

The Power of A Praying Life

As Presented by Lisa Bishop

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Day One

Have you ever longed for something—prayed fervently for something you wanted with all of your heart and soul? Maybe you are single and you have prayed for a spouse. Or you are married and have prayed for a child. Perhaps you have prayed for a specific job, a raise, or a promotion. Sometimes we see God answer our prayers in a way we desire, other times he answers in a way that we did not expect and is not in alignment with what we hoped for. Maybe you are in a period of waiting and wondering if and when God will come through.

Sometimes we ask God for something and he answers with a “no,” “yes,” or a “not yet.” It is in the times of no or not yet that our faith can be stretched. And it is also in these times where it can be super easy to miss the blessing and provision that is in front of us because we are so fixed on the outcome we want.

When I think of a prayer of longing, it reminds me of Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel. Hannah was grieving over a difficult situation in her life. She desperately desired a son but was unable to bear children so she went before the Lord and poured her heart out before him. First Samuel 1:10 tells us, “Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept many tears.” Hannah declares, “I am a woman with a broken heart.... I’ve been pouring out my heart before the Lord... I am praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment” (1 Samuel 1:10,15-16 CSB). Hannah is honest about the pain of her unmet longing.

What is a longing of your heart that has not been met in the way or in the timing that you want? It can be really hard to trust God to give us what is best when a deep desire of our heart is delayed. Hannah was in a heartbroken place and she poured her heart out to God and God heard her.

We don’t like hard places, but God uses difficult places to draw you into a deeper relationship with him. He wants you to come to him with your hurts, heartache, bitterness, and resentment. God already knows what’s on your mind and heart but praying helps you to work through and process your pain when you verbalize and give words to your emotions, allowing the vulnerability and depth of your heart to cry out to him.

When you are suffering from hardships, difficulties, and unmet longings, God is working in ways you cannot see. It may not turn out like you had hoped but God is at work and he will strengthen you to walk by faith and trust when you pour your heart out to him.

Day Two

The book of Psalms has often been called a book of prayer and it is rich with examples of the Psalmists’ communication with God. As a follower of Jesus, you have a relationship with God that enables you to have rich spiritual communication with him. You have the privilege of talking to God, of pouring out your heart to him, and also hearing and listening to him by the power of his Holy Spirit.

We see this pouring out in prayer in Psalm 25, a Psalm of David. David was a king of Israel and referred to as a man after God's own heart. Throughout Psalms we see him crying out to God as he is repeatedly pursued by his enemies, lamenting of his sin, and praying in his times of deepest struggle and need. David gives us an honest look into what it sounds like to come before God in times of trouble. In this Psalm we hear the cries of his heart as he seeks counsel from the Lord and confesses his utter dependence on him.

Where do you turn when you feel desperate? Who or what do you depend on in times of trouble? Maybe you are in a tough season in your marriage, your singleness, your health, your job. Perhaps a co-worker has talked poorly about you and given you a bad reputation or you are out of work and don't know what is next and you desperately need guidance. David reminds us where to keep our focus.

"Lord, I turn to you. My God, I trust in you. Do not let me be disgraced; do not let my enemies gloat over me. No one who waits for you will be disgraced; those who act treacherously without cause will be disgraced. Make your ways known to me, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me; for you are the God of my salvation; I wait for you all day long. Remember Lord, your compassion and your faithful love, for they have existed from antiquity." (Psalm 25:1-6 HCSB).

You hear the longing, humility, and gratitude in David's words. He begins this prayer by acknowledging God and declaring his trust in him and his character. God is trustworthy no matter what difficulties he is facing. He courageously asks God for what he needs. He desperately desires to hear from God, to know his ways and to be guided in truth. He waits on the Lord as long as it takes until he hears his voice and his direction.

I think it can be easy to forget the goodness of God. Or to pray and get impatient in the waiting. Have you forgotten the goodness of God in your time of desperation? Are you impatient as you wait on him? Someone once said, God is never late, he is rarely early, but he is always on time. Pour your heart out to him, praise him, trust him. He knows just what you need.

Day Three

When was the last time you sat before the Lord and thanked him? Really thanked him—expressing your heartfelt gratitude to Jesus?

Here is another Psalm of David. This one gives us a rich example of what it looks like to pour out our hearts in thanksgiving to God.

King David had many highs and lows in his life. David experienced hardship, loss, suffering, fear, anger, worry, and despair. In the midst of being hunted down by his enemies, we see a man who passionately pursued God as his faith was being purified. Psalm 138 are the words of a man faithful to God and grateful to him in all seasons of life.

Let this be your prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.

I will give you thanks with all my heart;

I will sing your praise before the heavenly beings.

I will bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your constant love and truth.

You have exalted your name and your promise above everything else.

On the day I called, you answered me;

You increased strength within me. If I walk into the thick of danger, you will preserve my life from the anger of my enemies.

You will extend your hand; Your right hand will save me.

The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me. Lord, your love is eternal; do not abandon the work of your hands (Psalm 138:1-8 HCSB).

Prayer is an authentic outpouring of our thoughts and emotions to a holy God who hears us; a gateway to intimacy with God as we humbly come before him acknowledging his goodness and faithfulness.

It can be easy to thank God when things in life are going according to your plan. But do you praise him when it feels like your life has taken a detour or dreams are delayed? Do you express gratitude in times of trouble because you know God's character? Do you thank him that he will never leave you nor forsake you and that he is with you in the middle of life's storms?

Isaiah 26:3 says, "You will keep the mind that is dependent on you in perfect peace, for it is trusting in you."

Praise is not something conditional based on our circumstances; praise exposes the condition of our hearts. How will you spend time pouring out your heart to God in gratitude this week? He is worthy of your praise.

Day Four

A well-known prayer from the apostle Paul is a rich example of the power of intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer is the privilege of petitioning God on the behalf of others. We are not concerned with our needs but with the needs of others.

I love praying for people, and when someone tells me they are praying for me I feel loved, seen, and deeply cared for. There have been seasons in my life where the burdens have felt very heavy. I have been anxious, worried, and desperately needing direction and comfort from God. In moments of hardship, inexplicably waves of peace and comfort would come over me and I would feel a sense of "groundedness." Then I would find out that a friend was praying for me. The prayers of my friends have sustained me and encouraged me in times of difficulty.

You can easily pray for the needs of others. For their health, job, financial issues, marital problems, broken relationships, dreams, desires, and unmet longings. And one of the greatest things you can pray for is their spiritual growth and an increasing love for, trust, and faith in Jesus; along with a growing knowledge of his love for them and his power at work in their lives.

In Ephesians Paul prayed a powerful prayer for believers and one that we can pray as well:

"I pray that out of his glorious riches Christ may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:16-21).

One of the greatest gifts we can give people is the gift of praying for them. Who is someone you can intercede for in prayer? Who is someone you can go to battle for, petitioning God on their behalf? Write their name in your journal and commit to praying for them. See how God works in you and how he meets them as you are faithful in prayer.

Day Five

Are you desiring transformation in your life? Spiritual renewal and growth in your walk as a follower of Jesus?

This is one of my favorite prayers from Psalm 139:

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24).*

I love this prayer of David. He invites God to investigate his life, to put his life and actions to the test. He asks God to know his every thought, examining not just his outward conduct, but what he thinks about.

If God were to examine your thoughts, what would he find? What passes through your mind; what occupies your imagination and memory; what thoughts do you dwell on? Anxious thoughts? Fearful thoughts? Self-defeating thoughts? Sinful thoughts? Most of us let our thoughts run wild when God tells us to hold our thoughts captive to him. Which essentially means, our thoughts should align with God's thoughts. Philippians 4:8 gives us guidance on the thoughts to entertain: whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise—dwell on these things. The mind is super powerful. It has been said that the directions of your thoughts determine the direction of your life. And David gives God an open invitation to try his thoughts to ultimately see if they stand the godly test.

David invites God to test him. You can hear the desire in David's words. He wants his life to reflect that of a man following hard after him. To rid himself of anything that is offensive to God and walk in integrity as a man after God's heart. And if you know the story of David you know he did not live a perfect life, and neither do we. If we are honest, there are parts of our lives that we let God into and other parts that have a "do not disturb" sign.

Yet here is David, inviting God into every nook and cranny of his life because his ultimate desire was to live a life fully pleasing to God. That is the kind of life that will ultimately bring us the greatest joy and fulfillment.

If you want to experience transformation in your life and a greater intimacy with God, invite the Holy Spirit to lovingly point out things in your life that are hindering you from living life to the fullest in Jesus, one that honors and pleases him.

When you do you will be led not in the way of sin and evil but in the way of godliness and everlasting life in Christ.