

## The Measure of Our Prayers

1 Thessalonians 5:17, Matthew 21:13, Hebrews 13:3, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Matthew 6:6

### **Slide 1**

As we continue our sermon series, *How God Measures Our Life*, one of the things God will surely measure is our prayer life.

Prayer is so powerful that it can reach the whole world and the fruit it produces will last forever.

In fact, one day in eternity God will show us the impact our prayers had, or could have had, if we had only prayed.

Prayer is much like sowing and reaping. If you sow nothing, you reap nothing, but the more you sow, the more you reap.

When you pray, you're sowing for eternity, and one day God will show you the eternal fruit your prayers produced.

This is why Paul instructs us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "*pray continually*." We're to pray without ceasing.

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So, not only is it God's will that we pray, but it's God's desire that we pray without ceasing.

What does that mean, "*to pray continually*?" It means we're to live with an attitude of prayer that's constantly thinking upon God and His Word.

To pray without ceasing is an investment of our time in prayer. Many Christians have bought into the idea that prayer's only for super saints, but that's not true.

The Bible clearly teaches that every believer has the God given ability to pray.

Our prayers are so important that one day in heaven God will pull back the curtain and show us the impact our investment to pray had on eternity.

One of the great truths many Christians miss is to whom do we pray.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:6, *“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

We’re to pray to our Father in heaven. Who’s our Father in heaven? Our Father in heaven is the almighty God of heaven and earth Who set the earth in its place.

He’s all-powerful and all-knowing. He holds the stars in His hand and calls each of them by name.

He’s the mighty God Who’s from everlasting to everlasting and yet, as mighty as He is, God cannot answer a prayer that hasn’t been prayed.

So, how important is it to pray? Consider that just hours before His trial and crucifixion, out of all that He could have said and done, Jesus chose to spend His final hours in prayer.

Every major decision in Jesus’ life was clothed with prayer. The point is, if Jesus, the eternal Son of God, believed prayer was absolutely necessary, how much more should you and I pray?

Look at this way... Not everyone is called to be a pastor, a Sunday School teacher, or a missionary, but every believer is called to pray.

More than at any time in history, our society is in desperate need of prayer. God's divine timetable for the ages is racing toward great prophetic events.

The signs of the tribulation and of Christ's return are upon us and, as we watch the end of days unfold before our eyes, it's vital that we pray and be a people of prayer.

Again, God cannot answer a prayer that hasn't been prayed.

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When it comes to prayer, you have two choices. You either choose to pray, or you choose not to pray. The decision is yours to make.

Recall Matthew 6:6 I just read to you, Jesus said, "*When you pray...*" not if you pray, or if you get around to pray, but when you pray.

It's God's divine will that you pray and live a life of prayer. To achieve greatness in prayer, you first must pray.

Your decision to pray, or not to pray, is one of the greatest decisions of your life. Prayer is so important and holds such great potential, that your failure to pray will have serious eternal consequences.

Why? Because your prayers are eternal. They have an impact on eternity. However, God won't force you to pray. You either choose to pray, or you choose not to pray.

I know that prayer isn't natural. It takes practice. It takes persistence. It takes faith to believe that when nothing seems to be happening, that God is still working on your behalf.

I've found that when I pray, there are times when God seems far away, and yet, by faith, I believe He's with me. It's God's desire that we pray.

The question is, are you praying? Remember, God can't answer a prayer that isn't prayed.

The greatest need of our world is for God's people to give themselves to prayer. There will come a day when Jesus looks into our heart and measures our lives by our prayers.

He'll measure how we prayed for others and for the advancement of His kingdom. He'll measure how we prayed in faith and prayed for His will to be done.

Prayer is so powerful that it allows us to reach every nation on earth. Can you imagine what it'll be like to see people in heaven whose lives were touched because of our prayers?

Can you imagine, at testimony time in heaven, the people who'll rise and thank God for our prayers on their behalf?

When God measures our prayers, I picture Him measuring them by their width, their depth, their height, and their length.

You may not have ever heard that before, so let's take a few minutes to help you understand what that means.

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First, how wide are your prayers? Do your prayers go beyond your wants and needs? Are your prayers wide enough to include prayer for other churches and their pastors?

Are your prayers wide enough to pray for a world that's racing toward judgment? Are your prayers wide enough to intercede for the nations to know Christ?

In Matthew 21:13, Jesus said, "*My house will be called a house of prayer.*"

Are your prayers wide enough to intercede for our brothers and sisters in Christ who're being persecuted and killed for their love of Jesus?

Hebrews 13:3, *“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”*

So, as you pray, make sure your prayers are wide enough to include the whole world and for all that God gives you to pray.

Second, measure your prayers by the depth of your burden for those whom God has placed on your heart.

Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were so burdened they cried out to God on Israel's behalf.

When Jesus prayed for Jerusalem, He wept with great anguish. May God give us a heart like Jesus to weep for those lost and without Christ.

David Brainerd faithfully prayed for years that his father-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, would be saved.

Jonathan Edwards was not only saved, but he became one of America's greatest evangelists, and through his preaching and writings, tens of thousands have come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

May God trust us enough to give us a burden, because He knows the depth of our prayers.

Third, measure your prayer life by the height of your prayers that truly touch heaven.

The prayers of Daniel so touched heaven that God sent the angel Gabriel to assure Daniel that his prayers had been heard. In Acts 10 God sent an angel to assure Cornelius that his prayers were heard.

Can you imagine the angels knowing you as one of those whose prayers are often heard in the throne room of glory?

I hope that when I stand before the Lord that He'll know me as one of His who lived a life of prayer.

I realize that none of us would consider ourselves to be in the same class as Daniel, but the point is, God wants to hear our prayers. He wants our prayers to reach heaven.

The big question is, how can our prayers reach the height of heaven? How is it possible for them to reach the throne room of the King? The answer is found in three things.

First, we pray by faith. God hears those who pray in faith and believe by faith. Second, and very importantly, when we pray, we must pray in the Name of Jesus, whose name is above all names.

Only in the name of Jesus can our prayers boldly reach the throne room of the King.

When you pray in the name of Jesus for others, and for the nations of the world, you are reaching the heights of heaven, to the very throne of our eternal King.

Third, you reach the height of heaven when you remember His glory in prayer.

1 Corinthians 10:31, *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*

When you give God glory in the name of Jesus, your prayers will reach the height of heaven, into the very throne room of God. He loves it when His children remember to give Him glory.

So, when you pray, make sure you're praying in faith; that you give God all the glory and praise, and that you pray in the name of Jesus.

Because, when you do, your prayers will reach the highest point of heaven, the throne room of the eternal King.

Fourth, God will measure your prayers by their length. When I say God will measure our prayers by their length, I'm not talking about how long you pray. I'm talking about the eternal results of your prayers that will never end.

For example, your prayer of faith on behalf of others for God's kingdom will live on and on for all eternity. Any prayer from a humble heart for the salvation of souls is a prayer that lives on for all eternity.

One day in eternity God will show us how the fruit of our prayers for others will continue for all eternity, resulting in great eternal rewards.

You can't reap unless you sow and God can't answer a prayer that hasn't been prayed.

Let's look at the length of our prayers from another angle. I know there are those who can pray for hours. I personally don't know how they do it.

I don't have that kind of gift, but I can pray, and I believe by faith that my prayers, as small as they are, can impact eternity.

My point is, it's not about how long you pray, but that you DO pray. For example, suppose that you only pray five minutes a day.

5 minutes x 7 days = 35 minutes, which means if you pray for five minutes a day for seven days, the length of your prayer on someone's behalf is now 35 minutes.

If you pray five minutes a day for 365 days over the course of the year, that equals 1,825 minutes which is over 30 hours of prayer over the year.

You may not be able to pray for hours every day, but you can pray a little every day, and over time, the length of your prayers added with your burden to pray, can have a powerful impact on eternity.

Every Christian can add to the width, depth, height, and length of their prayers by being consistent to pray a little every day.

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So, how do we begin to pray? The first step to developing a prayer life that will impact eternity is to have a plan, and that plan begins with a decision to pray. Only you can decide to pray. God will not force you.

Second, in choosing to pray, you must have a plan. Listen again to Matthew 6:6, *"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

Notice the progression. Go into your room, shut your door, and pray to the Father. That's a plan. If you desire to fulfill your God given purpose to pray, then it's imperative that you have a plan.

Third, in your plan, make time to pray. Prayer takes time; it takes effort; it takes discipline, but prayer that brings eternal results is worth our every effort.

You can pray anytime you wish but find a way that works best for you. If you desire to impact eternity for God's glory, then I encourage you to pray, and make time to pray.

Fourth, and this is very important; ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to pray. If you make time to pray and ask God to teach you to pray, I promise you that He will.

Fifth, when you pray, believe that God will answer. You must believe that. Sometimes, the answers seem very slow in coming, but don't give up praying.

There are some things I've been praying over for many years, and I believe that one day, in His time, those prayers will be answered.

So, in Jesus' name, pray, and continue to pray. Then leave the results in God's hand.

Sixth, there's one final point and this an absolute must. When God answers your prayer, no matter what it is, or how small it is, stop whatever you are doing, and immediately give God all the glory and thanks.

God loves it when we remember to give Him glory and thanks.

## **Slide 6**

### Conclusion

So, in closing, God's calling all of us to a life of prayer, but it's your decision.

Remember, when you measure your life for prayer:

- Measure it by the number of unsaved souls you pray for.
- Measure it by the number of pastors and ministries you pray for.
- Measure it by the number of nations God gives you to pray for.

- Measure your life by praying for our brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution and imprisonment for their faith. Pray for those who have left behind the comforts of this world to travel to the darkest parts of the world and bring the good news of God's love.
- Measure your life to the extent that you make the time to pray.
- Measure your life by the width of your prayers, by the depth of your prayers, by the height of your prayers, and by the length of your prayers.
- Measure your life with a heart that so loves God, that you desire to be with Him in prayer.

May the measure of what you sow in prayer, reap the great rewards of heaven that last forever. God cannot answer a prayer that isn't prayed.