. And when there's a harmony of spirit and a cohesion of will and interest together and there is this forgiving spirit, then we begin to pray and genuinely for things that we can honestly believe. And it may be very small in our lifetime.

They may be little things. Maybe things concerning our grandchildren that we see are real needs. Maybe something that regarding our spouse or something of a need here on the ground that you just have a feel that it's a real pressing concern and you honestly can believe that this is it and we can speak to God about it.

And then God enriches our lives and deepens us, I'm sure, and increases our capacity to have an effective prayer time. But there are two. That we are in agreement together assures answered prayer.

That we are praying for something that we can really believe is assuring or answered prayer. And then if you would, on the very last hours of the life of our Lord in John's Gospel in chapter 14. John chapter 14.

We'll read to get the flow of the continuity in verse 9. Jesus saith unto him, that is Philip, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. And how sayest thou then, Show us the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words which I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work's sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I shall do, he shall do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. What would it mean to ask in his name? What's being held before us? Is it just to say at the end of the prayer, in his name? You have to know his will. All right, that's one good thing.

You have to know his will. Because if we're asking it in his name, we are asking it representatively, or on his behalf, or associated with him, and we would have to know what he would want. Very good.

What else? Chapter 16 of the same book, he tells his disciples, you've not asked anything up to this time in my name. Why, up to now, they have prayed how? They've prayed to the God of Israel, have they not? Now the Lord has opened up a new family relationship, and coming to him through the character and the person of his son, as they have come to know him, they've gotten a much closer tie. Now, he says, you can ask in my name, and you're speaking to your father.

A whole new relationship. A family tie. To ask in his name.

What's the thought? It's knowing his will, or his mind, or his pleasure. Say it in your own words now, and share it with us, because something you'll say will kind of add insight for the rest of us. What else is in the thought of in his name? An understanding.

All right. An understanding, an improved understanding of what God's mind or thought is. What else? His power, his advocacy, right? Because of him, not because of what I am, but because of his power, he is my advocate.

I come in his name. People will come and call me up, usually ahead of time, but their entree is the fact I would hold them at the doorstep and talk with them, were it not for the fact that they'd made a phone call and said, you know, I know your mother and she used to such and such. Oh, come in.

I know one of your brothers and I used to travel with them, and because they know somebody that I know, then they are given an entree. We say in his name, we know your son. We're familiar with him.

We're his followers. We have come to love him, and we pray in his name. Now, we have three steps.

In mutual agreement, then he taught us disciples really believing, then you will come in my name. This is a new innovation for that Jewish mind to perceive prayer. And then in chapter 15, this remarkable portion of scripture about the vine.

Remember now, these are the last hours of our Lord's life and his teaching in the upper room, and it gives us a little bit of sense of the importance or the emphasis of his teaching. And he says, in the Greek language in which this statement is made, I am the vine, the true one. Israel had been told they were the vine.

Right? Isaiah chapter 5, the prophet announces that Israel is the vine and Judah is my tender, gentle, good fruit-producing plant. But the nation of Israel said in Psalm 60 that they were like a vine that had been taken out of Egypt and transported into the land and blessed and enriched to fill the land. Ezekiel says, a vine is only good to produce fruit.

You don't build anything out of a vine. You don't even make a chair. You don't even make a tent peg out of a vine.

It's only good for fruit. So the whole subject is now, you, my followers, here on earth, you are to be my fruit-bearers here on earth. You are to produce the rich character of Christ-likeness here on earth, the fruit of the Spirit, Christian character.

I am the vine and you are the branches. And as close as you stay to me to produce character, as you abide in me, then he says, in verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches, he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing. And verse 7, if ye abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

There is the fourth requirement. In agreement, believing in his name and as a result of abiding in him. Now what does that imply to us? Being in prayer, constant prayer with him.

All right. Being in constant prayer with him. Very good.

A relationship. How close is the vine or the branch to the vine? Inseparable. The moment the slightest separation comes between that branch and the vine, if it's only the width of the piece of this paper, the page of my Bible, what happens? It dies.

It withers. Lacking of communion. Lacking of communion.

Right. You have to draw from the vine the very sustaining life. For me to have effective prayer, I must not only address God in the name as closely tied to the Lord Jesus, believing what I am praying for, and in harmony and union with the prayers of my brethren, but as a result of being in communion, close personal relationship with him.

What will that suggest concerning my prayer? Why will that kind of prayer produce fruit? Sure. That's exactly right. It would never occur to me to go to my father when I was a boy and say, Dad, for graduation, I'd like to have a new car.

That never would have occurred to me. We were having difficulty putting food on the table and meeting practical needs. We had to scrape and save to meet all the details of life.

It never would have occurred to me. But I did go to him and ask, Would you come to my graduation? And that was important to me because he was sick and frail and it meant a great deal, but I knew that he loved me enough that he would make that special effort. He couldn't possibly do the other.

When we're abiding in Christ, we get to know his mind. We feed upon him and enjoy him. And then our thoughts are gleaned and our spirit is melted and our hearts are cooperative and we understand and we have his honor and his glory and his mind and then we know how to pray, don't we? What else does abiding in him suggest? Obedience, then.

We can't really abide unless we're ready to obey. Isn't that right? Now hold on to that contribution. Obedience.

Because this must have come from John's mind. Because in 1 John chapter 3, John says, if you obey my commandments, you shall ask what you will and receive. And he also says in chapter 4, 5, 14, he said if you ask according to his will, you shall ask and receive.

So John had a couple of concepts that came out of this discourse in the Upper Room and find their roots there that he expresses two more things, asking in accordance with the will and that harmonizes with what Brother Frayn said earlier. So you see, all these things are welding together. But the Lord taught there were four requirements.

He gave his instructions concerning answer prayer. In the order they were given in, the way he taught them, first he said you must be, Matthew 18, in agreement. You must be in agreement.

Then in Mark 11, we must believingly and then in John 14, in his name, and in John 15, as a result of abiding in him. Very good. May the Lord exercise our hearts and just refresh our spirits and realize how much he wants our closeness and reliance and dependence and enjoys to hear our prayer.

Maybe we can close with a word of prayer. Brother Granger, would you like to close in prayer, please? Gracious God, our loving Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for renewing unto us once again this opportunity of gathering one with another to talk about these things. But we thank Thee, O God, that the

greater benefit is that we have met in order to hear what Thy Word says to us.

And we thank Thee for the ministration this morning. We pray Thee, O God and Father, that we may be fruitful unto Thee. Grant, O God, that our lives may be such that others seeing us may wish to come to know and enjoy the blessing that we have.

And so we commend ourselves now to Thee, asking Thy blessing in the worthy and the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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