

“A Time to Pray” – Prayer for BOCF

Intro

DVD clip – *Bruce Almighty*

Does our prayer life sometimes feel like that of Bruce’s?

Do we feel we are talking to a brick wall?

Do MY prayers actually work?

Do our prayers really make a difference?

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Gen 4:26 says *“To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.”*

This is the first time prayer is mentioned in the Bible. Adam & Seth knew their people were in trouble and began calling out to God.

Richard Foster said in his book, *Celebration of Discipline*: *“To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us.*

Is this prayer? **Cat Story** – *After his cat got stuck up a tree, a vicar mounted a rescue operation. He climbed a ladder, tied one end of rope to the narrow trunk, and the other end to the tow bar of his car. He gently drove forward and the inevitable occurred...the rope snapped! Catapulting the cat into the sky.*

No more was heard of the cat. A few weeks later the vicar went to visit a member of his church, a young mum and her little boy Johnny. In her front room, lying on the rug, was the vicar’s cat! “How did you get such a lovely cat?” the vicar asked, with a thinly disguised innocence.

“You’ll never believe it” replied the mother. “My little Johnny’s been asking for a cat for months. In the end I got so tired of it I told him to come out in the garden where I was hanging out the washing. I told him the only thing to do was to pray. So we put our hands together and looked to the heavens. “Dear Jesus” we prayed, “please send us a pussy cat”. And vicar, you’ll never guess what happened next...”

If only prayer was like that.

Prayer to Christian’s is like breathing to a new born baby. Vital!

Prayer is a gift from God, **we** can talk to the Creator.

We love talking because God loves talking. We are made in His image. He loves to **communicate**

Deut 4:7 says *“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is (near) to us, whenever we call upon him?”*

James 4:8 *“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”*

We have a God who is always there & always wanting to have a conversation. HE LISTENS:

2 Kings 20:5 says *“Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you.”*

Prayer reconnects us to God. Without it we dry up. We lose our passion & vision. Eg...

Jesus says in **John 15:5** *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing”*. **That’s a promise!! We need to hold onto these.**

HOW DO WE PRAY?

We close our eyes, fold our hands, get on our knees etc...Ha ha!

We pray with:

1. Honesty – God is big enough to handle our feelings.

Ps 5:1-3 *“A Psalm of David. Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.”* Expectancy.

2. Confidence – We must know God will answer all prayers in accordance with His will. Otherwise what’s the point!!

1 John 5:14-15 *“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”*

3. Childishness – **Richard Foster** says again *“Imagination often opens the door to faith...children instantly understand these things...I was once called to a home to pray for a seriously ill baby girl. Her 4 year old brother was in the room, and so I told him I needed his help to pray for his baby sister. He was delighted, and so was I since I know that children can pray with unusual effectiveness. He climbed up into the chair beside me. “let’s play a game” I said. “Since we know that Jesus is always with us, let’s imagine that he is sitting over in the chair across from us. He is*

waiting patiently for us to centre our attention on Him. When we see him, we start thinking more about His love than how sick Julie is. He smiles, gets up and comes over to us. Then let's both put our hands on top of Julie, and when we do Jesus will put his hands on ours...Let's watch the healing power of Christ fight with the bad germs until they are all gone, Okay?" Seriously, the little one nodded. Together we prayed in this child like way and then thanked the Lord that what we had prayed was the way it was going to be. Now, I do not know exactly what happened, nor how it was accomplished, but I do know that the next morning Julie was perfectly well.

4. Persistence – Sometimes we pray but do not see results & we give up. We cannot give up because the timing may be wrong.

Jesus said in Luke 11:5-10:

"Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything!' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his shamelessness he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

Romans 12:12 says “*Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer*”. Are we constant in prayer as a church?

5. Godly Lives – Husbands listen...! The apostle Peter said “*Likewise, husband's, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered*”. **1 Peter 3:7.** Transparency.

James 5:16 says “*The prayer of a righteous man is power and effective*”. Are we not covered with the breastplate of righteousness?

A few practical points:

- Find a quiet space
- Use the Word
- Make Time (i.e. Mornings before work.)

WHY DO WE PRAY? – this is the main point

- We live in a society going down-hill.
- We have eliminated God from our country and we need help.
- 2 weeks ago, 19 year-old **Oliver King-Onzila** became the 26th teenager to be murdered in London this year.
- Of the 50,309,000 people living in England, 3,166,200 usually attend church on a Sunday; regular churchgoers therefore amount to 6.3% of the total population. (*English Church Census 2005*).
- 71% say “we are Christian”!?

Why not pray? What else can we do or where should we start?

Richard Foster says *“In our efforts to pray it is easy for us to be defeated right at the outset because we have been taught that everything in the universe is already set, and so things cannot be changed. And if things cannot be changed, why pray? We may gloomily feel this way, **PAUSE (do we?)** but the Bible does not teach that. The Bible pray-ers prayed as if their prayers could and would make an objective difference. The apostle Paul gladly announces that we are “co-labourers with God”; that is, we are working with God to determine the outcome of events (1 Cor 3:9)... This comes as a genuine liberation to many of us, but it also sets tremendous responsibility before us. We are working with God to determine the future.*

Here are some examples of people who believed this:

1. **Azuza Street** – 1903 was the “official” birth of Pentecostalism where people of all colours in Los Angeles began speaking in tongues and worshipping God i.e Revival. They had been praying for 3 years 24/7!!
2. **Reading Boiler Room** – After only 2 weeks of 24/7 prayer and 3 years of working with kids in the area... *“we had been open maybe a couple of weeks. A few people are praying, a few people chatting. Malc and Penny are looking after the building. Half an hour later 100 young people are there, 30 outside drinking. A stereo outside is blasting Marilyn Manson... Tons of young people inside chilling out. I remember the rather frantic call to come in and help. God had brought together the young people who hung out in the Forbury Gardens Park nearby the Boiler Room. Apparently a local policeman had suggested they hang out in our building...it makes sense, I guess.”* (Punk Monk)
3. **Evening Standard 23/11/99** – *“Heart attack patients who are prayed for appear to recover faster than those who aren’t. At the Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City, 500 patients admitted*

with heart attacks were allotted people to secretly pray for them, a further 500 were used as a control. Those in prayer groups had a significantly better recovery, being 11 per cent better off in terms of symptoms and test results”.

- 4. Peter Richley** - *In 1830, Peter Richley survived despite a series of strange and harrowing events. The ship he was travelling on capsized. He was rescued but, by some strange twist of circumstance, the ship that rescued him also sank. He was rescued again but, this third ship sank too. He was rescued for a third time. Nevertheless, the fourth ship also sank soon afterwards. Unbelievably, he was rescued for a fourth time, but the fifth ship sank too. It would have been laughable if it hadn't been so serious. By this time, Richley must have been floating confident that somehow God would not let him die. And sure enough, as if on cue, another ship came along and rescued him. This ocean liner, The City of Leeds, was bound from England to Australia and was travelling in the same sea lane as the other ships Peter Richley had been on. The crew hoisted Peter aboard and provided him with dry clothing. The ship's doctor also examined him and pronounced him fit. But then he made an unusual request. "There's a woman on board who booked a passage to Australia," the doctor explained. "She's looking for her son who disappeared years ago. She's dying and she's asking to see him. She knows everybody on board and since you're the only newcomer, would you pretend to be her son?" Peter agreed – after all, his life had now been saved for the fifth time, so why shouldn't he feel amenable to any request? He followed the doctor below deck and entered the woman's cabin. She was obviously suffering as she lay on her cabin bed. Deliriously, she was crying out. "Please, God! Let me see my son before I die. I must see my son!" The ship's doctor gently pushed the young man towards the bed. Soon, however, Peter Richley started to sob because he suddenly realised why he hadn't been allowed to die. Here was the lifeline that had kept him from drowning five times. For lying on that bed was none other than Sarah Richley - who had prayed for ten years to be reconciled to her son, Peter. The ship's doctor stood in amazement as the young man fell down by the bed and embraced the sick woman. "I'm here, Mother! I'm here. It's me!" Within days the fever had subsided and his mother woke up to find an answered prayer sitting on the edge of her bed.*
- 5. Apple Tree** – *For over a year we have been praying. We have been singing and preaching. In over a year the Lord has completely changed their spirits. They recognize us, sing with us and even asked to be prayed for. God wants to move through us!!*

The Lord is truly calling us as a church to pray regularly together!!

If there's one thing we are to do it is to PRAY.

Look at Act 2:42 *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

Do we really pray as a church together?

God is calling us to reach Burnt Oak.

We already do many "things" but we need to PRAY.

Leonard Ravenhill wrote a book called *Why Revival Tarries*. He says:

"Prayer is profoundly simple and simple profound"

"No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying"

"We have many organisers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few pray-ers; many singers; few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers, many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors, many writers, but few fighters. Failing here we fail everywhere."

All God is calling us to do is to pray. Its that simple!!

Out of that come worship, evangelism, study, compassion and care.

God called me 5 years ago to take the gospel to Burnt Oak. We have seen trickles. God has told me He needs us to pray!!

Did you know that: We pray at the prayer meeting for people to come to the prayer meeting!

Also that at least 1 person from each house hold in Jericho will come to know the Lord this year!

Let's all know make a commitment to come to the Tuesday Prayer meeting. Every week. God is going to move.

2 Chronicles 7:14-15 *"if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. **Now** will my eyes be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place."*

It is simple, BOCF MUST PRAY TOGETHER IF WE ARE TO SEE GOD MOVE.

Think about what its like after 24/7 prayer?
After our 3 days of prayer and fasting?

Does it feel right to meet regularly and pray?
Don't move things seems to happen?

Don't we want to see people saved?
Don't we want to see people healed & delivered?
That's real Christianity.

We have everything ready, the ground work is done.

LET'S PRAY