

Matthew 6

by William Wilson

Effective prayer results from a proper spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, and is a way of life that involves abiding in Him and praying in His name.

Duration: 41:31

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, Mark 11:25-26, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Philippians 4:19, 1 John 3:22

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that prayer is not a means to gain spirituality, but rather an outgrowth of spirituality. He explains that prayer is a powerful tool given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is through a proper relationship with Him that we can experience its true power. The speaker highlights the importance of giving in relation to receiving from God, citing various verses that show how God's promises of provision are conditional upon being a generous giver. Additionally, the speaker emphasizes the significance of forgiveness in our prayer life, explaining that refusing to forgive can hinder our communication with God.

Transcript

Again, let me say that it's a real pleasure to be here with you for this Labor Day Conference. We're really looking forward to the Lord speaking to us in the power of the Spirit. I'd like to have a request as we begin each session, and that is that we begin each session with just a moment of silent prayer.

And there are two specific prayer requests that I have during that period of silent prayer, and that is that you would pray, firstly, that I would be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, because I can say the words and I can stand up here and go over the material, but if the Holy Spirit of God does not speak through me, then nothing will happen of any good spiritual nature. The second request I have is that each of our hearts, including mine, would really be open to the message that the Lord would lay on us this morning. So could we pray those two things silently, and then we'll begin.

Father, we do ask that you would speak to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, into the glory of Christ, and we pray that each of our hearts will be open to the message that you have for us. So we pray it in His name. Amen.

I'd like to have you open your Bibles, if you will, to Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6. I talked a little bit last night about the theme of the conference, which is prayer, and how we can experience a powerful,

effective prayer life. I find that as I studied for this material, that I had a lot of misconceptions about prayer, and I think that it's very good that periodically we go back to the Scriptures to see what we can learn about what the Bible teaches us about this very important privilege that we have called prayer. Everybody should have been given one of these blue booklets.

If you did not receive one, perhaps you'd like to put up your hand, and I'm sure that one of the men would be glad to get it to you. These booklets contain skeletal outlines for each of the four messages. If you'd like to take notes, there is room for taking notes.

If not, it will give you a record of some of the things that we've talked about. Let me begin by saying that sometimes we think of prayer as a vehicle to gain spirituality. And I think if we look into Scripture, we find that rather than being a means towards spirituality, that prayer is really an outgrowth of spirituality.

And it's as we are walking in a proper relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ that we begin to experience the real power that He's given us through prayer. Towards that end, we'll find that if we want to experience the real power of prayer and have a really effective prayer life, a lot of that depends on our relationship. And this morning, Lord willing, we'd like to talk about our relationship to the Lord Himself and also our relationship to others, and also how our prayer life depends on our spiritual condition, those two things.

So if you'll turn in your outlines to session one, in the first page, I'd like to just read a couple key verses from the book of Matthew to show you the basic premise upon which we will be building. Matthew 6, verse 33 is a very familiar verse that most of you have probably memorized. We're going to read Matthew 6, 33, and then we're going to move to Matthew 7, verse 7. Matthew 6, 33 says, But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

And then Matthew 7, verse 7, Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Now at first we don't realize, but there's a real relationship between these two verses. The intervening verses are, of course, extremely important, or the Lord wouldn't have put them there, but they are verses that explain the relationship between these two verses.

The reason I'm bringing them together is to show the basic connection from which we want to proceed. The promise that we like to claim, ask and it will be given to you, is in the context of seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. And so there's a condition for the fulfillment of that promise.

And if we want to claim the promise that if we ask something it will be given us, then we have to fulfill the condition in Matthew 6, 33 that we're seeking first the kingdom of God. Now as many of you know, the word kingdom there can also be translated kingship. And we could say, seek ye first the kingship of God.

In several of the hymns that we've talked about this morning, and several of the comments that have been made as we've worshipped the Lord together, the concept of king has come across. King of my life I crown you now. The idea is that if we make the Lord Jesus king of our life, if we put Him on the throne of our life, if He's really in control of our life, we're seeking first His kingship in our own lives and His righteousness, then we can claim the promise, ask and it shall be given to you.

And so the premise from which we want to proceed this morning is that prayer, effective, powerful prayer, something that I know we all seek, results from a proper spiritual relationship. It results from having Jesus Christ being really on the throne of our lives, being our king and being our Lord. And we'll find that because of that, prayer is not an activity, but rather prayer is a way of life.

You see, as our whole life is consumed with seeking the kingship of Jesus Christ, our whole life is consumed with putting Him on the throne, the supreme desire of our life is to serve Him and to please Him, that's a way of life and effective prayer grows out of that. And so prayer really becomes a way of life, a constant communion with the living Christ and not just an activity that we engage in. Sometimes we almost make prayer a ritual and we'd like to discover this morning that prayer is not a ritual, but prayer is a relationship with the Holy Spirit of God, because it's only as we are filled with the Spirit of God and controlled by the Spirit of God that we can abide in Jesus Christ and that we can seek His kingship or His control in our lives.

And so the relationship that we have with the Holy Spirit is a dynamic one, it's a real one and out of that relationship grows what prayer really is, that is a way of life. Now I'd like to point out that again, the real power of prayer comes based on our relationships. And first of all, as per the outline, we'd like to talk about our relationship to God Himself.

Now I'm going to break it down to the three members of the Godhead, Father, Son and Spirit, because the Scripture tells different responsibilities that each of the members of the Godhead has regarding prayer. I'm not trying to divide up the Lord, but Scripture teaches that He is one God manifesting Himself in three divine persons and each of those persons has their own function or role as regards prayer. If you're still open to Matthew 6, we'll proceed with our relationship to God the Father.

And there are several things that we notice in Scripture relating to God the Father in our prayer life. The first is found in Matthew 6, verse 6, But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. The first thing that we need to reflect on this morning is the fact that there's a tremendous privilege of being alone in the presence of the Father, alone in secret.

And in the hustle and bustle of our lives, our lives get increasingly more complicated, we need to realize that we need to take time to just be in His living presence, to be totally alone with the Lord, to have all the sounds and all the things of the world away from us, cut off, to be hidden from the carnal eye, to be withdrawn in secret before the Lord, and to spend time with Him listening to His voice. What a beautiful thing it is to have silent communion with the Lord and to be alone with Him. And I think sometimes we overlook that.

We overlook the importance of just being in His presence alone and just having our total thoughts and our total hearts focused on our Father. And then secondly, if you would look over at Matthew 7 in verses 9 through 11, I won't read all of them, but this is the portion that tells us that God is our loving Father and He has our best interests in view. And a good earthly father is not going to give his child a snake if he asks for an egg, he's not going to give him a rock if he asks for a loaf.

And we need to refresh our minds to the fact that God is our loving, holy Father. He loves us and He always has our best interests at heart. And so as we pray, we should realize that He's our loving Father who's there to answer, who's there to grant whatever is best for our lives.

Sometimes we sort of look at the Lord as someone who is unwilling. We wouldn't say this out loud, but we look at Him as someone who is unwilling to grant us what we want. And that's really not a very good perception of the Lord, is it? Because prayer is not overcoming the reluctance of God.

Prayer is really laying hold of His willingness to grant us the blessings that He wants us to have. And so we should have a heart filled with love for God is our holy Father, a Father that we can call Father, a Father that we can be related to in a personal way and enjoy what He has for us. And then John 14, 13 would teach us regarding the Father that the chief end of our prayer should be that the Father be glorified.

Let me repeat that. The chief end of our prayer should be that the Father be glorified. This is what Jesus taught in John 14, 13.

You know, desiring that the Father be glorified is not something that we turn on and off when we go to pray. In other words, as we go through our lives and we say, oh, it's time to pray now and my motive should be that the Father be glorified. Our whole lives should be dedicated to the glorification of the Father, shouldn't they? Every move that I make, every breath that I take, every word that I say, every thought that I have should be geared to glorify the Father.

And therefore, when I engage in prayer, there's no difference from the rest of my life because my whole life should be to glorify the Father and therefore I can pray to the glory of the Father. You see this whole concept again, that it's a way of life. It's only when my life is given to the glory of the Father that I can truly pray to the glory of the Father.

How hypocritical it is to pray to the glory of the Father, but to live for the glory of myself. You see, we need to live for the glory of the Father moment by moment, day by day and then we can pray to the glory of the Father as well. In 1 John 5, we find another thing in relation to the Father and that is that we need to identify with the will of the Father.

We need to identify with His desire, with His will. And here again, by living the will of God and by doing the will of God, then I can pray in the will of God. How hypocritical it is to pray in the will of God when I don't live in the will of God.

When I don't serve Him as I should day by day. And so the picture is here that if I'm walking with Jesus Christ moment by moment and day by day, if I'm living the will of God and I'm doing the will of God, then a natural outgrowth of that is that I will have the power to pray in the will of God. And so we should never pray in the will of God when we don't live in the will of God, when we're not interested in doing the will of God.

It's so hypocritical to turn it on and off. The last thing that I would mention in relation to the Father is found in Luke 1 37 and that is a recognition that with God all things are possible. I don't know about you, but I know I have a tendency to make God too small.

I have a tendency to think that God's powers are limited. Now, I would never say that. I know that the Bible teaches differently, but in my own mind, I have a tendency to limit Him.

Maybe there are things that I shouldn't ask because subconsciously I'm afraid He cannot do it, even though I know from Scripture that He can. And sometimes we miss out on the great blessings of God because we make Him too small. We don't realize that God can do everything, that He's omnipotent.

We know that in our head, but when we go to pray, we limit Him and we're afraid to ask for certain things because in our own mind we've made our God too small. What a mistake that is. We need to recognize that the Father is all-powerful and with Him nothing is impossible.

Now, also our prayer life is dependent upon our relationship to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The first thing I'll mention in relation to the Son is found in John chapter 15 and verse 7. I'd like to have you turn to that, please. John's Gospel chapter 15 and verse 7. This is perhaps the all-inclusive condition, if there is such a thing, for an effective prayer life.

John 15 and verse 7. Jesus is speaking here and He says, If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done to you. You see, we like the last part of that verse, don't we? That whatever we ask will be done, but we forget the condition in the first part.

There's a two-fold condition, that we abide in the Lord Jesus and that His words abide in us. And the all-inclusive condition for an effective, powerful prayer life is that we abide in Jesus Christ. That we abide in Him.

And that means that we walk with Him hand in hand, moment by moment, day by day. That we live in Him. That we're obedient to Him.

It's a union that we have. We all have by position, when we receive Christ as Savior, a union with Jesus Christ. There's a difference between union and communion.

Communion is that constant day by day interaction with Him. That constant day by day walking with Him. Where we're hand in hand with Him.

And when we abide in Jesus Christ, when our heart is occupied with Jesus Christ, when we are abiding in Him, when we've got Him by the hand and He's got us by the hand, and we walk with Him, then we will have the kind of prayer life that we're all after. It's that walk of obedience. It's that walk of trust that gives us the power to really pray.

Abiding in Christ is not some sort of vain struggle that we have to live right. But it's really a walk with Him. It's an abiding in Him.

And to be in Jesus Christ, to abide in Him, that's the way to have our prayers answered. And I must say, with a great deal of sadness, that I believe that the impotence that we see in the church today, as far as prayer goes, is largely due to the fact that we, as individuals and as bodies of Christians, fail to abide in Jesus Christ. If all of us were to abide in Jesus day by day, moment by moment, what a changed world we would have.

What a changed prayer power we would have. And the impotence that we see around us is due to our failure and our refusal, as Christians, to abide in Jesus Christ. And I would say that, conversely, that you could look into a fellowship, a group of believers, and you could use the answers to prayer that they receive as a fellowship as an indicator of the reality of their walk with Christ.

In other words, if there is a group of people who are truly abiding in Jesus Christ, they're going to see answered prayer. And if you look at a group and there's no answered prayer, then perhaps it's an indicator that many are not really abiding with the Lord. You see, when you abide with Jesus Christ and you abide in Him, you expect to see great things.

Because when you're abiding, you feel the power of walking with Christ and you know that He can do great things. And we miss out on so many things because we fail to abide. Now, also in relation to the

Son, we find that Scripture teaches that we are to pray in His name.

And as I go various places, I find that there's a tremendous misunderstanding about what this phrase means. We find it in John 14, 13 and 14. It says that we are to pray in His name.

And many, many Christians, even mature Christians, think that praying in His name is simply adding on that phrase at the end of our prayers, in Jesus' name or in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's almost like they think it's some magic words that you put on the end, but that's not what it means. Praying in Jesus' name means to pray in accordance with all that He is.

It means to pray in submission to His will and to His authority. It means to pray in unity with Him and in sympathy with His desire. It means to pray in His righteousness.

You see, to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus means that I am identifying with all that He is and all that He wants. So, to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus means that I'm praying the way He would pray. You see, in total submission to the will of the Father.

And when the name of Jesus Christ, when the name of Jesus Christ has become the power that rules my life, then I will experience that power in prayer to the Father. In other words, the power that the name of Jesus Christ has on my life is the power that it will have in my prayer. That's another way of stating our basic premise, isn't it? If the name of Jesus Christ is that name upon which I function, it's that name which controls me, it's that name which I live to glorify, then I'm going to experience the power of that name in my prayer.

But if I tack His name onto the end of my prayers and think that's praying in Jesus' name and the power of the name of Jesus Christ does not touch the way I live, I'm not going to experience the power. The power that His name has on my life, day by day, is the degree of power that I'm going to experience in my prayer. And as we bear that name, that precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we bear that name before men, we will have the power to use it before God in prayer.

And really our prayer rises or falls with the quality of our relationship to Jesus Christ. Another very interesting aspect of our relationship to the Son, all of us know that 1 Thessalonians 5.18 teaches us to pray without ceasing. And I always thought that was kind of an ideal, it's something that we should sort of shoot for, but I never could understand how it was quite possible, pray without ceasing.

But if we look at Hebrews, you don't need to turn to it, you're familiar with it. The Hebrews 7.25 teaches that Jesus Christ is our intercessor whoever intercedes for us. And the Lord Jesus Christ is always praying for us, He's always interceding for us.

And to pray without ceasing means that we identify with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, He always is praying, He prays without ceasing. And it's as we identify with the Lord Jesus Christ that we can experience this idea of prayer without ceasing.

He draws us into unison with Him. He draws us into this beauty of praying for other people. And so we need to identify with the Lord Jesus Christ and His intercession.

As He prays for us without ceasing, so we should enter into that by identifying ourselves with the Lord Jesus and we are praying without ceasing because of it. Another thing is that you find in the story of Gethsemane, Mark 14.36, we need to identify with the Lord Jesus in the surrender of our will. The Lord

Jesus said, not my will but thine be done.

How many of us can truly say that when we pray? How many of us truly surrender our will to the Lord Jesus? How many of us are praying for the will of the Father and not for our own will? That brings us to our relationship to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. I'd like to have you turn with me to the book of Ephesians.

We'll be looking at some verses in Ephesians 5 and also Ephesians 6. What does our relationship with the Holy Spirit need to be in order that we might really experience a powerful prayer life? Look at Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Ephesians 5.18 Also, And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The one necessity, the one necessity for every need of the spiritual life is the Holy Spirit of God. If we are really to be able to abide as a child of God, if we're really to be able to abide in Jesus Christ, we need to be filled with the Spirit of God. Now, I think that one of the interesting, actually it's a tragic thing that I've observed as I've gone different places to share from the Word of God, is because of the charismatic abuses that we see all around us and because of the improper abuse of the gifts of the Spirit and so on and so forth, I feel that in many cases we have overreacted and we've become afraid and when someone talks about the Holy Spirit, we almost get shaky for fear that they're going to say or do something that we feel uncomfortable with.

And this is a tragic overreaction and in many places it's so pronounced that the Holy Spirit has almost become a second-class citizen and people are afraid to talk about Him and they're afraid to teach about Him. And, you know, really if we had done our job in many cases and taught properly about the Holy Spirit in the beginning, we wouldn't have so much misunderstanding. Being filled with the Holy Spirit of God is not a charismatic phrase.

It's from the Word of God, Ephesians 5.18. And in fact, in the literal translation it says, keep on being filled with the Spirit. At the moment that you and I received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Spirit of God came to dwell in us. And He does dwell in us and we possess Him as He lives in us and through us.

But we need to be continually filled from within with His power to go about our daily lives. And the one necessity for every need of the spiritual life is to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. He is the one who awakens us.

He is the one who increases our desire and our need to pray. We need to be controlled. That's why it says, do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

When someone is drunk with wine, they're controlled. They're under the influence of that wine. And this passage is saying, be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Be under the mastery of the Holy Spirit. And it's only when we are truly filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God that we can really pray in a powerful way.

I wonder how many of us actually ask to be filled with the Spirit of God before we pray. We can't pray effectively unless the Spirit prays for us. Unless we're filled with the Spirit.

And I know myself that so many times I launch out on my own and I try to pray in my own power. And you know, that's really no better than trying to preach in your own power, is it? We need the power of the Spirit of God. We need to be under His control.

We need to be filled by the Spirit. Because it's the Spirit of God who draws us in to that great stream of Christ's intercessory ministry. Romans 8.26 implies that the Holy Spirit of God teaches us how to pray and what to pray and when to pray.

And oftentimes the Holy Spirit will bring things to our memory that need to be prayed for. He teaches us to pray in the will of God. And what our prayer accomplishes really depends on what our life is.

If we live in the Spirit, we will be able to pray in the Spirit. Don't expect to be able to pray in the Spirit when you live in your flesh all week long. You see? You can only pray in the Spirit as you live in the Spirit.

And I can only pray in the Spirit as I'm controlled by the Holy Spirit day by day and moment by moment. And if I grieve Him in thought and word and deed, then there's a loss of power. Prayer is this relationship to the Holy Spirit of God.

And if I grieve Him or if I break that relationship, I will not experience the power in prayer that He wants me to have. He wants me to be able to pray in the Spirit. And in order to do that, I must be willing to live in the Spirit all the time.

And much of the spiritual weakness that we have, whether it be in prayer or other kinds of spiritual weakness, is because we don't have the communion and the fellowship with the Holy Spirit of God that's spoken about in 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 14. Communion with the Holy Spirit of God. Fellowship with Him.

That's what gives us the power for the Christian life. And so we find that real prayer power, real effective prayer is dependent upon our relationship to God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

You know, we also find out from Scripture that our prayer power is also dependent on our relationship to others. And I've listed here secondly on your outline to our spouses. And probably most of you are familiar with the Scripture that I've cited there.

1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 7. And I'll just read it to you. It says, "...Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them," that is your wives, "...according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayer be not hindered." Now that's pretty clear. That if we don't have the proper relationship to our husband or to our wife, our prayer life will be hindered.

It says there in black and white. And many people like to overlook that. Many people think that they can still have an effective prayer life when things are not right with their spouse.

That's contrary to the Word of God. The Word of God clearly teaches here that if we are not in the proper relationship with our spouse, that our prayer life will be hindered. And notice there, husbands, it says that we should live with our wives according to knowledge.

Another way to translate that would be in an understanding way. We are to protect them and provide for them. And it says we are to honor them, husbands.

That means that we are to put them above ourselves. We are to put them first. It means that we are to sacrifice for their well-being.

Isn't that how Christ loved the church? Christ loved the church. He gave everything he had for the well-being of his bride. And you and I as husbands, men, our responsibility is to sacrificially give for the well-being of our wives, regardless of what it costs us.

I think we forget that. We like to have our wives be in submission. We like to have them follow our leadership.

But we forget that our responsibility is oh so sober. That is that we are to love them as Christ loved the church, giving everything we have for their well-being. Wives are to follow their husbands, to be in submission, as you know.

I'm not going to belabor these points, but I want to make it very clear that the Word of God teaches that we will not have the prayer power that we should have if things are not right between us as husband and wife. And I would encourage any of you who are here this morning, who are having some kind of difficulty with your spouse, make it right before the Lord so that your prayers would not be hindered. A wife or a husband who is not in right relationship to their spouse cannot be in a right relationship to God.

God reminds me of this many, many times in my own life. Seeing as that I'm in full-time work and I have my office in the home, sometimes I have a tendency to be hanging around the kitchen when my wife's trying to get something done. And I might be in her way a little bit from time to time.

And maybe we'll have a little spat and we'll have a little bit of dispute. And I'll huff and puff and I'll go out in a huff and go down to my office. And I'll get and I'll open the Word and I'll start to pray.

And it's almost as if the Lord audibly says, what are you doing here? Of course, He doesn't. But the point is, what am I doing there? I have no business coming before the altar of the Lord in prayer when things are not right with my wife. And it's as if the Lord says to me, what are you doing here? You go make it right with your wife and then you can come to the altar.

That's what the Word of God says. That's why I'll go up and make things right and then I'll be able to return to prayer. The point is, we're kidding ourselves if we think that we can have something wrong in our marriage relationship and still have prayer power.

And of course, let me emphasize the importance of praying together with our spouses. Now, it also is very interesting to note from Scripture that our prayer effectiveness is also related to our relationship to others. And I've listed three areas there.

There are probably more. But the first one is giving. And I think this is probably one of the least known requirements for an effective prayer life.

I'd like to have you turn to Proverbs 21, verse 13. It's very interesting that Scripture teaches that if we are to have an effective prayer life, then we must have generous giving spirit. And I would suggest to you that one of the reasons that Abraham had such a powerful prayer life, especially when he interceded for Sodom, was because of his generosity with his nephew Lot.

It's not that we deserve it, but it's God working in our lives saying, if you have a giving, loving spirit, then you can have powerful prayer. Proverbs 21, verse 13. It says, If whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

We have no right to expect to receive from the hand of God if we are unwilling to give what God has given us for the good of the body, for the good of others, for even the good of the unsaved. And I'm not merely talking about money here. I'm talking about time, effort, and talent.

If we are stingy, if we are greedy, if we are unwilling to fully give of ourselves and our resources for the good of others, then what right do we have to expect to receive from the hand of God? It's not that we earn it by giving and then God gives us. I'm not trying to imply that. I'm trying to show how hypocritical it is for us to want to receive from the hand of God when we refuse to be willing to give from that which he has imparted to us.

And that goes for our time and our strength as well as our resources. You will find, and we don't have time to go into it this morning, that you will find that all the verses that we like to talk about the most, about God giving to us, you will find that every single one of them is a conditional promise within the context of being a generous giver. For instance, 2 Corinthians 9 and 8. Maybe that's a promise that many of you have claimed many times.

2 Corinthians 9 and verse 8. It reads as such. It says, And God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. We like to talk about that, but that is in the context of being a cheerful giver, verse 7. 1 John 3.22 talks about God giving to us if we do what's pleasing in his sight.

And if you read that in context, it's loving the brethren and giving to the poor, in verses 17 and 18. Philippians 4.19. Anybody who has ever lived on faith knows Philippians 4.19. That God is able to supply all our needs according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. But that's in the context of people who had sacrificially given to the Lord's work.

The point I'm trying to make is this, that if we expect to receive from the hand of God, we must be willing to give of our time and our talents and our treasures in order to serve the Lord's people and to do his work. And then there's the whole matter of forgiving. Mark chapter 11, verses 25 and 26.

Mark 11.25 and 26. It says, And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

You know, when you and I refuse to forgive, we set up a roadblock in our prayer life. There's no way to get around it. That's what the Word of God says.

There's a roadblock set up in our prayer life when we refuse to forgive. If we're holding grudges, if we've taken offense, if we've let things simmer over years and years, we've let bitterness encompass us over years, our prayer life is blocked. And I would suggest that if anyone is here this morning and you're puzzled as to why you don't seem to have power in prayer, that's a good place to start.

Do you have something against a brother or sister? Have you refused to forgive? Have you been encompassed by bitterness? Have you held a grudge over many years? It's amazing as I go around to different places, how many people are holding a grudge or taking offense against a brother or sister for

many years away and wondering why their prayer life is hindered. If you refuse to forgive, your prayer life will be blocked. There's just no doubt about it.

If you were to take Matthew chapter 5 and Matthew chapter 18, you will see that it doesn't matter whether you are right or wrong. It doesn't matter whether you are the offender or the offeree. You have the responsibility, according to those two passages, to go to one another and make it right.

And only then can you proceed to the altar of God. And so I would encourage you, if you're here this morning and you're at odds with a brother or sister, there's an offense taken, there's a block there, it's blocking your prayer life, I would encourage you from the Word of God to make it right, to patch up that strife or division so that you'll have powerful prayers once again. We'll end this morning's session with our responsibility to others in the way of intercession.

Praying for others. You know, if we're not praying constantly and consistently and regularly and fervently for others, we're missing the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Lord Jesus is ever making intercession for us.

And He desires that we make intercession for others. And He teaches us to be persistent and regular in that particular ministry. We like to talk about the priesthood of believers.

And I praise the Lord that each of us who knows Christ as Savior, each of us is a priest. Well, one of the ministries of a priest is intercession. One of the ministries of a priest is intercession.

What a glorious responsibility it is. So, we close out this morning's session. We didn't get quite as far as I'd like, but I'm sure the Lord will make up the time.

We close it out with the idea that in order to have an effective, powerful, dynamic prayer life, we need to be rightly related to Jesus Christ. We need to be controlled by the Spirit of God. We need to be abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to be existing for the glory of the Father and living in the will of the Father. We need to be seeking His kingship in our lives. We need to make Jesus Christ the supreme desire of our hearts and His will the controlling factor of our lives.

And then and only then will we experience the kind of prayer life that He wants us to have. And He challenges us further to our relationship to our spouses, our relationship to other people. If it's not right, our prayer life will be hindered.

May each of us before the Lord this morning truly and honestly examine our hearts to see if Jesus Christ is king in our own lives. To see if we're abiding. To see if we're being controlled by the Spirit.

So that we might have the kind of prayer life that Jesus Christ died to give us. May it be true for His namesake. Heavenly Father, we praise You for the privilege that we have of being in Your family, for being related to You as Father.

We know that it costs a tremendous price the gift of Your Son. Lord, we thank You for the privilege of prayer. We realize from Your Word that the power and effectiveness of our prayer depends on the degree of our abiding in You.

We ask that through the power of Your Spirit that we would be controlled, that we would abide in the Lord Jesus, that we would live daily in the power of the Spirit, that we would be constantly seeking Your kingship in our lives, that our greatest desire would be to live for You and to please You and to do Your will day by day, moment by moment as we walk hand in hand with the living Christ. Father, we pray that as this happens, as we experience it, that we will be truly grateful for the wonderful blessing of prayer. Help us to exercise its power as we walk day by day with our blessed Savior.

For we pray it in His name, Amen.

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