

Having a Burden for Prayer

by Zac Poonen

Having a burden for prayer is essential for effective prayer, and we can increase our faith and live a spiritual life by seeking to be free from sin and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 36:46

Scripture: Leviticus 26:13, Matthew 6:33, Mark 14:38, Luke 11:9, John 15:18-19, Acts 17:26-27, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Topics: "Prayer Burden", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a burden in prayer, comparing it to carrying a baby, and highlights the necessity of faith and burden for answered prayers. It also discusses the journey from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness, encouraging a pursuit of being filled with the Holy Spirit and living a life immersed in God's presence. The sermon stresses the significance of commitment to Christ, the church, and the responsibility to be a witness in the world, especially in the face of potential challenges to Christian beliefs and practices.

Transcript

It's wonderful to see so many people at the prayer meeting. What happened? I hope this is the beginning of a revival. Being at the prayer meeting is not enough.

There must be a burden. A burden is, you know why many of our prayers are not answered? It's like trying to have a baby without carrying it in the womb. I mean, the way God intended babies to be born is a mother carries that baby in the womb for a number of months and the mother is so burdened about it, loves it so much, and then one day it's born.

And in the Bible, prayer is compared to carrying a baby. Paul speaks about, uses such expressions. And so, a burden in our hearts or something is usually the type of prayer that gets answered.

Otherwise, you know, a lot of our prayers would just come from our lips. It can be real desire, but without a burden. So, I've always said there are two requirements for answered prayer.

One is burden and the other is faith. Without faith we won't get anything and without a burden, I don't know how long it will last. A burden means there is an intense desire.

You know, I think of Hannah in the Old Testament when she didn't have children. She and Rachel also, give me children or I die. Wow, what a way to pray.

Give me children or I die. But I thought of that expression in relation to seeking God for something. You know, we pray like that when we have a personal need, family need.

And in the early days of our Christian life, it is true that our life is self-centered. We are all born self-centered. And to move from self-centered to Christ-centered is a journey.

And I don't think any of us will ever accomplish it fully on this earth. I can't say today that my life is totally Christ-centered. Because, I mean, to the best of my knowledge, I'm not seeking my own in anything, but it comes down to little things like, how much do I read the news, world news? There's nothing sinful about it.

We want to know what's happening in the world. But I ask myself, would Jesus be that interested in all this world news? So I have to discipline myself in some of these things. How interested would Jesus be in what's happening to Trump in the United States? I don't know.

But I'd like to know a little bit, because of what's happening in the world. But that's what I mean. I say, Lord, I want to pursue this journey towards being totally Christ-centered, but these are the areas I still struggle with.

I say, Lord, I want to really think about the things that Jesus thought about, and spend my time looking at things that Jesus would look at, and speak about the things Jesus would speak about. I want to have a burden that all of my life will be Christ-centered. But it's a journey from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness.

A lot of self-centeredness is world-centeredness. The world around us has such an influence on us to move towards Christ-centeredness. But all I'm trying to say is, but I'm not condemned by it.

I'm not condemned that I'm not totally Christ-centered. I'm encouraged that I'm moving in that direction. Because when I compare myself with one year ago, I say, hey, it's better.

So he who has this hope purifies himself as Christ is pure. I want to encourage all of you, if you want to see more answered prayer, try to speeden up this journey from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. Say, Lord, I know I won't get there till the end of my life, but I want to get as far as possible, because the more I get there, the more effective my prayer will be.

I often think of the Old Testament example of the prophets of Baal praying for hours, nothing happening, and Elijah praying for half a minute, and the fire fell. And of course, Jesus was the greatest of them all. He could pray for anything.

And when you believe that Jesus was a man like us, we see that in relation to sin, that he was tempted like us. But he was 100% a man. In other words, he limited himself, that he did not do things as God, even though he had the power of God.

So, as I see, there are only two things which he had to do as God. One was accepting worship, which I can't do, and forgive sins. He could tell people, your sins are forgiven, I'm telling you that.

I can't do that on my own authority, I can point them to scripture. Worship we can never accept, but apart from those two things, Jesus never did anything which he didn't do as a man. Everything I see, he did as a

man.

You read that he overcame gravity when he walked on the water. Philip also overcame gravity in Acts chapter 8, when the Holy Spirit took him from one place to another, he overcame gravity. So, everything that Jesus did, others, a man can do.

So, I was thinking also of Jesus' prayer life. He could pray and he knew something would happen. And that's because, I see, I think of that Roman centurion's statement, when he told Jesus, my servant is sick far away, so many kilometers away, but standing here, if you tell that sickness to go, it will go.

And he said, because I am a man under authority. And because I am under authority, when I tell a soldier to go, he goes. And he knew that Jesus had such power.

You know, a military man can always recognize another military man. So, he knew Jesus was some type of military man under some authority, that there was a bearing about him which showed that he was a man under authority. And he had authority.

I thought of that expression. I said, Lord, the reason why things happened when Jesus prayed, was because he was so 100% under his father's authority to such an extent that he would not even eat bread without asking the father, shall I, I've got the power, but shall I turn these stones into bread or not? The equivalent for us is, Lord, I've got the money, but should I spend it on this or not? It's quite an intense way of living, where every single step I'm seeking the Lord, when I have the resources, whether I should use it for something legitimate, for something wrong, I know, I shouldn't use it, but something legitimate, can I use it for this? And the more I get into that place where I seek the Lord about everything, the more I will have authority in prayer and get answers from God. And that is God's will for his children.

So, I want to say that to all of you, I want to encourage you to get into this pursuit of walking in Jesus' footsteps, seeking to be free from sin, always cleansing ourselves from anything that brings a slight disconnection with God. I just want to say I've become more sensitive to that in the last one year than before. It's not that I, I mean, I always hated sin, but it's a question of knowing not what just sin is, but anything that comes short of the glory of God, that is sin.

Sometimes it's not the crude things which the world calls sin, but more subtle things out there. I say that if we seek to live like that every day when we come together for prayer, there's real power, even in our private prayer. And also, one more thing I would say, if we, you know, change the center, re-center our prayer into the way Jesus taught us to pray, where I say, Hallowed be thy name.

Lord, that's my primary request is that in my life, in my family, your name must be hallowed and respected and glorified. And I want your will to be done in my life. I have a great eagerness to see your kingdom come on the earth.

If these things are uppermost in our life, we are changing the center of our prayer away from ourselves to God. And it doesn't mean we lose out. This is the meaning of seeking God's kingdom first.

Our other things sort of get added automatically because God knows what we need. And if I concentrate on the things of God's kingdom, you'll find amazingly God plans out your life. I mean, my wife and I were sitting and looking back over our nearly 49 years of life together now and seeing how we didn't plan anything.

We couldn't plan. We didn't have any job or money or anything. So there was nothing to plan with.

We were just almost something like the pillar of cloud, not day by day, but sort of month by month or year by year. What do we do next? But as I look back now, we see how God had planned it all. And led us step by step to where we are today in terms of fellowship, in terms of ministry, in terms of work, in terms of meeting our financial needs, everything.

Things we never even dreamed of. But how God knew that despite all our weaknesses, we were sincerely seeking to do His will. We didn't know all of them.

And when we started out, we didn't know what building the body of Christ was or overcoming sin was. We were just like any other married couple, but we desired to do God's will. That's what God sees.

I think of all of you, young married couples, desire to do the will of God with a great passion. And you'll find as you look back over your life 40 years from now, you'll see how God planned every step. It's a wonderful thing, because He knows the pitfalls coming up, problems going to come up, and He makes provision for them.

Everything. Sicknesses that may come, your family has made provision for them. So it's a wonderful thing if we pursue this goal of having my life more and more centered in Christ and God.

When we come together for a prayer meeting, our prayers, a few words, can really accomplish much. And also in your private prayer. I want to encourage all of you when you wake up in the morning to first think of Jesus and talk to Him.

And if you have nothing to say, pray in tongues. That's what I do. Before you get up from bed, give Him a few minutes.

Commune with Him and draw close to Him. Then get out of bed. It's the best way to begin the day.

And if you've got specific burdens on your heart, mention them. If your wife and you wake up together, pray together. If you wake up early, don't disturb her.

Let her sleep. You can pray together later. Very important to be considerate.

But if you begin the day like that with God and say, Lord, I want your name to be glorified in my life this day. It's a great way to begin our day. Gradually it becomes, you know, because in the first part of this year, I'd mentioned to some people that we need to give ourselves to prayer.

And what does that mean? It doesn't mean being on our knees, but thinking of the Lord more often during the day, with little half-minute prayers now and then, talking to Him and sensing His presence. And I've tried to practice what I've preached this year more than ever before, to recognize that I'm in God's presence and to use little 15-second prayers now and then during the day to think about the Lord in the middle of your work, whatever else you're doing. And in order to live this life, the most important thing is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

You cannot do this without being filled with the Holy Spirit. You know, you can sort of train yourself to practice the presence of God. It won't work.

You'll be using your mind to try and imagine, oh, Jesus is here. But it won't last. You'll forget all about it in a little while.

But it's not in my memory that I have Jesus. I have Him in my spirit. So I don't have to constantly remember He's here, He's here.

But in our spirit, if we can be baptized in the Holy Spirit, it means immersed, immersed in the Holy Spirit. That's what baptized in the Holy Spirit means. Every day of my life I pray, Lord, please cleanse me from all sin, hidden sin, everything, and fill me with the Holy Spirit today.

I want to live this day as a spiritual life. So I want to encourage all of you to do that. And so I would say that if we, now when we pray, also make that a burden of your prayer.

Pray that you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's good to pray along with others. I found sometimes when I'm praying alone, it's a little more difficult.

When you pray for that prayer along with others, it's, you know, the presence of the Lord is more when two or three are gathered together in my name. There I am in the midst. Then we can pray more freely.

Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the answer to everything, all the problems in my life. The answer to everything is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I really believe that. People may say, oh, that's a simplistic answer. You can say what you like.

But I've seen through the years, if you're filled with the Holy Spirit all the time, it makes all the difference in your life. It's like having the pillar of cloud, which is, the pillar of cloud is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. And they just did not move until the pillar of cloud moved.

They were absolutely secure, because the cloud was like a protection from the heat of the sun during the day, and it was like a fire protecting them from wild animals and all at night. It's a protection, day and night. The pillar of cloud, pillar of fire.

That's what the Holy Spirit is for us. So let's learn to honor Him, and seek, say, not just now, but always pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day. And ask Him to show you any place in your life where there's a leakage, which you have opened up some place where the power is leaking out.

Usually leakage comes through small little holes. Ask God to show you. Very, very important.

Ask God to show you if there's anything in your attitudes towards somebody, or some motive, or something you said, which you need to go and ask forgiveness from, from someone else. I mean, I'm so desperate about this that I say, Lord, I'll do anything if you will make sure I'm always filled with the Holy Spirit. Very important for me.

I don't care what else I lose. I don't want to lose the power of the Holy Spirit. So that's one thing we need to pray for.

And also, since you're a part of this church, just like you would pray for your own family, God enlarges our family by putting us in a church. And there are many benefits and blessings of being in this larger family. One is that there are other people who pray for us, care for us, and we have fellowship, which is a wonderful thing.

Fellowship with people of like mind. So, you need to pray that God will help you to have a little more interest in the matters that concern the family. You know, supposing you have a father who's completely irresponsible.

He doesn't care for bringing up the children. I mean, a wife would have a very tough time. Say, I wish my husband would take a little more responsibility for the children.

We ought to be together in this. Or he doesn't care about all the hard work she's doing in the kitchen or anything. That would be an irresponsible husband.

But in the same way, we can be irresponsible members of this church also, that we're not much concerned about. Others are doing everything. It's like saying, Oh, my wife is doing all that.

She's taking care of the kitchen, and she's taking care of the children, and she's taking care of everything, so I can be free. That's an irresponsible father. So, in the same way, you may have a very efficient wife who's doing all that, but it would make things much easier for her if you pitched in and helped a little bit, especially with the bringing up of children.

So, in the same way, there are some wonderful brothers in this church, amazing brothers and sisters, who do a tremendous job, and we see that particularly at conference time. I'm always amazed, not only I, people who come to visit us from outside are also amazed at how so many brothers take such responsibility that everything goes smoothly. But what you don't realize, which I saw especially in the last conference, is some people are overloaded.

It's like a wife who's overloaded, because you've got to check the children's studies, and do the cooking, and clean the house, and everything. The father can at least help with the children's studies. So, in the same way, there are brothers and sisters who can take some responsibility for some of the things that need to be done here.

You say, I don't know what to do. I'll tell you what you can do. Write on a slip of paper your name, and since many of you may have the same name, put your full name and address, and write there to the elders, this is what I can do.

Here is an area where I can help. It could be anything. And put it into that box.

You're volunteering to help in an area, and say, well, I'll have time one hour a week. I can devote for this. Or one hour a month, whatever you can.

I don't know how much you can, but a desire to be able to help the family in some way, instead of, as I said, being an irresponsible husband, or, I mean, we teach even our little children, I mean, small, five, six-year-olds, I mean, I've seen that with my grandchildren, taking the broom and sweeping. Small little children, we give them some job to do. So, all of us can do something.

We never say, neglect your family. We've always taught, Jesus first, your family second, ministry and church third. But, I never change that order.

So, I'm not saying you should neglect your family, or your children to do in the church, but so many young brothers and sisters here, who don't have any children, who can do something. Especially young brothers. And others, who can, in spite of your responsibilities, have a little bit of time to say, I can do something for

church.

That way, we are showing a sense of responsibility. I mean, that's the way God loves a cheerful giver. So, we don't force anybody to do anything here.

But, what a joy it is. I mean, isn't it a joy for you parents, if you suddenly see one of your children, small little children, cleaning some part of your house, without even your asking them. Boy, what a thrill that will bring to your heart.

Picking up some scrap from the floor and throwing it in the trash bin, instead of waiting for mummy to do it. That is the joy an elder brother here gets, when he sees someone doing something voluntarily. Because, as the church has grown, it's not just the physical aspect of it.

Spiritually, when you're concerned about somebody, and you seek to... I don't mean, you know, there are some people who like to go and visit people and teach them. The Bible says, don't be many teachers. Be helpers.

We had one or two cases like that, of people who grabbed the young people and said, OK, I'm going to instruct you. Who? People who come here just one or two years ago, who hardly know anything about Jesus, or the new and living way, imagining that they can instruct others. And it's usually people like that, who know nothing, who act as though they know everything.

We don't want such people. Such people, if they keep their mouth shut, that will be the way they can bless the church. But I'm talking about, you know, being concerned when you see a person in need, in some way, spiritual or physical or anything, you can at least mention that to the elders.

You know, I think this person is having some problem or some need. How will the elders know? Otherwise, I'll mention it to one of the deacons. Because all of you may know some people, which they never meet.

So if you know something, please tell them. Then we can do something to help them. You may not be able to help them yourself, but this is how we can be built as a family.

I'm just trying to explain various ways in which we don't just live in a commitment list, but are really committed to one another and care for one another and help one another. And if you find that someone has a grievance, you know, like I told you the other day, somebody wrote an anonymous letter, and I told you the first anonymous person was Satan, who came as a snake. I waited a long time for that anonymous person to acknowledge who he was.

He hasn't done it. So I've just handed it over for the Lord to deal with. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I've decided to hand him over to the hands of the living God and let him deal with him in whichever way. If he doesn't have any fear of God, if he tries to play the fool in this church, I say, God, you deal with him. And I believe God will.

But when a person has a grievance, sure, don't your children sometimes have grievances? Who do you want them to... Do you want your children to write an anonymous letter to you? Anonymous letter from your children, you can easily detect by the handwriting. We can't detect that, you see, particularly if it's by

email. And so, you're happy if they come to you and say, Hey mommy, this is not right.

You can explain to them why you did something. So if you find you have a grievance, go to the elders. They're not going to jump on you.

They'd be so happy that you came to them instead of being a gossip and going to the others and being a mouthpiece of Satan. So go to the elders. I guarantee you they will listen to you.

Go to one of the deacons. And if they can't handle it, the deacons will tell the elders. I'm trying to tell you how we can rebuild a true commitment, not a list, but a true commitment to this church.

And that's what we want to see. A family spirit. This is the great need in our midst.

And it's because we've had a sudden growth. You know, when we moved from that building to here three years ago, two and a half years ago, I thought, well, this is way out in the boondocks. Who's going to come over here? That itself will take care of our numbers.

But was I mistaken? It's exactly the opposite. And here are people coming all the way over here. Well Lord, they must be having some interest to take all the trouble to come here.

We don't want to disappoint them. But there are real problems. Imagine if you had a hundred children in your home.

Can you imagine what your condition would be as a father or mother? This is something of the situation that our elders are facing. So anything that you can do to help would be great. And make sure that you're really committed to the Lord Jesus first of all.

And committed to one another. And I've often said that we should not take advantage of one another. Very important.

I mean, in a home we make sure that an older person doesn't take advantage of the younger ones. And we want a fairness among our children. We want the same fairness here that nobody takes advantage of a weaker person.

Nobody goes and borrows money that's not returned. And nobody takes advantage of the poor. Boy, I'll tell you one thing.

I would not like to be near a person who is being judged on the final day because he or she took advantage of some poor person or a widow. I'd like to be a million miles away from that person on the day of judgment because it would be terrible. God is a God of those who is deadly against those who exploit others in any way.

So there must be absolutely no way in which you take advantage of others. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 2 and 3 we took advantage of nobody. We corrupted nobody.

We wronged nobody. It's a great testimony. We wronged nobody.

We corrupted nobody. We took advantage of nobody. But we served and helped as much as we can.

There are some brothers who are doing this wonderfully. Ancestors. We are praying that that number will increase and increase and increase.

It will be a real body then. You know like our human body. Every part is doing its job.

Some are more important than others but every part has got an important function. So if you are first of all committed to Jesus Christ then you are committed to this body. Not otherwise.

Just coming here you want to listen to Brother Zach counts for zero before God. I tell you it counts for zero. The fact that you like to listen to a good message.

Read Mark chapter 6. Herod liked to listen to John the Baptist. You think that Herod must be a spiritual man to listen to John the Baptist. No.

He cut off his head a few days later. It is only you know people like Pharisees are all boring and John was fiery. So naturally anybody would like to listen to him rather than boring Pharisees.

Herod liked to listen to John the Baptist. What does it prove? We don't have anybody like John the Baptist today but if you like to listen to a preacher it proves nothing about your own level. Are you committed to a body a family? In what measure are you committed? Are you seeking to if you are a new person you have such high thoughts about yourself that you can go around instructing all the other younger ones or do you say no I am newly here I don't understand everything that is being taught in CFC let me absorb that first and seek to live that before I teach others.

So these are some things that we can bear in mind. The second thing is our country. We have a big responsibility when God places us Acts 17 says God determined the boundaries of our habitation.

Acts 17.30. So that means God is the one who decided that you should be born in India or you should be living here at this time. I have no doubt about it. I am deeply thankful to God that I was not born in any other country.

Deeply thankful to God that I was born in India so that I could be a witness for Christ in India. Deeply thankful that I am born in this generation in the last hundred years so that I can minister to this generation and you should be thankful that you are born here so God wants you to be a witness and has allowed you to be in Bangalore and we have a responsibility to this country because of that. If he has placed us in this country the Bible says we must pray for those in authority and you know how if you read the papers you know that things are moving more and more towards not obviously anti-Christian but those who are wise to see will see it is moving very slowly, you can't do it suddenly moving slowly towards an anti-Christian direction.

These are matters which are coming in different ways religion coming more and more into little things that we have to do in our office we have to be very careful and wise like when people refuse to give for Ayudha Puja you don't have to be rude about it you can be very gracious and say I don't ask you to worship my God please don't ask me to worship yours if you are taking collection for widows or poor people or sick people I would be glad to contribute but I am a follower of Jesus Christ I am sorry I cannot give money it is against my religion to give money to something else so please don't force me to go against my religion we can say that in a gracious way I faced situations like that when I was in the Navy and I said ok, if they imprison me, they imprison me but I am not going to compromise my Christian conviction but those are the things that gave me a spiritual backbone when I was 22-23 years old it is good to have a spiritual backbone where you can stand erect there is a verse in Leviticus where the Lord said I called you out of Egypt to teach you to walk erect that is how we want to walk erect, upright and that is going to be more

and more difficult in India in the days to come and we have to be careful at the first movements in that direction we don't have to go and fight it but we have to pray that we will have wisdom when it begins to touch our children or touch our family or comes close to us in some way we need to pray in the church we can't say Lord destroy all this because when you go back to the first century God never destroyed the Roman Emperor with all their false gods Christians had to stand against false gods they had to say Jesus Christ is Lord and the magistrate would say Caesar is Lord and we let you go they say no Jesus Christ is Lord they burned them at the stake they haven't come to that place so there are little little things like this where we and our children will have to face in the days to come difficult days will come but one thing you can be sure God will be with you absolutely sure and one reason we pray is so that we can be strong Jesus said in Gethsemane pray that you don't fall in the time of temptation that's the meaning of that pray that you don't enter into temptation pray with me that you don't enter into temptation and he came back never asleep that's why Peter took out his sword and chopped off somebody's ear if he had prayed for that one hour I'm sure he would not have taken out his sword so you see what Jesus said was true he fell in the time of temptation and they all ran away then he denied the Lord but Jesus had warned them earlier pray so that you'll be strong so the presence of Jesus will be more real to you when that temptation comes than the temptation so I'm really trying to give you an introduction to your permanent prayer life but we'll spend a little time now in prayer

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