

Removing the Stumbling Blocks - Part 1

by Dan Augsburg

The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of prayer and the importance of interceding for others.

Duration: 1:24:19

Scripture: Isaiah 62:6, Mark 10:46

Topics: "Persistent Prayer", "Faith Healing"

Description

This sermon focuses on the power of prayer, emphasizing the importance of interceding for others and persisting in prayer. It explores the story of Blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10, highlighting the need for faith and persistence in seeking God's intervention. The speaker discusses hindrances to answered prayers and the significance of both physical and spiritual healing through prayer. The connection between praise and persistence in prayer is also addressed, encouraging listeners to continue seeking God diligently.

Transcript

Father in heaven, I'm grateful that this morning we have the opportunity to meet together in this building to once again consider prayer. To discuss prayer is to discuss miracles that have taken place. I pray Father that you will bless us, that you'll make it relevant to us, and that our lives can be changed by the time spent.

Empty me of myself, please forgive me Lord of my sins. Please forgive my friends of their sins as well that they might be able to hear. Might they Father come into contact with you.

And I thank you that you are more than able to do whatever is needed for whoever is here this afternoon. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

In the book of Mark, in the 10th chapter, in verse 46, as we get started, there's a story of a man that's known as Blind Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus had a problem. He'd been with him for quite some time.

He was blind. And he would sit by the road begging. He couldn't change his circumstances, but one day Jesus came down that road with his disciples.

And I can imagine that Blind Bartimaeus could hear the noise of the crowd coming. And as he heard the crowd coming, he realized that he had an opportunity of a lifetime to change his circumstances. And so he cried out.

But it's interesting. People warned him to stay quiet. Quiet down because perhaps they had other things that they wanted to do.

Maybe they wanted to talk to Jesus themselves. And they told him, quiet. Warned him to be quiet.

But instead of that, he cried out all the louder because it was a chance of a lifetime opportunity for his circumstances to change. It's because he cried out louder that something happened. I wish I could say that prayer is something that is universally accepted by all Christians equally.

That all believe in it, all would do it. But I have to tell you that some time back, it goes back quite a few years, I was at a camp meeting. And I encouraged some young women to share a testimony of how one of the husbands of these young women had left and gotten involved with another woman.

And they had decided they were going to pray together until God changed the circumstances. And they did. They prayed together hours.

And then suddenly felt that God had heard their prayer. And they thanked God. They went to bed that night.

It was very late. And lo and behold, the next day, the husband came back. They rejoiced.

And I was at the camp meeting. I told the people there, I said, you know, instead of my sharing on prayer in kind of an abstract, you know, teaching kind of way, just let these young women share their story. And actually, a pastor came to me and said, Dan, is it fair to suggest to people that their prayers can be answered? I know of a lot of people who pray and pray and don't get answers.

Is it fair? And it saddened me. But the truth is, is that there are people who have not seen answers for whatever reason and therefore sometimes struggle to pray. It's been my experience, though, that God answers prayer often far more than we expected.

And that's why it's well worth taking the time to study this matter. There were some missionaries. They were over in China.

They hadn't been there very long. They had studied together at Knox College in Toronto. And they had met, they had committed their lives to serving God.

The man's name was Jonathan Goforth. His wife was Rosalind. He had come from London, Ontario.

He had been very committed to God. And therefore, he had been going to the poor sections of town to share the gospel with those people. He had been busily studying his Bible.

He had been doing what he could to make a difference for God before he went to China. And eventually, he had met Rosalind and had felt called to propose to her so that they could serve God together. He did.

But he said, Rosalind, you must understand something very important. God will always have the last word in our lives, no matter what happens. She thought for a moment.

She said, I'm not sure I like the sound of that. I'd like to think that I could have a bit of a say. But she says, no, I've always prayed all my life that I would marry someone who was fully committed to God.

And a man fully committed to God would truly want to let God have the last word. So she'd agreed. They'd gotten engaged.

They headed off to China. With them was a companion who was able to learn the Chinese language very easily. But Jonathan had a great deal of difficulty, a great deal of difficulty.

And one day, he told his wife, Rosalind, he said, Rosalind, unless God intervenes, we may as well go back home because I'm just not picking up the Chinese language. What good is it for me to go into the marketplace and try and share the gospel in English when no one can understand English? This was back in the, I believe, in the late 1800s, early 1900s. So they made it a matter of prayer.

They said, Lord, you know, Jonathan needs your help to be able to share the gospel. He went off that day. When he came home, he was smiling.

He said, you know, the funniest thing happened as I was speaking in the marketplace. Suddenly I was speaking Chinese words that I hadn't been able to speak before. In fact, those words were coming together into sentences.

It was obvious the people couldn't understand me. And the people were talking to me, and I could understand them. Somehow, today, God gave me the gift of the Chinese language.

He rejoiced. Several months later, he got a letter in the mail. It came from the students at Max College.

And he said, Dear Pastor Goforth, on such and such a day, we were led to pray very specifically for you. And the Holy Spirit was so present in our midst, we knew that something had happened. Would you please look on your diary to see what might have happened on that day? And lo and behold, that was the very day that God had given them, had given him the gift of the Chinese language.

They rejoiced. Now, there was a group far away who felt called to pray. They prayed specifically.

They prayed until they knew that something had happened. They had pushed, right? Pray until something happens. And Jonathan had received the gift of the Chinese language and went on to be used by God in a great way to bring revival first to China.

He would plant churches one a month for a time in the interior of China. And then later, he went to Korea, where he began revival after revival after revival. You can read about those revivals in a book called *By My Spirit*, all because somewhere there were people praying.

As we read this morning, prayer has always been the engine of revival, the engine of evangelism, the engine of changed lives. And so we need to be praying. If you would, look in your Bibles at the book of Lamentations, Lamentations chapter 2, Lamentations chapter 2, verse 19.

Lamentations is a little book. For those of you that don't look in your Bibles often, it comes right after a larger book called Jeremiah, Lamentations chapter 2. And I want to take my time this morning. I was a bit rushed in looking up verses sometimes.

I want to make sure that you can all find it for yourselves. Jeremiah here is speaking of a group of people who truly were crying out because they had a burden. Their heart cried out to the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night.

Give yourself no relief. Give your eyes no rest. That's verse 18.

Now verse 19. Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.

Lift your hands towards him for the life of your young children who faint from hunger at the head of every street. Jeremiah speaks of the fact that there can come a point where people pour out their hearts like water for God to make a change in their circumstances. Look at Isaiah chapter 62, verse 6. Isaiah chapter 62, verse 6. We're going to read verses 6 and 7. It says there, I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem.

They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord do not keep silent. And give him no rest till he establishes and till he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Now if you know the story of Isaiah and what was going on in his country at that time, you know that it was a difficult time. And God was saying, don't give God any rest until something has happened, until he makes Jerusalem a praise in all the earth. And there is certainly the need of that kind of thing in our day.

I believe prayer is one of the more effective weapons that God has given us to bring about those kinds of changes. I believe so. This morning we talked about some of the things that can hinder answers to prayer.

This first session I want to talk what it means to intercede on behalf of other people. But I must tell you something, that depending on what we're praying about, how soon the answer comes varies. In other words, if I'm praying about something having only to do with myself, we should expect to have those prayers answered fairly quickly.

And I'm doing this from memory, so I may have the numbers wrong. But as I recall, George Mueller makes a statement such as, I prayed 50,000 prayers in my life. I mean, he literally wrote them down.

And he said 30,000 of those prayers were answered the same day. Huge percentage of prayers were answered the very same day. He went to the trouble to say, you know, I found that I would pray and God would answer right away.

And people who have been in relationship with God and praying much have found that God often answers just that way. But it's because it has to do with them and God. And they can live and seek to know God's will and live in a way that is good for God's kingdom, will advance his kingdom that's good for them.

And it is God's purpose to answer prayers quickly. But sometimes when we are praying for another person, sometimes when we are praying for another person, it takes longer. And I was sharing with you a little bit about the story of blind Bartimaeus.

And remember in the story of blind Bartimaeus, I will remind you of it if you don't know the story. He cried out because he was unwilling to have his situation remain the same. It was an unacceptable situation.

And finally, Jesus stops, recognizes him, and calls him. And the Bible says that in going, he had to throw off his coat. He threw off his coat.

And a lot of us, when we come to God and we're praying, we discover in the process of praying that there is baggage that we have been carrying that stands in the way. That's what is about our relationship. But sometimes the people we're praying for have their own baggage, quote unquote.

Maybe they have gotten into a lifestyle that is very hard to break free from. Maybe there's an area in their life where they say, man, I know what I should be doing, but I refuse. Well, we cannot force God to change their minds.

We cannot force God to bring them to repent. And so often, just as God needed time to change our lives, it takes time for God to change their lives. So welcome.

Welcome. And so George Miller, for example, who I believe is one of the greatest praying people that ever lived, he said, I have prayed for more than 50 years for the sons of a friend of mine. Prayed every day for more than 50 years to bring about the conversion of the sons of one of his friends.

Many of us would like to believe that if we pray within a week, within a month, whatever God is going to answer, that is not the reality. And that's why I like to use history. I like to use history to remind you that when we talk about praying on an intercessory basis for other people, it can take much longer.

The Bible is full of examples of individuals who were interceding on behalf of other people. Some that come to mind are, for example, Abraham. Remember when God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? What happened? God sent angels to Abraham.

We can look it up if you want. Genesis chapter 18, verses 22 to 33. We're not going to read the whole thing.

But here is God is having a conversation with Abraham. These people have come. The Lord said, because of the outcry against Sodom, verse 20, and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very great, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to me.

And if not, I will know. Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom. But Abraham still stood before the Lord.

And Abraham came near and said, would you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? God, would you actually destroy righteous people in the process of what you're doing with the wicked? Suppose there were 50 within the city. Would you also destroy that place? And he goes down, smaller and smaller numbers until finally he says, God, would you destroy the place if there were still 10 righteous people? And God is willing because Abraham is somewhat speaking on behalf of those people. We find in the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 17.

Exodus is the book after Genesis, verses 10 to 12. Now we find Moses. The children of Israel have not been obeying God.

They've been greatly favored. And so now Moses is speaking out. He says, so Joshua did as Moses said to him.

Well, that's a different story. Moses said to him and fought with Amalek and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so as when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed and when his hand let down, Amalek prevailed.

But Moses' hands became heavy. So they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands one on one side and the other on the other side.

I have the story slightly mixed up. But the point is, is that they were out doing battle for God. And somehow as Moses interceded on behalf of the armies, they succeeded.

When his hands were lifted up, they succeeded. When they fell down, somehow they retreated. Today, those who lead in this church need your support by way of prayer.

It can make a significant, significant difference. I'd like to have you look at some specific examples beyond that. A few more.

Let's look at Daniel chapter 9. Daniel chapter 9. Here's another example of someone who was interceding on behalf of his people. We're just going to look at several examples. Daniel chapter 9, verses 1 to 21.

We find in verse 3, actually chapter 2, chapter 9 verse 2, in the first year of his reign, Daniel chapter 9, starting in verse 2, in the first year of his reign, and I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face towards the Lord God to make a request by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. As Daniel had been studying the Bible, the scriptures, he realized that a prophecy that had been given regarding God's people was coming to an end as far as he could tell.

They were remaining in captivity. So it says, I set my face towards God to make a request by prayer and supplications. In verse 4 it says, O Lord, my God, and I said, O Lord, great and awesome God who keeps covenant and mercy with those who love him and with those who keep his commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity.

We've done wickedly and rebelled even by departing from your precepts and your judgments. Neither have we heeded your servants, the prophets who spoke in your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all people of the land. It's interesting that here Daniel is actually praying a prayer of confession with the word our, we.

He's confessing in a corporate way saying we have been guilty before you. He says, O Lord, righteousness belongs to you but to us shame of face. And it goes on.

He's asking God to not allow the things to happen that he fears. But God hears that prayer. God hears that prayer.

He gives him what he's looking for. He gives him the understanding. Look at the book of 2 Chronicles chapter 20, Jehoshaphat.

2 Chronicles chapter 20. It's after kings. First and second kings and then Jehoshaphat.

And I want to establish what I'm talking about in the Bible first and then I will tell you quite a few stories. So just hang in there. We will study the Bible first and then I will give you some practical stories as well.

2 Chronicles chapter 20 verses 3 to 13. We won't look at the whole story. And it happened after this time.

I'm starting in verse 1. It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon and others with them besides the Ammonites came to battle against Jehoshaphat. He faced a great problem. Then some came and told Jehoshaphat saying, a great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria.

And they are in Hazazon Tamar, which is in En Gedi. And Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord.

And from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the Lord before the new court and said, O Lord God, our fathers, are you not God in heavens? And do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? And in your hand is there not power and might so that no one is able to withstand you? So he goes on continuing to talk to God about their problem. He says, Are you not our God, verse 7, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and gave it to the descendants of Abraham, your friend forever? And they dwell in it and have built you a sanctuary in it, et cetera.

Verse 11, And here they are rewarding us, speaking of what they had done to the Israelites earlier, when they had not hurt them going to the land of Israel, coming to throw us out of your possession which you've given us to inherit. O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. This multitude is far stronger than we.

We don't know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. He was begging God for help. The story goes on to continue that then the Spirit of God came upon one of their number who said, Listen, God has told me something.

Tomorrow go down and do such and such and you will see a great victory take place. Here Jehoshaphat was facing a great problem. He was a king in the Old Testament and he prayed and God responded and his situation changed.

Now, you might be listening there saying, Damn, those stories are good. Those happened to people in the Old Testament. Does it really work? I don't think I shared it to the group studying prayer.

I think I shared it another time, but I have a friend who began a ministry for children called Your Story Hour. This was a man who believed in intercessory prayer. He told me one day, Dan, he said, I was concerned about organization and I began to pray and confess using these intercessory prayers.

If there was a living saint, Uncle Dan, I refer to him as Stanley. His name was Stanley Hill, was a living saint. He said, Dan, I prayed the prayer of Solomon, the prayer of Hezekiah, the prayer of Daniel.

He said, after I was done, God said you're going to receive \$100,000 by the end of the month for this ministry. He called me after he prayed to let me know, not at the end of the month. By the end of the month, \$100,000 had come in the mail to support Your Story Hour.

Now, that's not bad. That's a true story. Wonderful thing.

I shared this with the group. He believed in what God would do. He told me also once when he was reading a bit more on Stanley, that as he read this letter from a woman who had written him, he said, God impressed me.

She was going to marry me. He was in his 80s. He called me.

He called me to tell me these kinds of things. I told him, you're crazy. He said, no, Dan, God has told me.

He had been praying specifically, actually confessing these prayers, but he was a saint. He so identified with what was going on within his organization, so recognized the need that he began praying, begging God, and that's when God began to impress him with specific things. We find also the story of prayer in, I believe it's in Nehemiah, Nehemiah chapter 1. Nehemiah is a little book.

It comes not too long after Chronicles, starting in verse 3. And just to give you some background, he was working away in a far distant country, and some people came back from where his people were being held in captivity. The children of Israel, God's people, had been taken in captivity to another country. And in verse 3, they said to me, the survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach.

The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down and the gates are burned with fire. So it was when I heard these words that I sat down and wept and mourned for many days. I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

He said, I got this report that things were not going well at all for my people. And he said, I mourned and I wept. I sat down and I prayed.

And I said, I prayed, Lord God of heaven, oh great and awesome God, you are you who keep your covenant and mercy with those who love you and observe your commandments. Please let your ear be attentive and your eyes open that you may hear the prayer of your servant, which I pray before you now, day and night. Notice his persistence.

I pray before you now, day and night. We continue. That you may hear the prayer of your servant, which I pray before you now, day and night.

I'm reading in verse 6. For the children of Israel, your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against you, both my father's house and I have sinned. There was another righteous saint saying, we have sinned. We've acted corruptly, etc., etc.

And then he begins to ask God to intervene on behalf of his people. A couple of elements are coming out in what we're talking about. Here are godly people, sainted people who hear about the situation, become very burdened, and begin to pray.

But in all cases, don't have it within their means to change anything. When you are praying and interceding, often it's without having any means of changing the circumstance. It's just praying and asking God to work.

Jesus spoke of the same thing. If you want to turn in the book of Luke, I believe it's in chapter 11. Yes.

In verse 5, Jesus says there, and he said to them, which of you shall have a friend and go to him at midnight and say to him, friend, lend me three loaves? Now, would you go to a friend at midnight for some trivial reason? No. You wouldn't go to the friend and say, by the way, I was wondering what was the score of the rugby team or something. I don't know what you follow down here.

You wouldn't go at midnight, would you? They would be rather offended. Wouldn't you agree? But it says, which of you shall have a friend and go to him at midnight and say to him, friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey and I have nothing to set before him. I have what? Nothing to set before him.

The hand was empty. Nothing. And he will answer from within and say, do not trouble me.

The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give to you. I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, because of his asking, I'm adding those words, you will rise and give him what? As many as he needs.

So when we're interceding, we're talking about a situation where we recognize that there's a need. It's an urgent need. We have nothing.

And we go and we notice. We have to persist, sometimes, not always. And God responds and gives us whatever it is that we need.

That was in Luke chapter 11, if you're wondering, starting in verse 5. Luke chapter 11. Now, I'd like to share with you some stories that kind of illustrate what this means on a practical basis. A famous Christian who I'd love to talk about is a man named Hudson Taylor.

Hudson Taylor was raised in a very godly home. His father was a pastor. But like some of us, some of you, as hard as he tried, he found it impossible to live a godly life.

Tried very hard, but found it impossible to live a godly life. And so, in his teenage years, he said, I've tried, I've failed, I'm going to give up. But his mother was unwilling to give up on him, and she was a praying mother.

And for those of you that have praying parents, you are greatly blessed. Greatly, greatly blessed. And one day, when she was away from her home, she said, I'm going to pray this afternoon until Hudson becomes a Christian.

That's what she said. She literally said, I'm going to pray, and I'm going to keep on praying until Hudson becomes a Christian. And she began praying, earnestly imploring God, earnestly asking God to change his life.

At some point, God worked a miracle, and she sensed it. Hudson Taylor, who had been at home, had wandered into his father's study, and there had come upon a tract that looked interesting. He said to himself, tracts always have good stories.

I will read the tract, you know, in terms of the story, but I'll skip all the religious stuff, because I'm not interested in the religious stuff. But while he was reading the story, he came upon the words, the finished work of Christ. And he suddenly realized that Jesus had won something for him when he died on the cross that could never be taken away.

Like Bunyan said, I discovered my righteousness is in heaven. My good frame can't add to it. My bad frame can't take away from it.

And he became a rejoicing Christian. His life was forever changed, based on what he read in that tract. Mom, who had been praying at the other house, suddenly was sensing that her prayer had been heard, and she began rejoicing too.

Now, Hudson Taylor told his sister and made her promise that she wouldn't tell mom. But when they finally got together, mom was rejoicing, and he suspected that sister had shared. But his mom said, no, I was praying, and God impressed me that my prayer had been heard.

She decided that she was going to pray until something happened. Now, it's interesting that later Hudson Taylor went as a missionary to China. His parents never told him until after, I believe he was in China, that at his birth, he had been dedicated to God as a missionary for China.

You see, they had set him apart for a special purpose at a young age. And she knew that God needed her labor, and so she had prayed and prayed persistently, kept praying until something happened. And she rejoiced to see her son completely converted.

One time, D.L. Moody crossed the ocean from America and went to Chicago. He was tired from having spoken in many meetings, and he thought to himself, I'm just going to go and enjoy listening to other people. I'm not going to volunteer to speak.

But a pastor recognized Moody and asked him if he would be willing to come and speak at his church. And Moody had, like some speakers, had found it, wasn't able to say no. He said he was willing to go.

And so he'd gone to the morning service, and as he preached there, he discovered the people were as icy as can be. They were not interested in hearing what he had to say. And he was sorry, sorry that he even accepted the invitation.

But he'd accepted to go back that evening. And as he began preaching, suddenly it was as if the windows of heaven opened and the Holy Spirit was poured out, because suddenly the people were responsive. He made an appeal at the end and asked the people to make a choice for Jesus, and the entire church responded.

He didn't know what was going on. He didn't know what was going on. And so he told the people, he said, you know, this is a major commitment for God.

If you want to talk with me further, I'd like to meet with you in the inquirer's room, the place where you talk with the pastor. And the whole group got up to go out to talk. Moody looked at the pastor and said, what he gives.

And the pastor shrugged his shoulders. He'd never seen such a thing. Moody went off later to Ireland.

And when he arrived in Ireland, there was a telegram waiting for him which said, revival has broken out. You must come back to London. And it was not only that church.

It was many churches around that area. Moody didn't know to what to attribute the revival, because he'd preached. But you know it wasn't anything in particular that he'd done.

He knew that. But later he ran across two women who were in their 80s, one of which was an invalid. She couldn't even get out of bed.

But she'd said to herself, I believe that I can pray for my church. I can pray for my church. I can't do anything else, but I can pray.

I can pray while I'm in bed. And she had been praying and had come across a magazine which had mentioned this preacher from America by the name of D.L. Moody that seemed to be touching so many churches. And so she began praying every day, God, please send D.L. Moody to my church.

God, please send D.L. Moody to my church. And one day when her sister came home from church on the day that Moody had come to the church in the morning, she asked her sister, well, what happened? She said, well, there's this visitor from America, D.L. Moody. She said, hold my food.

I must pray. I must pray. And she spent the whole afternoon praying.

And that evening, a revival broke out that not only affected her church, but many churches in England. It was an amazing thing. Why? Because there was someone who said, I can pray.

Some people have suggested, and I believe they're true, they're right, that actually prayer is the greatest thing that we can possibly do for God. It actually does more than work. Now, we must work too, but we can't work until we've prayed.

Would you agree? We cannot work effectively until we have prayed. Another favorite person that I've learned so much from is a man named Charles Finney. Charles Finney was probably the greatest revivalist that ever lived.

When Charles Finney came to towns, there was sometimes such an effect that the theaters and the prisons in town could close down because there were no patrons. No one was going to the theater. People weren't going to the bars.

They just kind of cleaned up the entire town. A great revivalist. But before Finney would go into a town, there were always those people going ahead of him and praying.

There was one man by the name of Daniel Nash and another brother by the name of Abel Cleary. And they would pray. It's interesting.

They used a list when they prayed. They would make a list, and Daniel Nash, he liked to pick out the hardest cases to pray for. And he would pray, and he would pray, and by the time Finney came, somehow hearts had been so touched, so softened by those prayers that when Finney began to pray, I mean began to preach, people were converted.

And literally thousands and thousands of people came to God. In some towns, like Rochester, New York, it was a revival that began with the more educated class. In other towns, it was with the simple woodsmen.

It didn't matter. Now, it's interesting that at some point, Daniel Nash and Abel Cleary passed off. One of them died.

Maybe they both died. I don't remember if both of them died. But when Daniel Nash died, Finney resigned from his preaching and became the president of Oberlin College because he felt that he could not have success without those prayers.

Now, I do a lot of preaching. I go to a lot of places. But you know, before I go, I have a circle of praying people who I write.

And I say, I'm going to such and such a place. Please pray. And I can assure you, it makes all the difference in the world.

When I left on this trip, I was sitting in L.A. Airport. I had a long delay in L.A. And I was just sitting there. Suddenly, my phone rang.

And it was a saint from Alberta, Canada. He said, Dan, I was thinking of you. And I said, Ben, you've prayed at just the right time.

You know, we were able to pray together on the phone. And I believe that one of the reasons, for example, that God has blessed me while I've been here in this town is because of the prayers of Ben Lippert up in Lacombe, Canada. A great man of God.

Great man of God. He's also in his 80s. He has pernicious anemia.

He has diabetes that's often out of control. Lives in a simple, simple place. But you know, he lives to pray.

He lives to serve God. And when I'm going somewhere, if Ben is praying for me, I know there'll be a power attending my words that would not be there did I not pray. I would like to suggest to all of you this afternoon that you should all have someone praying for you.

You need to find a prayer partner. Someone that will pray for you on a consistent basis. I have prayer partners.

I believe in the work of prayer partners. I used to pray with a man from Brazil. And it's interesting.

He was, I think, far more of a saint than I was. But he always told me, Dan, I believe your prayers are answered for me more than my own prayers. And I knew that if Benoni prayed for me, things happened that I'd been praying about but didn't seem to get anywhere.

But if he would pick up the prayers, I don't know why, but often there were results. Now there was another man by the name of James Frazier. A book that I would recommend you to read is called Mount and Rain.

It's a story of this missionary that went to China. And it's an interesting book because it speaks of someone who was serious about God but had to learn how to pray. He worked and worked but had no success.

No success at all. And then he wrote his mother a letter and said, would you please gather a group of people to begin praying for me here in China? She began to do that. Now it's interesting that he was praying specifically that God would give him 100 families.

He believed he needed 100 families because he felt unless people came in his family, they might not stick. And he didn't feel he could manage more than 100 people or 100 families at a given time. But he prayed specifically, actually felt at some point that God had heard because he said, God, not only will I work for you, but I'll stay to shepherd these people along.

And he said when he left his home and began to witness in the villages, this was in China, entire families had already been converted and were waiting for him to come. He said, as a result of the prayers going on in England by my mother, I saw a great, great work take place. And I want to read you just a little bit of what he wrote there.

He says, I'm feeling more and more that it is, after all, just the prayers of God's people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in doing that work or not. I believe it will only be known in the last day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home. And this surely is the heart of the problem.

Solid, lasting missionary work is done on our knees. The church that grows, the church that does a great work for God is always a praying church. He goes on to say, I find myself able to do little or nothing apart from God's going before me and working among these people.

Without this, I feel like a man who grounded his boat in shallow water. Pull or push as he may, he will not be able to make his boat move more than a few inches. But let the tide come in and lift his boat off the bottom.

Then he'll be able to move it as far as he pleases quite easily and without friction. It is indeed necessary for me to go around among our people preaching, teaching, exhorting, rebuking, et cetera. But the amount of progress made thereby depends almost entirely on the state of the spiritual tide in the village, a condition which you can bring about on your knees as much as me.

You folks are doing a great work here. But as all of you join in praying, and I'm sure you are, but as you say, we are going to really lift up this work together in a united, persevering way, I believe you will see advances that take you even further than you've gone already. There was another man by the name of Prane Hyde.

Prane Hyde lived in India. Prane Hyde had left for India, trained at a seminary, and he was greatly offended when on the boat he read a letter sent where it was suggested that his heart wasn't really right with God and he crumbled up the letter and he threw it down. How could someone suggest that he wasn't prepared? But he later pulled it out, smoothed the paper out, read what it said and admitted that his heart was not right before God and he began praying earnestly for himself.

Sometimes, my brothers and sisters, when we pray for other people, the first work has to happen in our own hearts. Did you know that? First, the work has to happen in our own hearts. And he prayed and asked God to make him the person that God could use and by the time he got to India, he had a power with God that was rather amazing.

People would come to Prane Hyde and say, we want you to pray for us and Prane Hyde would say, I'm sorry but I need to pray and ask God first if I can pray for you. And if he felt impressed that he was allowed to pray, invariably the people were healed. He also had another thing he did with God, it's quite an amazing thing.

He had a deal with God that every day he would win a person to God. God led him to ask for one soul. He was in a land where there weren't Christians for the most part.

He said, God, every day I want to win one person. Then he was led to pray for two people. Then he was led to pray for three people.

Then he was led to pray for four people. Every day praying that God would win four people through him. How would you like to do that? How would you like to know that every day, Johnny, your church was growing four people per member? Would that not be amazing? I long for the day when the worry with evangelism is not the marketing budget but the building budget because of growth, because we're outgrowing what we're trying to do.

Anyway, every day he was winning four people. Now some days it didn't happen. Who can tell me why perhaps some days God did not give him four people? What conclusion might he have come to? This is what he said.

This is how he prayed. He said, Lord, why is it today? He didn't say it was cold, they were hard hearted, they were too busy. That's what we pray.

He said, why is it today, Lord, that you could not trust four people with me? Why is it that you could not trust four people with me? What? I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you. No, he prayed always. In his case, well, it could have been any reason.

I'm not sure what the reason was, but for some reason he said, God, you haven't been able to trust people with me. He wasn't worried about the people's condition, he was worried about his own condition more. We must keep praying.

Let me share a little bit of my own experience. I remember one time a person I was praying with came to me and said, Dan, I have a problem. I'm going on a trip and while we travel, the most horrible music is played.

We must pray and ask God to somehow, I just can't handle this music. I prayed and he prayed. You know what I prayed? I said, Lord, today might the CD player fail.

It was a brand new car, no problem with the machine at all. He said, as they headed down the road, the person put the CD in the player and it refused to work. The words were, what is wrong with this player today? That's a true story.

Another time I was praying and I was struggling to have God help me in my business, but the only thing that God was telling me was that I needed to tell my prayer partners that I was struggling financially and I had gotten behind on some bills. It didn't seem to help my situation at all, but that's all I was impressed with. So I went to my prayer buddies, Pastor Dwight Nelson and a few other people, and I said, I need to let you know what's going on because I don't want to embarrass you because I've fallen behind on some bills.

It's interesting what Pastor Dwight said to me. He said, Dan, it is those kinds of things that we exist for. We're here to pray for you even when the going is tough.

So they put their arms around me and they prayed for me. They gathered around me, and within just a few days, my financial struggles were turned around. Pastor Dwight was amazed.

Sometimes it was a matter of pride for me, but I prayed, they prayed, and things turned around. It was wonderful. There's also a story told of a work going on in Vietnam.

I don't know if you've heard about it, but people have been praying that the underground church in Vietnam would go forward. The church has been growing very rapidly, but there was a section of Vietnam where they were told they could not enter. So some people began to pray.

Some people even tried to enter, and they were warned that if you go in, you're going to die. One of the people went anyway, and they were horrified when they saw this friend's body come floating down the river. So they didn't do that, but some of the people said, we still want to go in.

We want to see what's going on. And they kind of snuck in by another route, by another area. They came to a village and were surprised to see that everyone there was converted.

They went to the chief and they said, what's the deal? How is it that all of you are keeping the Sabbath in these villages? And they said, well, a tall Vietnamese with a shining face came to our village, had a radio, and said, you can find truth, and then pointed to the dial in a particular place where there was the radio work of our own church. And they went to other villages and found that this same tall Vietnamese with a shining face had been going from place to place. And so they found several villages where the people had found the truths of the Bible where they had not been able to go.

You see, when we pray, God works. When we pray, God works. I love what someone said.

I'm trying hard not to use too many quotes here, but here's what someone said. Men may get angry at our appeals and say, I don't want to hear you. They may reject our message.

They may despise who we are, but they are helpless against our prayers. They are helpless against our prayers. So what does it mean to pray on an intercessory basis for just a few moments? First of all, we need to take it seriously.

There's a difference between earnest prayers and casual prayers. I shared with you early in the week that there was a time, and I know this may sound a little trivial, but to me it was an amazing answer to prayer, where I had moved into a new condo on a providential basis, and my dog had been attacked by a larger dog. And she'd had a problem all of her life of falling asleep and then her bladder relaxing and waking up in a pool of urine.

And I had taken her to the animal hospital, and they had worked on her, and I brought her home with tubes coming out of both ends, and just lots of scars from all the attacks, the biting that went on. And I worried that she would begin to wake up in a puddle of urine when her bladder started working again, her intestines. We had left her outside for 10 years because of that problem.

But now because she'd been attacked, I had to bring her in. And I remember that one morning I went to check on this dog, and sure enough she was lying there in a puddle of urine. And this had happened continually for the last 10 years.

Every time she fell asleep, whatever was there got leaked out. What happened the second morning, the first morning it happened, I just said, God, this can't happen. Clean it up and worry.

The second time it happened, I got on my knees next to my dog, before my God. And I said, God, this is a strange, silly prayer, OK? I had never prayed for my dog before. But I'm here because you brought me here.

And if I put her outside, she'll be killed. If I leave her here, she's going to ruin the condo that these nice people have loaned to me. Would you please heal her of this problem? And she never had that problem again from that moment.

My dog was healed in answer to earnest prayer. Did you hear me? We must get serious when we are interceding on behalf of other people. Just a casual, just a God, please bless this person, move on, doesn't really do the trick.

It's when we're serious. Lord, you must change this person. We get serious.

We must get serious about seeking God to make a difference. Another thing that seems to make a difference, I've found, is when we use a prayer list. I've talked to some of the people here.

They have prayer lists. I recommend it strongly. I, for some reason, in my haste to leave the house when I left the United States, I left my prayer list, the one that's printed, at home.

I have one on my computer. That's why I have my prayer list. But you should always work from a prayer list if at all possible.

Plead the promises of God. The Bible is full of promises. Claim those promises on behalf of those people.

Some people use fasting, fasting and praying. It can make a difference. Nehemiah fasted when he was seeking revival.

Daniel fasted when he was seeking wisdom. Esther called the people to fast when she felt her country was endangered. Fasting is a good thing to do, but why do we fast? Who can tell me why we fast? Why do we fast? Do we fast to force God's hand? Does fasting allow us to gain all kinds of merit so that God will then do something for us? No, it's because fasting causes us to make the work of God a great priority.

It clears our minds so we can hear what God is trying to do and often is used by God to bring about blessings. But it's not like, I have a friend who literally said once, Dan, I'm going to fast and God's not going to let me die. I'm just not going to eat until he answers my prayer.

That's not the way to fast. In fact, if you fast in the wrong way, it can seriously hurt you and not help a bit. Another key point is we should expect an answer.

Turn, if you would, in your Bibles to Acts chapter 12. And I'll tell you the story. Peter had been placed in jail.

The story starts in verse 5. He's kept in prison, but constant prayer was being offered to God for him by the church. And so in answer to prayer, Peter was let out. And I don't see where it talks about how prayer was going up.

Yes, verse 5. But constant prayer was being offered to God for him by the church. In response to their prayers, angels were sent. Peter was released from heaven.

He goes to the home. And we find that he comes to the house, verse 12. So when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

Praying for whom? Praying for Peter. And Peter knocked at the door of the gate. A girl named Rhoda came to answer.

And when she recognized Peter's voice because of her gladness, she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. Their prayers had been answered. Time to rejoice, right? But they said to her in verse 15, you are beside yourself.

You are crazy. Why should we bother to pray if we don't look for an answer? Why should we bother to pray if we don't look for an example? I mean for an answer. We often make a mistake there.

Finally, we should be prepared to live out our prayers. We should be prepared to live out our prayers. I remember once I was praying for a friend.

Their family was going through all kinds of problems. And at some point, God impressed me very specifically that instead of praying, I needed to call the person who was causing all the trouble. And I did.

I went and I visited with them and I said, you know, I've been praying for you, but God has impressed me that I need to come and talk with you. I told them exactly what God had kind of impressed me with and how I saw the family situation. And I don't know how it works, but at that point, the person was open, made some calls where the family had been in total turmoil.

Healing came. Healing came. A complete change took place.

Another time, I went to a seminar and I heard someone speaking and there was something that didn't seem quite right. And so I went home and I asked family members, you know, what do you know about this person? What gives? And what they shared really made me feel sad. And there was a part of me that wanted to go and just kind of make everything right, just tell them kind of what I knew and how I felt about it.

But I said to myself, who are you? Are you God Jr.? You know, what right do you have? And I said, God, if you want me to go, you impressed me that I need to go. And nothing happened. I just kept praying.

But then one day, a pastor of my church came to me and said, Dan, do you know this individual? I said, yeah. They said, would you please go and talk with this person? I took that as the indication that it was time for me to go. I did what I could to talk with this individual.

Couldn't make an appointment, but when I finally did, I arrived at like 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock in the morning and we continued talking till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The person, a man crying, saying, I have been going through the most horrible experience of my life. I have not known who to talk to.

And I was his buddy as his life was turned back around. So the point that I'm making when it comes to intercession, that we need to pray. And then when the time comes, if necessary, reach out to the person and talk with him, work with him.

Intercessory prayer, as I said, sometimes takes longer. But God will intervene. God will work.

And if he calls us to do something directly, we need to do it. One last little story on intercessory prayer, and then I want to talk briefly about healing prayer as well. There's a famous lady by the name of Frances Ridley Havergill.

You sing her songs frequently, Take My Life and Let It Be, Consecrated Lord to Thee. You know those songs, don't you? She was a very intelligent woman. In her 20s, she could already speak many, many languages.

She had already memorized the entire New Testament, the Psalms, the book of Isaiah. OK, that's pretty good. But she was in love with the Lord.

That was her great passion. And as she would go, she wanted to win others to the Lord Jesus. And she came to this one boarding house in England.

And she found there that there were 10 people who either did not know Jesus or were not rejoicing Christians. And she prayed and she said to God, God, before the end of this week, might you win every person in this place to you? And made it a matter of much prayer, much prayer. And obviously, talked with them too as she was able.

Before the end of the week, she said, God, before the end of the week, we must win all 10. There were three that were left. And that day, she went and she visited each one and begged them to surrender their lives to God.

By the end of the day, she had won all three. It's interesting, she was so excited that evening over what God had done, she could not sleep. And it was that night when she wrote that beautiful hymn one line at a time, because she always would write a line.

She'd pray and say, God, what do you want me to write? Then she'd write. Then she'd say, God, what should I write next? Then she'd write. That night she wrote, take my life and let it be.

Consecrate, Lord, to me. It was out of the fullness of winning others to Jesus who had come as a result of prayer that she wanted to consecrate her life to God in a greater way. That she wanted to consecrate her life to God in a greater way.

God is able to do great, great things as a result of our prayers. I want to give you just a little example of why sometimes prayers are answered differently. And you'll all understand perfectly.

I bet there are some people in this room this afternoon who know that their lives are not perfect. In fact, maybe there are some people here who are really struggling. And maybe every once in a while, maybe because you heard me this morning, because you've heard about the gift and you've heard the one, you're praying.

And I'm glad. Keep on praying. There were a group of people like that in the Old Testament.

They were called the Children of Israel. They lived in Egypt. They had come there in freedom.

But eventually a pharaoh had come along that did not know Joseph. And this pharaoh was paranoid. He was worried they would take over.

And so he had begun to make their lives miserable. He had begun enslaving the men. And he had begun killing off the babies under two years of age.

Very difficult situation. And I can't imagine that the mothers were at home saying, praise God that my husband is being dragged off to be a slave. Thank God that my male babies are all being killed under the age of two.

That was not happening. Well, Moses came along after all of this had begun. For 40 years, he was in Egypt.

You know that, don't you? 40 years he was in Egypt. And then 40 years, he was in the wilderness. And then he came back.

So for 80 years, there was enslavement and there were babies being killed. Would you agree? 80 years, during which I am sure prayers were going up. But those prayers were not being heard.

People were interceding with God to make a change. Listen carefully. Here's the problem.

And here's why sometimes our prayers don't get anywhere when we're praying about something for ourselves or praying for someone else. They were praying, listen carefully, bless me in Egypt prayers. And there's many a person who prays and says, Lord, I love my life now.

I have this problem. Give me a boyfriend. Give me a girlfriend.

Give me a better job. But don't mess with my life too much because I like it just the way it is now. And listen carefully.

When we pray bless me in Egypt prayers, sometimes our life gets harder instead of better. Our life gets harder instead of better because God knows that Egypt is toxic. And now I need to explain what I mean by that.

They were living in a place where there was another king than their own king, a king that was killing off their babies and enslaving them. And so they were praying, Lord, bless us but don't move us. And God was saying, there's no safety here.

I want to move you to the land of Israel where you belong. And so they were praying bless me in Egypt prayers instead of deliver me from Egypt. Bless me in my situation instead of deliver me from my situation.

And I know that there are people here today who are praying those kinds of prayers. They know that their life may be in turmoil, but they're not convinced how much they want to surrender to God. And God says, I care too much to just put a band-aid.

I want to change your experience completely. And so for the children of Israel things got worse instead of better. It went on for a long time.

Finally one day God called them to leave. They finally got desperate enough for God to acknowledge their prayers. And they began a journey across the desert area.

And as I shared with a group in one of the classes, it was a progressive journey of dying to self. First God said, you know, at a certain time you need to spread some blood on the doorpost of your houses because if you don't, the oldest male child is going to die. They had to get serious that what God said he meant.

Then they had to get serious and accept God's direction to the Red Sea. They couldn't just go the way they wanted. They had to accept God's direction.

They had to die to self to saying, I'm in charge of my own life. At the Red Sea they came face to face with the water. They couldn't go through.

There were mountains on each side. They were in a trap. Behind them was the Egyptians.

And they had to die to self and accept God's way of deliverance instead of their own, which was through the water. In front was impossible. On the side were circumstances that could not change.

And behind them was their past. And many of us find ahead of us the way seems impossible. On the side are circumstances that are hard to change.

And behind us are things we've never changed before. And you know what the devil says? It never changed before. Don't expect it to change now.

But you see, when God is in charge, he sometimes sends us down the path to impossible things. But those are the very means that will bring victory and deliverance where there was only defeat before. After they got on the other side, then the Bible says they went for three days through the hot desert sands, no water.

And they had to accept God's timing. Some of us want our prayers answered tomorrow, maybe the next day. But we learn from the story that God intentionally led them for three days because they had to learn to accept his timing.

And then they got to this pool called Mar, which means bitter. The water was bitter. I can imagine them seeing the water and running, but then realizing it was bitter.

And some of us, we come to Jesus. We say, God, if I become a Christian, it's because you've agreed to make my life better. But sometimes in the rehabilitative process, there are disappointments.

That's life. I can't help it. We live in a land where there's an enemy and people who are opposed to what God wants to do.

And I'm not throwing stones. I'm just saying that it's not easy to be a Christian always. And there are disappointments.

They had to learn to accept disappointment. Then they had to accept blessings at a place called Elam, where there were 70 palm trees and 12 wells. Then they had to learn that there was a day to rest on.

Then they had to learn to accept that there was a preferred way to live in terms of health. They learned about the Ten Commandments. All of these things were a progressive journey.

And yes, they were learning. They were re-becoming God's children. But they weren't taking any cities.

Do you hear what I'm saying? Because you see, had they begun taking cities, they would have just made them little satellites of Egypt. And they would have eaten like they were in Egypt. They would have lived and thought the way they were in Egypt.

And God says, no, no. You need to become my people. You need to become like me before I can safely trust you to take those cities.

And I think some of you people are probably in that journey of dying to self. It's a journey that God takes everyone through. Initially, they were praying, bless me in Egypt prayers.

Now they were praying, listen carefully, self-centered prayers of survival. Not a bad thing, but that's a phase that many people go through. They came to the shores of the river, Kedesh Barnea.

And there they had an intellectual knowledge. And there are people who have an intellectual knowledge of God. But they didn't have the courage to obey.

Maybe they were afraid of what people might say. Maybe they didn't feel they could afford the changes that would come in their lives if they really took a stand for God. And so they turned back into the

wilderness.

Intellectual knowledge, but not a willingness to go. And there we find that God provided for them, gave them water, gave them food. Their shoes did not wear out.

But listen carefully, they were enjoying wilderness blessings, not promised land blessings. And many of us are enjoying wilderness blessings more than promised land blessings. So we have the first person who said, God, I don't want my circumstances to change.

And God allowed their circumstances to get worse, but God was answering their prayers. Then we have a group that's being re-educated. And then finally, when they'd come to the point of saying, I'm tired of the wilderness.

I'm tired of tough times. When they were prepared to not only know the truth, but obey the truth. Then they crossed the river.

And God took the walls of Jericho down. They obeyed exactly what God said. They obeyed every day what God said.

They followed exactly his instructions. It even says they didn't murmur. And you know, to the people who lived back then, as they walked around the city, the Bible says once a day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day.

They looked a little odd and funny. They obeyed in a peculiar way. And I hate to break the news to you if you don't know it.

Some people look at Christians as a little peculiar. But there's nothing wrong with looking peculiar if you're doing the right thing. When they were finally prepared to be God's people, doing God's work, God's way.

Then God was able to bring down the walls of that city. And some of you will only find real victory in your life. Some of you will only see your prayers answered the way God would prefer to have them answered.

When you're prepared to be God's person, doing God's work, God's way, then God will give you real power. And what you find is they began conquering city after city after city. And so I ask you the question, where are you in the continuum? Are you praying this morning, last week in Egypt, prayers? Are you in the wilderness learning, praying self-centered prayers of survival? Or are you praying conquering Canaan prayers because you're finally obeying God? Which will be.

I believe that explains more than anything else, perhaps, why some prayers are answered more than others. Now, I'd like to speak for just a few moments on prayer. I also want to talk about the need to praise and persist.

That's actually the best part of everything I talk on prayer. But let me talk a little bit about healing. How many of you believe that God actually answers prayers for healing? OK.

I believe it. I believe it. I remember one time I went to the midweek prayer service.

And sitting there were a whole bunch of people, some people who were doing well, some people who were not doing well. And I remember Pastor Dwight, who's a man of great enthusiasm, said, tonight we're going to pray for everyone that needs healing. And Dan, he asked me, he said, Dan, you find some people

to pray for us.

So I found three people. And I remember one woman that evening prayed in specific and said, God, if there's anyone that needs healing, heal them right now. And I thought to myself, this person isn't even giving God time to work.

What right can they say heal this person right now? Well, no one jumped out of a wheelchair. No one had their limb automatically put back together. And we didn't know what to expect.

But the next day, we heard a testimony. A woman said, I had been going to the doctors for a problem. And nothing seemed to be correcting the problem.

And when that prayer was offered, I told the Lord, Lord, that person is praying for me. And she said, immediately I knew that something had happened. And I was healed.

Another time I was at a seminar towards the end of the week. And I was praying for people. And others were praying.

And we had told them, we'll pray at a particular time for everyone that needs a healing prayer. And I always find local people to pray that really love the Lord. I don't encourage the idea that there's certain people who have greater power with God, because it adds to pride.

A couple of people came forward. I remember we prayed. And once again, no one jumped out of a wheelchair.

No broken arms were repaired. And the next day when I began, next day when I began, I said, you know, we didn't see anything dramatic last night, but I'm convinced that God began to work. And someone said, hold on, hold on.

God was working here. God was working here. I said, what do you mean? The lady said earlier in the week, I was in the hospital.

They did a CAT scan. They discovered that there was a mass in my body. And so they rescheduled an MRI for this morning.

It was a Friday. We prayed on Thursday night. But she said Thursday night when the people prayed for me, she said, I felt something go through my body.

And I told my husband at home, I don't know what happened, but something happened. And she said, this morning when I was in the hospital and they did that MRI, they could find nothing there. They didn't know what had happened to the mass that had been so clear when they had done the CAT scan.

She had been healed. Absolutely, she had been healed. Another time I was praying with a group of people.

We were praying for an evangelistic series. And there were probably a group of 10 or 12 of us. And I said to the group, if we're spending so much time praying for other people, the least we could do is pray for some of the people here.

Three people identified themselves as needing prayer. One man said he'd had lots of back problems. Another person said that, or another woman said she had been, she was literally walking with a walker.

And the third person said she'd lost the ability to sing. She had lost the ability to sing. So we continued praying.

And one evening, the man came to us and said, I don't know what's happened, but my pain is gone. And we praised God. The woman who'd had a walker said, I was telling my husband that God had to work.

And one morning I got up out of bed and said, look, husband, I can walk. I have no more pain. We praised God for that.

The third person, right at the very end of the meeting said, this morning when I got out of my shower, my son said to me, Mom, do you know what you were doing today? What? He said, we heard you singing in the shower. I'll tell you what, that Wednesday night, we had a very special prayer meeting because she shared her story. She'd been a nun in the Catholic church.

She had found the truth. She'd left the truth. She hadn't, I mean, she had found truth and she had made great changes in her life and had been afraid to share her story too much.

And music had been a major part of her ministry as a nun. But she said, I have to testify and share what God has done in my life. And she sang for us and we heard literally the answer to our prayers.

I believe that God answers prayer. If you would look at the book of James, James chapter five, James chapter five. And then we're going to take a break.

Just a few verses, a little bit of comments on healing prayer. There in verse 13 it says, James 5, 13. Do you all have that? It says, is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. James said, if you're sick, you have every right to ask that the elders of the church come and ask them to pray. Psalms, Psalms 103, if you want to look that up.

Psalms 103, verse 3, actually starting with verse 2. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals what? All your diseases. Do we believe that God can forgive us? Do we believe just as much that God can heal us? Absolutely. Does that mean, then, that we don't need doctors? No, no, no, no.

What? We need physicians. Roslyn Goforth, I've already mentioned their story. She said, in our case, we saw God heal many times, but it was when we were away from medical help and when every other remedy had been tried.

It's interesting that she shared that that was their experience. We're not here saying that we should not use the use of physicians and that kind of thing. Now, I've wondered about that sometimes, but I think perhaps part of the reason is that God does not want to share the credit with anyone else.

And he makes sure that other remedies have been tried before he actually goes to work. But I want to share with you some of the reasons, because this is what you're really interested in, why we don't always get answers to our prayers for healing. Are you interested? Here are some things.

And if you look in your little handout later, you can read all the other material that I have that goes with it. I'll just give those to you. Number one, a failure to believe.

Because we don't really believe in the power of God for healing. Many of us do not pray for healing for another person. In fact, sometimes what people say is, is it so bad that you can only pray? We need to make prayer something because we really believe that it can happen.

Another reason is that it's not always in the person's best interest. Did you hear me? It's not always in the person's best interest. George Mueller says that when he was a younger Christian, he would pray for people and invariably they would be healed.

But he says, I can no longer do that. Why? Because people who were close to God would later leave God. And he said, from what I could tell, they would have been better off to have died when they were young and walking with God than having lived.

Now, that's a hard thing to say, isn't it? But that is a true thing to say. And I can show you a reference on that. Someone else has written on that in one of the testimonies from Battle Creek.

It's a book that we have in the church. If you want to look it up, page 64. The same thing, where the early pioneers of the church would pray for people earnestly and they would be healed.

And then these young people or this individual would later leave God. And they said, you know, it would have been better had we never prayed for this individual. Another reason.

Listen carefully. God will never heal supernaturally what he can heal naturally. Let me repeat that.

God will never heal supernaturally what he can heal naturally. If, for example, you have a lifestyle-related disease and God were to heal you, what would your conclusion be? It doesn't matter. When I need to be healed again, God will heal me.

And I can just go on and have a sedentary lifestyle and eat all kinds of things that may not be good for me. And God says, hold on. That's not the way it works.

I want to really heal you. I want to heal your lifestyle too. I want to give you a better diet.

I want to have you exercise. Because there are many things, diabetes type 2 and other things, that are heavily impacted by the way we live. I'm not a doctor, but I think the doctors in the house would probably agree with me on that.

God will not heal supernaturally what we can heal naturally. Another one is the failure to confess sin. Another one is the failure to confess sin.

One of my heroes, when it comes to prayers, a man by the name of Andrew Murray. And I try to use quotations from lots of people so you know that this isn't just kind of only a few people, but this is widely recognized by praying people. He said that when he sought healing, that he felt it was absolutely necessary to prepare his heart for healing.

You know, the Bible talks about, you know, that if you regard iniquity in your heart, God will not hear you. He says, I spent, if I'm not mistaken, one month preparing for them to pray for him. He had some kind of problem, but when they prayed, he was healed and he became a believer in healing prayer.

And here's one other reason. It may lead to ungodly pride. The sad thing, and I think we see it all around us, is that there are those who use healing to take advantage.

I am not throwing stones gratuitously, but there are some who specialize in healing, but they make a tremendous amount of money at it. Tremendous amount of money. I heard an interview of a gentleman who actually has researched faith healing.

Actually gone and taken the name and contact information of some of these people who were supposedly healed and found that in almost all cases, the healing that was supposed did not continue. And what they believe is probably, under the effect of the moment, the adrenaline was flowing and there was a short-term residual kind of thing. It sometimes happens when a person's sick, just before they die, they will have this kind of uplift of their experience.

I'm talking way beyond my training now. Forgive me. But in the research they did, they found that most of these supposed healings, where people go to this big service where people come forward and they get hit and the spirit hits them and they're supposedly healed, in most cases it doesn't happen.

And what they said was, at the back of those meetings, there are wheelchairs and people on stretchers who go away sadly believing that they didn't have enough faith to be healed. I believe with all my heart, the reason the Bible says, if there be any sick among you, from the book of James, James chapter 5, says, go call the elders of the church. It's because healing prayer, in most cases, was never meant to be a solo sport.

Because any time one person says, I'm the one that can pray, you come to me, it will go to their heads and sometimes it will even drift into their pocketbook. And that's a sad thing. Many people, they view Christians as kind of money grabbing people and healing is one area where that occurs.

Those are some of the reasons I believe that healing prayer doesn't always take place. Is it always necessary to actually lay your hands on a person? In the book of Acts, there are numerous examples where people were not prayed for in a formal way. There are numerous examples where there was no oil available.

What does oil represent in the Bible? It represents the Holy Spirit. When God said, anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, it's a reminder that this is about the Spirit, this is not about you. I don't believe that it's even necessary to have, quote unquote, the elders of the church.

If there is someone sick, by all means, pray for that individual. We have the right to pray. It's better if you can get an elder, but feel free to pray.

You know, when I was in Cambodia, I was really impressed with the fact that they baptized 826 people one afternoon. It takes a lot of pastors baptizing to baptize that many people. I asked them, how is it that you work? They said, you know, if our neighbor's planting rice, we go help plant rice.

Their children don't know how to read, so we've set up literacy schools. We're helping them. But they said, especially when they're sick, we go with charcoal and natural remedies, and we pray.

And when we help them regain their health, they become open to discovering the God that was behind their healing. Healing must be understood in the broader context of things. God means for us to enjoy health.

And when someone says, please pray, the first thing to say is, what is your lifestyle like? Is there something I need to help you with so that you don't have this problem? And then you pray. And then you lead them into a relationship with Jesus. Because I believe, listen carefully, when we pray for healing, we're not only praying for spiritual, I mean physical healing, we're also praying for spiritual healing as well.

That's why the prayer of faith, we'll raise them up and the Lord will heal them. That's what it says in James. It's meant to be both.

So whether they're healed physically or not, there should always be a spiritual healing that takes place. Now we need to take a break. I've talked too long.

Welcome, welcome. Can we take a bit of, if I could have just another half hour of your time to talk about the connection between praise and persistence. After a short break, we may need to use the facilities, something like that.

I'll finish up, but you need to hear the last part. Please, come back. Let's take a break.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/G0A3IOXZnuk.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dan-augsburger/removing-the-stumbling-blocks-part-1/>

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