

The Highest Purpose of Prayer

by Michael Durham

Michael Durham emphasizes that the highest purpose of prayer is to cultivate a deep, loving relationship with God rather than merely seeking answers to requests.

Duration: 55:16

Scripture: Matthew 17:20-21, Mark 9:17-29, Luke 9:37

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the highest purpose of prayer, using the Gospel of Mark chapter 9 verses 17-29 as the basis for his message. He begins by discussing a story in which a man brings his son with a dumb spirit to Jesus' disciples for healing, but they are unable to help. Jesus then rebukes the faithless generation and emphasizes the importance of prayer and fasting for this kind of situation. The speaker also references Matthew 6 verses 5-6, where Jesus teaches that the reason for prayer is love for God. He emphasizes the need for a deep relationship with God through prayer and spending time with Him in order to truly know and trust Him.

Transcript

The text we pray the Lord be pleased to speak to us from is the Gospel of Mark, chapter 9, verses 17 through 29. Mark 9, 17 through 29. I want to speak on the highest purpose of prayer.

If this is a prayer breakfast, I thought it most appropriate to speak on the subject of prayer. Mark chapter 9, beginning with verse 17. Some of this may sound familiar to you.

I've alluded to these themes before here at Solid Rock, but I hope to capulize them for you today. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit. And wheresoever he taketh him, he tarryeth him, and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away.

And I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not. He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him, and when he saw him straightway, the spirit tear him.

And he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oft times it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters to

destroy him.

But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried and rent him sore and came out of him. And he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead.

But Jesus took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose. And when he was coming to the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could we not cast him out? And he said unto him, This is the thrust of our message today. This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.

Matthew, in his account of this same story, gives Jesus's answer to the question, Why could we not cast him out a little differently? Listen to what Matthew records in Matthew 17, 20 and 21. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief, for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you. How being, now focus, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Most Christians do not pray, or either they pray very little. However, this is not the chief problem of our churches. I would say it's the second greatest problem and need.

The greatest need and foremost problem is that we do not love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Our prayer problem is chiefly a love problem. There are two reasons for prayer given in the New Testament, only two.

Now you may find other reasons, but they can be categorized under these two headings. Number one, a deep and overflowing love for God. Reason number one, a deep overflowing love for God.

And number two, our need for God. These two things should cling to us as does our names. We should love God so much that we want to commune with Him, and we should feel our need for Him so much that we would not depart from Him.

As the disciples who could not cast the demon out of the child, we have no one to blame for our powerlessness except ourselves. Our prayerlessness is the blame. We cannot blame hell for our powerlessness, because Jesus defeated these principalities and powers, and He has given us the power to tread upon the serpent and the scorpion.

Nor can we blame the Lord for our spiritual poverty, since He promised to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power which worketh in us. We are the problems. It's weak hearts that leads to weak knees.

Prayerlessness is a symptom of something much larger, a relationship void of intimacy. We suffer from what I call a formal faith. And here I'm not talking about false professors.

I'm talking about us. It is so easy to fall into the formality of Christianity, to go through the motions, the system, if you please. We blindly serve a loveless morality and give homage without heart.

Here is the problem, and this is the problem, why we are prayerless. Christianity at its core is to be a flaming romance with a God who loves us, but we've turned it into a distant acquaintance with a God we barely like. I know I'm not speaking about everyone in this room.

I heard you pray just a moment ago. I heard you pray with sincerity. I heard you pray with feeling, even with tears.

But beloved, if we are to be people of God, we must be people of prayer. There is no shortcut. There is no other way.

We must pray. And if we're to be spiritual people, we must be people who pray in the spirit. We've got to learn what that means and learn how to pray with the spirit, in the spirit, by the spirit.

If we're to preach with power, we must be first endowed with power. And such empowerment comes from heaven, and it comes from heaven only through prayer only. If I could roll back the clock over the last almost 30 years of ministry since a Christian, I would do this more, pray.

You shouldn't be surprised that the Holy Spirit filled the early church after 10 days of prayer. The missionary Hudson Taylor said, quote, But since the days before Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon God for 10 days? That the power might be manifested, we've given too much attention to methods, machinery, and resources, and too little to the source of the power. E.M. Bounds, in his most recommended books on prayer, said this in one of them, What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use.

Men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men.

He does not anoint plans, but men, men of prayer. Jesus told the disciples that their failure to cast out the demon was because of a lack of faith and prayer. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

But if we don't rightly interpret Jesus's words here, we're going to go down on a wrong path concerning prayer. And so I want to hopefully help you in your prayer meetings, your corporate prayer meetings, but most importantly, in your private prayer meetings. I can be in a corporate prayer meeting and I can listen and know which ones are practicing private prayer.

It's, you can just sense, I know. And so if the corporate prayer meeting is going to be increased in strength and vitality, it's going to start in your own private prayer closets. Was Jesus simply saying that more prayer, more fasting brings success in ministry and in life? You know, I've heard ministers sound forth from this text saying that if we would just spend more time in prayer, we'd have more power with God.

We must spend more time in prayer with God and therefore we'll have more success in our churches. And no doubt, no doubt, listen carefully, that is what Jesus said to the failed disciples. How be it this kind does not go out except by much prayer and fasting.

So Jesus did allude that there has to be an increase of time in prayer. But did our Lord mean for us to simply increase time in the prayer closet saying that then all your problems will be cast out? This is the way this text is often presented, but it's entirely wrong. It's wrong headed and even worse.

It's wrong hearted. More prayer does not mean more power. Jesus does not want you to make that mistake.

More prayer does not mean more power. Why? Here's the first reason why prayer is not formalistic. Prayer is not formalistic or methodical.

More prayer does not equal more prayer, excuse me, more prayer does not equal more power because Jesus said such approach is absolutely wicked. You say, where's that in the text? Ah, Jesus said in Matthew chapter six verse seven, in that text, he says, the Gentiles and the pagans, they reduce faith to a formula. They think when they pray that they will be heard because of their much speaking.

Don't you do that? Don't you be like them? Don't you use vain repetitions as the heathen do? Don't you think like they do that because they put in the time, they should deserve the reward. That's not what Jesus is saying. How bit this kind does not go well except by much prayer and fasting.

You cannot say that if you increase your prayer life to 30 minutes a day, you might get a prayer answered now and again. But if you could go to an hour, well then, then you might see somebody even saved in your house. And my word, if you could increase it to three hours today, well maybe you can even cast out devils.

That's not what you need to hear Jesus saying. Why? Because prayer is not a formula. Nor secondly, is prayer manipulative.

Prayer is not the means to manipulate God. Now, why is that? Because if prayer is a manipulation tool to get what you want from God, such an attitude suggests that God is reluctant to answer prayer. That prayer is just the means of overcoming his reluctance.

And indeed, many good Bible-believing Christians think that of prayer. They think that prayer is a means of un-gripping God's hand and loosening from that hand what they want. And if they put in the appropriate amount of time in prayer, sooner or later, God is going to relent and cave and give them what they want.

Friends, that is an attitude of manipulation. That's not what prayer is for. In its very heart, it is suggesting that God is neither good or gracious.

You, if you could just believe, if you could just believe, your father is very good. I heard a dear man of God that I loved dearly say the other day, no one here, I struggle believing, identifying with God as father. And it, it explains some things that I had said some questions about this prayer, brother.

He's a father, much better than the father you had and much better than the father I've been to my children. He loves you with a love that I cannot, cannot explain its depth nor height. I can't give you in words, the scope of the love of God for you, nor can I tell you just how good he wants to be towards you, how much he delights in your pleasure.

He is a father, a good father, and any good father wants to please his children. It's such a joy to see your children happy for no other reason, but their own happiness. And if you being evil, no, no, how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your father in heaven will give good things to them, but ask him why? Because he's good.

That's why he needs no other reason, but that he loves you. And he's good. If we could really believe that, I know you've heard me say that many times before, but I'm going to keep on saying this because even my heart needs to hear it again and again, and again.

I need to be told, I need to take my heart by the scruff of the neck and say, now stand at attention and listen, your father's good. Believe it. Because by believing he's good, we, we can then really receive.

Because I really truly believe that prayer is the means by which we open up the heart to receive what God is just ready to give. Just waiting for you to believe it, that you might receive. Prayer is not manipulative.

Prayer that is formalistic and manipulative sees the answer to prayer as the prize of prayer and hence the problem. The greatest reward of prayer is the answer. And that's where most of us live.

I confess there's been an hour, a day, a season, a long period of time in my life. That's the way I was taught prayer. That's how the books conveyed it to me.

And I've read most every good book I know on prayer. And sometimes you, you just, you interpret the author. He may not be meaning that, but the performance mentality kicks in and you cloud the author's meaning and you insert it there and you walk away thinking that's it.

If I just pray more, I can get more answers as if answered. Prayer is the goal and the means and the end for which prayer is for. And it isn't.

Therefore, whatever Jesus means by this statement, this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting can not mean simply more praying for the sake of prayer doesn't mean that. So what then does it mean? It means first and foremost, that prayer is about relationship. I don't apologize for coming back to this theme again.

What else is there about Christianity? Prayer is undoubtedly the means by which we receive answers. Yes. It's the instrument by which we receive what we need.

Yes. Therefore, petitioning is one of the purposes of prayer. Yes, indeed.

And there, there are many things that we could talk about prayer this morning. I could spend several days with you discussing that. There are books, many books written about it and prayer conferences are filled with these principles on how to pray methodology.

But it seems to me that we have failed at this most essential point in purpose of prayer and not until we get this matter corrected. Will any biblical techniques and methodologies ever be helpful? No. And it's at this point, we must renew the mind and relearn what prayer is all about.

Here's what it's all about. Are you ready? Prayer is about having communion and intimacy with the person you love the most, period. That's it.

And I believe this is what Jesus is implying in his answer. I'll show you how I get that in just a few moments, but just, just hang with me for a while. Give me the benefit of the doubt.

This is my premise that prayer is about having communion and intimacy with the person you love. That's the highest purpose of prayer. That's prayer.

And it's ultimate reason. This is what I suggest to you is what our Lord is teaching. That prayer is fellowship with the God we love.

Now, listen carefully. If you felt a flush of disappointment with that statement, your disappointment betrays your heart. If you're here thinking, okay, wonderful.

He's going to tell us and give us some key to prayer that will unlock the treasures of heaven, but I might get more answers to prayer. And now you've heard the key and you're disappointed. Then be it known to you that your whole thinking, your whole paradigm, your whole mindset about prayer has been unbiblical all along.

Now don't be so hard on yourself. It's good that you now see that if nothing else this morning, if you come to that conclusion that yes, this has been true about me, you are well on your way to advancing in prayer. Prayer is absolutely difficult.

I don't want to minimize it and try to say it's always easy. No, even fellowshiping with the God I love the most, the person who I desire more than anyone else in this world, who have I have in heaven, but the, and who on earth besides thee do I desire. Even in that prayer can be difficult because there are things and persons that oppose prayer.

The devil schedules, our own flesh will oppose it. Mere duty and discipline will never overcome these obstacles, but the power of love can and does. Sheer discipline in the area of love is never going to get you all the way there.

I'm just going to tell you, warn you now I've tried it and I'm fairly disciplined. And I've discovered that discipline alone will never get me to the place that God intended me to be. When I'm alone with him in prayer, the practicing of relationship must be at the heart of prayer and prayer is nothing more than one of the main ways to practice your relationship with God.

What is the other? I said, it's one, there's two, the word of God with the prayer to God by the power of the Holy spirit is how you mainly and mostly have fellowship and practice that relationship with God. There are other things come secondary, but those are the primary. Otherwise prayer becomes ritualistic.

If it's not love that's motivating prayer, then prayer has ended up to be a ritualistic routine in your life. Something that you do because you feel you must do in order to stay on God's good side and gain the favor and blessings of life or whatever motivation, my dear friends, it is not the biblical motivation. It's the motivation that the apostles had when they were trying to cast out that devil.

Don't you think they were praying? I imagine as that whole scenario began, they remembered that just a few weeks earlier, he'd sent them out two by two and they had casted out devils. Many of them, in fact, they came back rejoicing over this fact, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in thy name. And he had to rebuke him about that.

And so I would imagine they walked up to that boy and said, in the name of Jesus, we rebuke you devil. Nothing happened. And they tried it again.

We rebuke you. We rebuke you. We said we rebuke you.

You're not cooperating. Then they would say, okay, maybe we ought to pray. And then they started to pray, Lord, help us.

Help us. I do. Am I far off with my, is my imagination getting the better of me? Don't you think after a few times trying that they'd stopped and said, let's pray.

Isn't that the way we are? We'll try other things and then we'll decide that's not working. We better pray. Somebody who hadn't said that about some aunt Wilma who was sick in the hospital.

Well, I think it's time to pray. She said, has it got to that? But the prayers weren't answered. Why? Well, Jesus said, because of your unbelief, but also because you don't pray.

But Lord, we did pray. No, no, no, no. Cause you're praying, seeking the answer as the great reward.

A W Tozer in his devotional classic, the pursuit of God. Can I stop and quit preaching for a moment and do a little inventory? How many of you read that book? Be honest. Raise your hand.

Three men. Come on ladies. You can't let these guys beat you.

You need to get that book and read that book. The pursuit of God by A. W. Tozer. It's my favorite book.

This book's so important. And in that devotional classic, listen to what he says. Come near to the holy men and women of the past, and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God.

You ever been around somebody like that? They pant after God and you can just kind of feel the warmth of the flame that burns within their heart. I'd like to be around those kinds of people. Tozer went on to say, they mourned for him.

They prayed and wrestled and sought for him day and night in season and out. And when they had found him, the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth.

Complacency. Long before there was a Tozer in the pursuit of God, there was a David who said these words as the heart, the deer panted after the water brooks. So panted my soul after thee, O God, my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God? And another time in Psalm 63 verse 1, he says, O God, thou art my God. Early will I seek thee, for my soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh, body, he's talking about his body, my body longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

Why? To see thy power and thy glory because thy loving kindness is better than life. I love that. Have you come to that place in your relationship with Jesus? You can say, God, your loving kindness is better than even my existence here in this world.

That's where he wants you to be. I urge you. Press on.

Press in. Know him in that way. Know his loving kindness to such a degree that there is no life apart from it.

That even the sweetest joys and the highest pleasures that you now delight in will soon pale in comparison to thy loving kindness. It's there. It's there.

In thy presence is fullness of joy. My right hand places forevermore. Do you know your God in that way? You walk with perpetual joy even when your heart's breaking because thy loving kindness is better than life.

Another psalmist has said it this way. My soul longs, yes, even faints, faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

That's the supreme reason why we pray. Because we delight in him. We love him.

And because we love him, we want to spend time with him. Now stop. I'm not talking about mysticism, please.

I will this time resist that charge. Sometimes I don't. But this charge is this is not about mysticism.

It's not about hearing voices. It's not about getting impressions. It's not about having holy ghost doodads run up and down your back of your spine.

No, no, no. It is just the sense of his presence. It's that very thing that Jesus laments that he was no longer conscious of on the cross.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I don't need impressions like I used to when I was a younger man. I don't need to feel those holy ghost doodads like I used to. I've graduated beyond that because I found something deeper.

And it's more satisfying. Those tingly feelings will subside and leave quickly, quickly come, they come and quickly they leave. But this is abiding.

This remains. I'm experiencing it right now while I'm preaching to you. I'm sensing the presence of my God.

It is delighting me so. That's why I'm acting the way I do. I can't help it.

We see our Lord early before anyone was awake praying late at night and into the morning could also find him in prayer. And our master as he went about doing the father's will went on praying. Not only was he alone with God, but when he was in the midst of the multitude, he was praying without ceasing.

We've got a question for you. We just looked, showed you what David, how he longed for God. Do you think David longed for God more than Jesus? No, sir.

Do you think that such could possibly be? No, sir. He's not praying just to know the will of the father. No, he's not just praying that he might have the power to do the will of the father.

Beloved, he's praying above all things that he might be in communion with his father because he loved his father and his father loved him. Are you with me? Are you seeing what I'm trying to say? This is what drew him in communion. It kept him in communion, pure love, not manipulation, not answers to prayer, not even to discover the will of the father.

Now, this is a very crude illustration. Most of my illustrations are going into my senior year of college. I was carrying a honors degree grade point average.

And then my wife and I started dating and my GPA actually went down a half a percentage point so that I could not graduate with honors all because I met my wife to be. I went to school full time and I worked a part-time job. So there wasn't a whole lot of time left for studying.

And it's as important as those things were to me. I made time for the that I really wanted to do. I wanted to be with this young woman who was the best thing for me since my salvation.

And there you see love is a better motivation that even determined discipline. Prayer is hard to do on a routine basis. Let me just tell you, discipline is not going to get you there, but love always will make sense.

And I'm suggesting to you that that's at the core of this statement, how be it this kind go without, but by prayer does not go out, but by prayer and fasting. Let's go to Matthew six. We have to look at Matthew six verses five and six and see that here, Jesus teaches this most important principle that the reason for prayer is love for God.

Matthew six, beginning with verse five. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men there. They, I say unto you, they have their reward.

Why did the religious people, the hypocrites here, he calls them. Why did they pray? What would be the motif of their prayer life pride? They wanted the praise of men. And Jesus said, they got it.

As they were walking in the marketplace, a man was walking marketplace, saw the religious Pharisee praying that beautiful praises. Now I wish I could pray like that. And he overhears that man say that.

And his heart just kind of feels a little, a little flutter of pride. He got his, that was his reward. He got what he prayed for.

You see this prayer was the means to the reward. What was the reward? The appraise and approval of men. Prayer was a method.

Prayer was a formula to the hypocrite. I do this and I will get this. Aren't we hearing that today? The whole health, wealth and prosperity industry.

And that's, that's what it really is. It's built on this premise. If you do X, Y, Z, God must do ABC.

If you fulfill the formula, then God must respond as if God is on your leash. That's how the religious hypocrite here saw it in his day. But Jesus says to the Christian, you and me, verse six, that that's not the reason we pray.

That's not the reward. That's not the purpose. That's not the motivation.

Verse six, but thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet. And when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret and thy father, which seeth in secret shall reward thee open. Where is the secret place? Where is it? Is it the place that's away from your family's eye? Is it a literal closet? What is the secret place? Well, this we know it isn't in the public eye, but we must be very careful.

Otherwise you'll undermine all public praying and say, we should never pray in public and have prayer meetings. And we know that's not true. The day of Pentecost, what were they doing? All 120 of them, they were praying.

So he's not ruling out public prayer here, but public prayer that's for the public's approval and praise. That's what he's ruling out. What is it about praying in secret? That is the opposite of this kind of public prayer.

Praying in the secret place is not for public approval, but for God's approval. There's the difference. See it.

Jesus is, Jesus doesn't care if you're in a closet or a room, the secret place is praying to God who dwells in secret because all that matters to you is what God thinks. Yeah. Let me say that again.

The secret place is praying to God. He dwells in secret because all that matters to you is what God thinks. That's what he's trying to suggest here.

You're praying not for men's approval. You're praying for God and his pleasure. Are you with me? And what God thinks matters, not because you're afraid of him.

If you don't pray, some of you are that level of your prayer lives. You pray because you're afraid. If you don't, he'll not be pleased with you.

You pray because you love him and that's why what he thinks matters. That's what Jesus said, but I still haven't answered the question. How about where's the secret place? Is it a physical closet, a room, or even a physical place? No, it's not any of those.

And I've heard men take this text and they turn it into another methodology, don't they? Turn it into formula. I've heard good men say, now you need to have a special place where you're alone and you got to be in that. And then they make prayer this rigid formula.

That's not the heart of Jesus's statement here. Where is the secret place? It's being alone with God. And believe you me, even at this moment, I'm alone with him.

I'm communing with him. Even as I'm talking to you, I'm alone with him. And so can you be the secret place is being alone in the presence of God.

Listen, here's a clue. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the almighty. When you are standing in the shadow of another person, it means you are in close proximity to that person.

The secret place is where God is and you being alone with him. That's it. To be in the shadow of a person requires you to be very close to that person.

That's what Jesus is saying. And brothers and sisters, if you love him with that full devotion, that full heart, you'll desire him for his own sake. Now, prayer primarily is about love relationship.

Second, it's about trust. Again, you got to remember Matthew. Matthew throws in the statement of our Lord about unbelief.

Mark does not include it. It's not because Mark knows that Jesus didn't say it and Matthew's inventing it. No, Mark just does not include that because really Mark was not there in the first place, but Matthew was.

Matthew remembers that and the spirit of God leads him to include that. You remember what he said? Because of your unbelief for verily I say unto you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall

say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place and it shall not remove and nothing shall be impossible to you. How be it this kind goeth not up, but by prayer and fasting.

Why does Jesus, why did he include the faith element in this explanation of prayer and how to have power so that you can cast out demons, even the strongest of kind? Now, listen, they had cast out demons before. Well, I just alluded to that a few moments ago and they're surprised. They're startled that they couldn't do that.

And Jesus acknowledges you haven't ever faced a demon like this, this kind, how be it this kind, you have faced lesser demons. You have faced demons less powerful than this one. This kind is so powerful that you have got to be a man or a woman of much prayer and fasting in order to be able to have the power to deal with this.

Now, again, what does your rubber band mind do? I've stretched it, but right then it seemed to be released and go right back and think, sure sounds like if I pray more, I'll have more power. Yes, but it all depends on what you, how you define prayer. And that's why he brings faith into this because faith is also a part of the language of love in Galatians chapter five, verse six, we have this statement for in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth much anything or uncircumcision.

In other words, writing to these who are a little shaky on their understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith. He says, listen to me doing some religious great thing like circumcision, even though that's in the old Testament law, even doing that really in the end, it doesn't matter. That's, that's not going to solve anything or avail that won't accomplish much.

No, no, but here's what will, but faith, which worketh by love, by love, you see, that's the only kind of faith that God recognizes the kind that's motivated by love. You can try to muster up your willpower to believe until you feel sure that you're believing there's no love in that. That's mind games.

That's psychological battle. And again, that's what the health wealth and prosperity industry is trying to peddle. No wonder it doesn't work.

Faith has to work by the motive of love because faith is in the realm of relationship. And if, if Karen today tells me later today, when I talked to her again, sweet home, when you get back, I'm so anxious for you to come on. I'm going to make you an apple pie and I'm going to even need a lots of butter and lard in the crust.

Hey, makes the most tender and flaky. And by the way, for those of you think cholesterol, cholesterol, cholesterol, get all nervous. Cholesterol is not the problem.

It's not a problem. It's all those substitute things trying to substitute for cholesterol. That's your problem.

Fake butter and all that nonsense, vegetable oils. And how many of you know, how many of you would believe me when I said to you that when I get into that car from the airport and she takes me home and I walk into the kitchen, I'm expecting to see that apple pie. Yeah.

Why, why am I expecting it? Because I, she told me so. And I trust her because I love her. Hard to love somebody.

You don't trust you ever try. It's difficult, not impossible. But when you love them, it's a lot easier to trust them.

This is faith working through love. Let me tell you something about your Lord. I'm not an expert, not talking as an expert.

I'm just talking to somebody who's learned by being with him in the word. I've discovered that our Lord wants to be trusted for the same reason you trust your spouse or a dear friend because you love him. If you have to sit here and work up and try to increase your faith by the grit of your teeth and clenched fist.

What are you saying? What are you saying about your Lord? He's not very trustworthy. I don't have to try to trust Karen when she tells me she's going to bake me an apple pie. I know that's a little, again, crude illustration.

It probably breaks down in several places, but I think it's hard. It really captures it. Do you trust your God? And the more you know him, the more you will love him.

The more you love him, the more you're going to trust him. I think that's why faith is a part of this whole equation because faith is not cold or mechanical. It trusts God because it sees him for who he is and he is absolutely trustworthy and it's one of the reasons we love him.

But to know someone requires one thing, time with them. Texting won't do this, not even email, but spending time with them in person, face to face. Ah, there, there it works.

Jesus, listen to me. Jesus knew his father and knew that he could trust him. Yes.

He spent time in prayer because prayer strengthened him. Yes. But what was it about prayer that strengthened him being with God? You don't need to say anything else.

Being with him, seeing him, hearing him. It's the very practice of a love relationship. That's what strengthened him as a man.

No different. None whatsoever. Now turning your Bibles to the book of Luke and find the transfiguration portion of scripture chapter nine, Luke chapter nine.

Luke tells about the same event also in verses 28 through 36. We have the account of the transfiguration. You know, it don't need to read that, but when you read Mark and Matthew's account, you get the idea that after that event took place, then they all just climbed down the mountain.

And here was the scene, the foot of the mountain that night. Correct? But Luke inserts one little detail that the other two writers omitted. Look at verse 37.

Now it happened on the next day when they had come down from the mountain that a great multitude met him. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out saying, teacher, I implore you look on my son for he is my only child. When did it happen? When did this event happen on the night of the transfiguration? No, the next day while Peter, James and John was asleep, what was Jesus doing? What was he doing? That's a question.

He was praying. And while he was praying, what happened? He was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared and he conversed with them. And then Peter woke up and out of a half day's sleep, he said, oh,

it's good for us to be here.

Let's build three tabernacles. One for you, Jesus, one for Moses, one of Elijah. And then a cloud overshadowed them and the voice spoke.

This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. Hear him. And they stayed there the rest of the night.

I have I have a speculation. You're right. I can't prove it.

Can't show you a word, a phrase in the text here in Luke nine. But I wonder when the disciples finally calmed down to go back to sleep, what do you think Jesus was doing? And why was he praying? Because he knew he was going to have to cast out a devil, a very strong demon the next day. That would have been a secondary purpose.

There are two reasons to pray because we love him as number one, number two, because we need him. Both of those motives were at work there that night. And so when he comes down, he casts out the demon.

The disciples ask him, why can't we do it? He says, here's why. You can only have this kind of power when you pray much and fast much, not because you pray to get more power, but because you pray, because you love God. That's what he's trying to say to them.

Men, if you will pray, ladies, if you pray because you love God, you'll want to spend more time with him. And the more time you spend with him, the more you become like him, the more your faith increases, the more his fragrance settles upon you like a garment. Now, I've used this illustration here before.

I know I have. If I haven't, shame on me. This is the first time only.

When I embrace my dear wife and tell her goodbye on one of these trips, if she's already put on her cologne perfume, I'm sitting there in the airport or on the plane and I start to smell something. My sweetheart, how did I get her fragrance on me? Because I was in her secret place. I was in her shadow.

I was in her proximity. I was close to her. And when you get close to God like that, something of his aroma settles on you.

And demons know it. Powers of hell know it. You're not special.

The one who is special's aroma is on you. That's what I think he's saying. And therefore, the highest purpose of prayer is because we love him.

Father, we can't seem to make ourselves love you more. And we mourn our little hearts because they love little. We want you to enlarge them so we can love you more.

But Lord, preserve and protect us from trying to do that in a formulistic and mechanical way. I don't believe. If I understand you, please correct me, my precious Lord.

Please, if I'm wrong, show me because I don't want to ever preach this again. But I believe it's just it's not done by methods, but by relationship, pursuing relationship with you. That's what I believe you've taught me.

That's what motivates me. And I too, with my brothers and sisters, lament that not only is my heart small, but it has holes in it. I need you always.

Keep me desperate to always see my need. Not of your miracles, not of your power, but for your love, your communion, your person. So that I will always seek you, hungry and thirsty after you.

Work this in us so that the very reason he died for us becomes accomplished in us. Fellowship with you. It's in Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.

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