

“Proactive Prayer”

When it comes to faith, Prayer is like food and water - essential for our survival, and for our growing and thriving as a believer. Every few hours if we haven't eaten, our bellies start to grumble, reminding us we're hungry - we gotta eat - and if we go a day without food, we think we are gonna die.

- According to Randall K. Packer, a professor of biology at George Washington University A human can go for more than three weeks without food — Mahatma Gandhi survived 21 days of complete starvation — but water is a different story
- The maximum time an individual can go without water seems to be a week, But one week is a generous estimate. Three to four days would be more typical, especially in difficult conditions like broiling heat.

How long can we go without prayer? A lot of us know, we can go a really, really, really long time, and we can survive, but we don't thrive. Our goal with regards to prayer should be that if we go a few hours without prayer, that 'our spiritual bellies' grumble and remind us we're spiritually hungry, we're starving for connection with God; we've gotta pray, and we're just not going to be satisfied unless we do.

Good news is God loves us; God loves hearing from us, talking to us, and just spending with us. Even if and when nobody else wants to be around us, God still does :)' If we're not satisfied with our current level of faith and connectedness and ability to talk to and hear from God, it's not God's fault, it's on us.

Tension: Prayer is supposed to be a proactive means in which we put God at the center and build a relationship with the Father, and seek His will, but many times Prayer ends up being reactive and a last resort. And sometimes, quite honestly, we don't even pray until we find ourselves at a point of desperation.

- This was true for Jonah - in 2nd chapter, he is at a point of desperation
 - Jonah has undergone a severe ordeal
 - Recap of last week and how he got there
 - Chapter 2, we hear Jonah finally praying

Jonah 2 (NIV)

1 From inside the fish **Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.**

- First verse confirmation we can pray ANYWHERE, even from inside the belly of the fish
 - Embrace praying 'anywhere' and 'everywhere'
 - Consider a 'Prayer closet' [doesn't have to be an actual closet]
 - Movie: "War Room"?

- Miss Clara-mentor, Elizabeth-wife, Tony-husband
- Brent's prayer closet(s)

2 He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead (Sheol in other translations) I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

3 You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

- Jonah has gone through an ordeal of his own making!
 - Up until this point, we don't see Jonah pray at all
 - Didn't pray when the Word of the Lord came to him to go to Nineveh
 - Didn't pray before he decided to flee to Tarshish
 - Didn't pray before he went to Joppa, found a ship, spent money, or when he goes down into the hold of the ship and went to sleep - should have at least prayed before bed time
 - Didn't pray when they sea and storm got worse
 - Didn't pray before he tells the sailors to throw him overboard

Worship Note: Prayer should be our first response, not our last resort.

This is a Kingdom Principle: When we don't pray and seek God's will about a situation FIRST, we often get ourselves into trouble

- True about major life situations, about spending, about how spend our time, about just about everything
- Can spend our whole lives and never learn this principle

Prayer should be our first response, not our last resort.

- Jonah - doesn't pray first, he is centered on his own will, not centered on God
- Gets himself in deep water, is in a fish, only then that we hear about Jonah praying and centering himself on God and God's will
 - Jonah mentions the Temple in verse 4 and later in verse 7
 - Goes from not being centered on God at all, to focusing on the central location of God's presence and Jewish worship
 - Holy of Holies, sanctuary, Temple, Jerusalem

- Turn towards the temple and pray no matter where they were in the world
- Center of the world for Jews
 - God is to be at the center
 - How do we put God at the center? Prayer
 - Again, we do well to put God at the center FIRST, not later, or last; Prayer should be our first response, not our last resort

JD Walt: “As I look back on so much of my former “prayer life” I think my praying was more an expression of my hope that this whole God thing was real. Faith is not hopefulness in the reality of something you can’t see. Faith is a determined movement on a decided reality. Prayer navigates the movement. Prayer is not a “Hail Mary” pass into the end zone as the game-clock expires.” Prayer is not a, “when all else fails try prayer,” last resort remedy.

Prayer is the normative zone of interactivity between God and human beings founded in covenantal relationship and forged from a dogged and insistent clinging to the character of God.”

Jonah’s prayer goes on:

5 The engulfing waters threatened me,[b] the deep surrounded me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6a To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever.

6b But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit.

- Pit
 - Study Bible: “Jonah feels trapped in the Belly of Sheol = the Pit; Sheol is , ‘the world of the dead’
 - Lowest of Lows
 - When it comes to being in a pit

- Could end up in a pit because we haven't followed the Kingdom principle of 'pray first, then act', but not the only reason we end up in pits
- Could end up in a pit because we made some really bad decisions and behaved badly (sin) - nobody to blame but ourselves
- Could end up in a pit due to no fault of your own:
 - Could be because somebody else didn't pray first
 - Could be because somebody else made some really bad decisions and behaved badly (sin)
 - Could be because of something somebody did to us
 - Could end up in a pit simply because we live in a broken world and there is just no other way to explain it...or understand it...
 - The pit could be health, Cancer; Strained relationships; divorce, Job loss, depression...OTHER?
 - Drug story illustration
 - Other side of the door, invited in at age 12
 - Drug abuse part of family DNA
 - "Last Resort" Prayer: Kill me or Help Me

7 "When my life was ebbing away [Last Resort], I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

8 "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.

9 But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'

10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

- Jonah in belly of the fish for 3 days and three nights
 - Jesus in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights
 - Remember what we call it when Jesus got out of the belly of the earth?
 - Resurrection
 - Jonah had descended down, and God brought Him up from the Pit
 - Jesus had descended down, and God brought Him up from the Pit
 - If you're in the Pit, God will bring you up

Closing

Remember, if you're in the Pit, you're not in there alone, and God is a God of Resurrection; and Resurrection is not far off

Let Jonah serve as a source of hope that things are never too far gone, and we've never sunk so deep that God can't come to our rescue

Guidance: We want you to UP your prayer this week! All at different places, so gonna look different for us all:

Some maybe pray for first time with some regularity: A.C.T.S.

Worship Note:

A.C.T.S. PRAYER

A = Adoration

C = Confession.Forgiveness

T = Thanksgiving

S = Supplication

- Some a call to go deeper go deeper
- Think about idea of a Prayer Closet
- Seek the ability to Pray with others (Friday morning group= planned, spontaneous= this Thursday with Chris/Jim/David/Sarah at Last Resort in Athens)
- Pray at 9:00, 12:00, 3:00 this week - SET PHONE ALARMS, and pray at one or all
Among other things, pray for your church and leaders, for revival in Jackson County, for your assignment, your family, unity...
- Make Prayer your first response, not your last resort