

Prayer and Work
Presented by Lauren Stibgen
Air Dates: November 13-17, 2023

Day One

What do prayer and work have in common? For many years I separated my faith life from my work life. God was held for Sundays or my off hours, and prayer seemed like a bedtime activity. That was until I was convicted about prayer after completing a bible study on Elijah. Elijah only had what the Lord provided him.

In just the few chapters of 1 Kings 17-19, we see how Elijah draws near to the Lord and must rely upon Him solely. We first see Elijah cry out to the Lord in a bold prayer for the life of the widow's son. His prayer is answered.

"The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived." (1 Kings 17:22).

His second bold prayer comes in Chapter 18 verses 36-37. In his repeating plea, "Answer me, O Lord, answer me..." we see that Elijah implores God to show that he is the Lord God by consuming a soaking wet offering with fire.

In the book of James verse 5:17-18 we note that Elijah "was a man with a nature like ours", and that he "prayed fervently". How could changing my outlook on prayer change my work? I realized that Elijah's "work" was from the Lord, and that mine was too. Prayer needed to be part of my work.

On a red eye flight back to Chicago I scheduled my first prayer meeting for working women: Wednesday, lunch hour. It sounded good—mid week—get me through. I knew that I needed to pray for others and wanted others to pray for me. Would anyone show up?

I prayed on that flight that, even if one woman came in need of prayer, that my heart would be filled with joy. Not just one, but four women joined, and we prayed. We prayed for opportunities, for difficult conversations and for feelings of hurt and rejection. For the last year, these midweek calls have become a part of my work, as I pray for the many needs and recount the answers to prayer and God's goodness.

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Ephesians 6:18).

We will continue to look at different ways to pray for your work, and how it will transform you, and bring you closer to God.

Day Two

Do words get in the way? Is there a right way to pray? One of the things I have found from praying for others and with others is that there are many people who don't know where to start when it comes to prayer. The good news is God has provided wonderful encouragement throughout the scriptures that can guide us.

So many acronyms are offered to help us “model” our words to the Lord. A dose of praise and reverence, some repentance, and often a request. But does it all need to flow together and be in the same pattern each time? It almost seems like a recipe.

Recently I was joined by a friend and her husband for dinner. We enjoyed the meal, and a few weeks later, she asked me for my recipe because they had enjoyed the meal. I had to stop and think—I had no formal recipe for how I made this dish. Sometimes I weave a few different ideas together from what I find to make my own version. Like a recipe, prayer can be your own version.

Sometimes when I simply don’t know what to pray for, I am encouraged that in Romans 8:26-27 I know that the Spirit helps us in our weakness. When we don’t know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit will intercede for us with groanings too deep for words.

God doesn’t expect our prayers to be the same. He knows that the world will be bringing us different joys and different trials. Be encouraged that God wants ALL your requests (Philippians 4:7).

One of the ways I have challenged myself in prayer is to better understand the names of God in the bible. It has opened my prayer life. God is a compassionate God. He is a God with care and kindness. In Exodus 34:6, the Lord passes in front of Moses proclaiming, “the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”

God is also my Helper. In both the Psalms and Hebrews 13:6 we see that “the Lord is my helper; I will not fear”.

Thinking of God’s compassion and as my helper shapes my prayers differently. I know God sees my weakness and has mercy on me, and I can pray for his help during the day.

Sometimes, I simply ask God to carry my burden. “Lord, can you carry this for me? I need your help.” In Matthew 6:8, I am reminded, He already knows what I need, and I don’t need to be specific.

But I also know that God is Elohim—Mighty Creator. He is in all things, and I go to him with exceeding humility.

Day Three

Bold. Hungry. Looking for the next promotion. Achievement. How does the Lord call us to work? Is the title so important? Today we will explore how humility in prayer can help us shape ourselves into a humble worker for the Lord.

Angry. Confused. The new woman that was hired was occupying the office and promotion she deserved. She resigned over a title and was determined to achieve this at another company until God wove humility into her heart as a result of prayer.

Comparison robs us of humility, and often our drive for achievement places comparison smack in our face. Consider God’s word in Luke 18 about the two men who go up to the temple to pray. One, a Pharisee, “stood by himself” and compared himself to “other people” and spoke of his deeds to the Lord. The tax collector, on the other hand, “stood at a distance” with a lowly posture and asked God for mercy”. We learn that “all those that exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Humility itself is a foundation for prayer. It opens our heart to be clear of our position of reverence with the Almighty God. Your humble posture is opening your heart to allow God to change you. The

beautiful part about being humble, is the expectation that we can have that God promises to exalt us and give us riches and honor of life.

The promise is consistent throughout God's word. In addition to the verses above in Luke, James 4:10 states, "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you." Proverbs, 22:4 "The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor of life."

The exaltation may not be the title you expect, or the promotion you want, but we know He is working for our good. Remember, God can do far more abundantly than all we ask or think in the power of Jesus Christ our Lord (Ephesians 4:29).

How can you humble yourself in prayer with the Lord? Is your posture keeping you from the beautiful expectation of exaltation, riches and honor?

Day Four

Some days, I just feel alone. Living out your faith at work can sometimes seem difficult, especially if you don't have someone to share it with. One of the ways I have found that I can live out my faith at work, is to pray for the lost.

"Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38).

It occurs to me that one of the reasons I often feel alone at work is because I look at my "labor" or "work" incorrectly. As we can see in this verse from Matthew, the laborers are few. Few. As I consider my true work, it really isn't about what I am doing at my desk.

I am called to work hard at everything to bring glory to the Lord, but my focus should be on the harvest. Knowing I am one of the few in labor for His kingdom, I also need to be in prayer for how others see me at work. How am I fulfilling the greatest commandment to love the Lord my God with all of my heart, soul and mind, and to love my neighbor as myself? I need to start with thinking of my superiors, colleagues, and subordinates as my neighbors.

The word love sounds deep for some workplaces, but I want to challenge you that one of the ways you can love at work, without anyone knowing is to pray for those around you. Maybe you start praying for someone in need in secret, but eventually ask if you can pray for them. Simply knowing you are praying can give someone comfort—even if they don't have faith like you do.

And don't worry about offending someone. I have found that they will let you know if they don't want prayer...yes, I have had someone tell me NOT to pray.

Praying for others is one way to show others the love of Christ, but we can also pray for how we reflect Christ and attract others. 2 Corinthians 4:6 tells us that light shall shine out of darkness...give light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Pray for your words. This may seem simple, but gossip and unkindness find their way into the workplace quickly. You can pray that "no corrupting talk comes from your mouth, but only what is good for building up" (Ephesians 4:29).

Pray for your excellence. Often, we wake up and don't know how we will show up to work. Maybe it is a project we don't love, or a deadline that is causing stress.

Pray for God to send someone to you—to send you the lost. I have made this prayer a constant, and God has shown up in a bold way. More than one woman has hopped on a prayer call, and remarked, that they joined not knowing why, or having found the call by happenstance.

Jesus tells us that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the ninety-nine righteous persons who need repentance (Luke 15:7).

More joy in heaven. Now this is something to pray for!

Heavenly Father, give us hearts to seek the lost at work, and to reflect your glorious light that others know your glory in Christ Jesus!

Day Five

As I sit here, I must admit I have the Sunday Scaries. Those thoughts leading into a new work week, wondering how Monday will launch. Even if you don't work a traditional Monday-Friday, I am sure you know the feeling. Even if you find yourself in a season where you are between jobs, stress can steal your peace.

The stress we experience as working women is arguably only sometimes about work. Some of us are the main breadwinner, perhaps facing single motherhood, illness of a spouse or loved one, needs for childcare, needs to care for an aging parent, or even mounting household issues. The truth is, we carry all this around, on top of the to do list we face waking up to another Monday.

Jesus knew what we faced in the world. He even acknowledges this in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you." Not as the world—if our Lord Jesus is telling us the world will not bring peace, we should not expect it but for in seeking him.

The good news is that Jesus tells us to come to him and rest (Matthew 11:28). I have found that one of the best ways to do that is through prayer.

Philippians 4:6-7 tells us:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Scripture shows us that some many of those closest to the Lord cried out to him in distress. David cries out to the Lord, Job in his distress is in constant prayer, and perhaps our greatest example of crying out to the Lord is Jesus himself. When the mighty didn't have peace, they cried to the Lord for comfort.