



Intercessory Prayer
Women's Discipleship Class – October 19, 2017

Verses Covered This Week

Ephesians 6:17 – 19

1 John 5:13 – 15

Matthew 16:17

James 5:16 – 18

1 Kings 18:36 – 39, 42 – 46

Romans 8:26 – 28

We talked about the fact that the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. It leads you in your life. He's the single authority in your life. He is the person of the Trinity that drives what you do. We're going to look today at intercessory prayer. Now there are all sorts of prayer. There's the old Acts thing: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. We're looking at supplication today; how to pray for someone.

Now this is going to be extremely easy to process. It's not hard to look at the scripture and see what it says. You will not, most of you, do this. You'll start for a little while, but you'll revert back to the simplicity of what I call Facebook praying. It's going to be extremely difficult. What we'll do, as a matter of fact, I've had, I don't know how many times after I taught this, I've had people call me and go, "I don't understand. I can't make this work in my life." So you're going to have to decide whether you'll obey the scripture or whether you do what you want to do.

All my life I heard, and I used to preach, that God has different answers to your prayers. There's yes, no, wait, which is, of course, really not an answer. It's something you have to do at times. And then there's the other answer which I hear a lot, which is you've got to be kidding me. So there are all these different concepts of answers. The Bible denies that. The Bible says there's only one answer to your prayer. It is always yes. Walk with me. We're going to cover a little ground. Look at Ephesians chapter 6:17 – 19. It's at the end of the section on the armor of God in your life. Here's what he says:

¹⁷Take the Helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the

alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

In other words, you stay focused on what God's saying. So when he says pray in the Spirit, remember we have the subjective idea of the Spirit and we have the objective idea of the Spirit. The objective idea of the Spirit is the written word of God. This is the objective thing we have. So he's already given them, from the Spirit, a way to pray for him which is to pray that there will be an openness to the gospel and his preaching. The

Objective & Subjective – Objective idea of the Spirit - the written word of God.

Subjective idea of the Spirit – there are things that the objectivity of scripture does not answer

subjective is there are things that you're going to need to pray for that the objectivity of scripture does not answer. If you have a friend that develops cancer, if somebody in this room develops cancer and they put it on Facebook, I can guarantee you every prayer will be: God heal this person, guide the doctors, let them know what to do. Every single prayer will be for the healing of this individual. It may not be what God wants you to pray. So you've got to make sure you allow the Spirit to guide you both objectively and subjectively. If you remember, we won't go there today, but if you remember in 1 Timothy there's the passage, particularly 2:1 – 2, there is the passage where Paul says, "Pray for your leaders so that you may lead a quiet life so that the gospel can penetrate where you live easily." That's what we're to pray. So if your kid's in a school then you objectively, the scripture's already said to you, if your child's in a school you pray for the leaders in that school. You pray for the principal; you pray for his or her teacher so that their life will be quiet in the school so the gospel can go out. I just talked to Nathan Lino, he spoke at the Men's Steakout the other night, and his child's just been brutalized in school. This is one of the things you pray before your child gets into school. So you have a responsibility to pray objectively with scripture and now we have to pray subjectively.

Walk with me. Go to 1 John 5:13 – 15. Listen carefully.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life. ¹⁴This is the confidence which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

So here's the first basis of prayer. I have to be a believer. Not a believer; no prayer life. So I ask based on His will. He, thus, hears me. Now if you reverse that, if I don't ask according to His will, does He hear me? No! That's the point. Hear does not mean God can't hear you. Hear in the Bible means He doesn't respond or acknowledge your prayer. So if I don't pray His will, He does not hear me. If I pray His will, he hears me. Now watch this, look at what he says.

¹⁵And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

So the answer is always yes with specificity. Now here are the five things in that passage:

1. I've got to be a believer

So here's what he says. If I'm a believer, I pray His will, He hears me, I have the request, so the answer is always yes. But I have requests: specificity. I cannot pray in a situation, "God let Your will be done." I can't do that. That's not specific. The Greek word is requests and the Greek word is specific. And the idea is I pray a certain issue for the particular situation. I'm either praying for my child in school or I'm praying for someone who has some sort of issue, I'm interceding for them with the Father subjectively, but when I intercede with the Father subjectively, I've got to be a believer, I've got to know what He wants me to pray for them. If I pray what He wants, He hears me. He will answer that request, but it's got to be specific. I cannot say, if somebody's got cancer, "God let your will be done in their life." I can't do that. It violates the end of 1 John 5.

So watch this. Go to Matthew 16:17. Now this is right in Caesarea Philippi. It's one of the four vacations Jesus took with His guys. Gets them out away from the crowds, tells them who He is, Peter's run his mouth again, but he actually guessed correctly.

¹⁷And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Sim Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Now if you read that straight right there, it seems to say that I decide what is bound and what is loosed. Now read the Christian Standard Version; they actually have it correct.

¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be have been loosed in heaven.

Did you hear the difference? ESV is what you bind will be bound. Now the CSB, and ESV has in the footnotes, shall have been bound will be bound. Now this is the Greek. Most of your translations don't cover the Greek literally because it's an awkward way to translate it. But what Jesus Christ has literally said is, "Whatever you bound shall already have been bound." It's a unique phrase in the Greek that means something God's decided in the past that will be enacted in the future. It's enacted, though, through what? I give you, Peter, and the other apostles, I give you the keys to that process. You're the ones that I will use to unlock what I will loose and what I will bind. So the loosing and the binding of cancer in a person's life is based on what God has decided shall be bound. I'm not anti-charismatic and I'm not anti-Catholic; I'm more anti-Baptist than I am anything. The Catholics, of course, have taken this and said it belongs to the pope. The charismatics have taken this, based on the English Standard and the New American Standard and the King James and all the others, and said, "I get to go out and decide what will be bound." If you watch the charismatic healing service, they'll bring people forward, they will decide every person should be healed. But that is not what the text says. The text says it shall have been bound, in other words, I've got to figure out what God has already decided He wants to do about the cancer in this individual. Then I pray that specificity, He hears it, and He answers the prayer.

Now walk with me. Go to James 5:16 – 18. Now look at the last part of verse 16.

¹⁶The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
And then he gives you an illustration in the Old Testament.

¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain and the earth bore its fruit.

He says Elijah, like us, controlled the weather. If you take that right there and you don't go to the Old Testament passage, what it looks like is, "OK. We've got a drought in Texas, I'll just pray, have faith, God will bring the rain." That, though, is not what you have in the Old Testament place. Now go to 1 Kings 18. This is the passage that James is referencing. Now we're going to look at two things here. We're going to look at 36 – 39 and then 42 – 46 which is the reference point of James 5. Now this is in the passage where you have the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, Elijah calls the men, 450 of them, has them pray to their god to burn up the sacrifice. I love this guy. I probably shouldn't say this in here, but it's in the Bible. Look up in verse 27. I love Elijah because he's pretty sarcastic.

Side Note –

"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours," means that he did not know what Shiplap was.

²⁷At noon Elijah mocked them crying, "Cry aloud, he's a god! Maybe he's musing or maybe he's relieving himself."

The Hebrew really means maybe he's in the bathroom. So Elijah's got my sense of humor. So at any rate, look in 36.

³⁶At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." ³⁸Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."

So they kill the prophets and so they wipe them out. So he says, "I prayed fire down from heaven because I did it at Your word." He did not gather a bunch of wood and then pray based on what he wanted. God told him to gather the wood. Now I want you to watch what happens here because this is the reference of James. So obviously when he says this here, we're going to see this, we're not going to hear this written here, but it's obvious with what happens. Look at verse 42:

⁴²So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Mt. Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and he put his face between his knees. ⁴³He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times.

So here's what he does. So seven times he sends his servant up, "Go up and take a look at the sea." He goes up and looks, he comes back, and he says, "I don't see anything." He keeps sending him. Why? Because God's obviously told him, "You keep praying until your servant sees the cloud." Now that's obviously what he said. So look what happens.

⁴⁴It came about at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.'" ⁴⁵In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

Now I want you to notice two things. Seven times, right. There are two things that are key. He's going to control the weather. Exactly what James 5 said. But based on two things. He will utter a prayer and that prayer will be based on God's word. So if I'm going to be an intercessor there are two things. I have to know here, "God tell me how to pray," and, listen, I have to utter the prayer. If I don't pray, it's not enacted. If I pray what I want, it's not enacted. But if I pray what He tells me to pray, we go back to 1 John 5, He hears me, specificity, the answer's always, "Absolutely, yes." I am now binding what He has decided to have been bound. I am loosing what He has decided to loose. So Elijah is the perfect example in James, he's exactly right, but he does two things. He keeps praying; so he keeps uttering the prayer based on what God told him, "You keep praying until you see a cloud." "You pray and you ask me to call down fire." Both of these, God answered the prayer, He gave him a yes, incredible stuff, but he had to utter the prayer and it was based on what God told him. So for us that's key. As a matter of fact, look at Romans 8:26 – 28. What's Romans 8:28? What's it say? Yes! It's a Baptist verse. It's like John 3:16. All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. We always use that when people are struggling. We say, "Look, man, things are going to work out for you, God's going to bless." Now I want you to notice why that happens. Look in verse 26.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we don't know what to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We have the very same thing; you have the Holy Spirit in you. The reason Romans 8:28 works for you is because when you don't know how to pray, the Spirit prays for you, but He does two things. He utters a prayer, you don't hear it, and He does it based on God's word. He does not pray for you, even though He's equal to the Father, He does not pray what He wants to pray, it's what the Father wants. So He utters a prayer. If He doesn't pray, it doesn't happen. If He prays what He wants, it doesn't happen. He prays what the Father wants and therefore Romans 8:28 occurs. You have the very same principle within the Trinity. So you're praying based on a Trinitarian principle.

Now this is really hard, but it's key. When I was in high school and got called to preach. We went to this camp in Alabama. There were 54 of my youth from First Baptist, Slidell, Louisiana and we were at this camp. The last night of the camp, instead of preaching, they said we want those of

you that feel you've been called by God for something to come up here and stand and pray. So we go up and pray and there's me and a guy I talked to the night before, Bill Lee, is standing over here. So we start praying and out of 54 kids are on tour with us, like 50 walk the aisle that night. It was an incredible deal. But all through the thing I had this overwhelming, it's the first time I'd ever had this, I certainly didn't know this principle, I had this overwhelming feeling that I needed to pray for my best friend David Gill. So I just prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed. When it was over I didn't see him come forward. So when it was over I walked over to Bill and we were talking, they had taken our kids and had them in the back counseling them. He looked at me out of the blue and he said, "Man I don't know what the deal was, but I just really felt impressed to pray for David Gill." So I said, "Man I did too." So we walk out the building and when we stepped out, David came around the corner with the worst look I've ever seen on his face. And he said, "Man I need to talk to you guys." So we go upstairs and he asked Christ into his heart.

Now there are two things that day I could never process this, from the scripture there were obviously two things: God told us what to pray and we responded to that. Had we not prayed, you've got to always remember there's always demonic assault and angelic craving in a spiritual realm around us. Our prayer, obviously undid demonic assault in his life, and allowed the Spirit to speak to him. Now had we not prayed it wouldn't have happened and had we prayed what we wanted it wouldn't have happened. Because our assumption was he was a believer. So those two things are key. Our preschool minister, Sherry Maggard, had a best friend in this church, Donna, and Donna got cancer and so Sherry, and they were best friends. As a matter of fact, Sherry still misses her. So she got cancer and Sherry felt deeply led to pray for her healing. And she was healed for about five years. And about five years later, I think that timeline's right, the cancer came back. And she died. As a matter of fact, I did her funeral and Sherry spoke at her funeral. But a couple weeks after that I caught Sherry in the office and I said, "So I've got to ask you something because I sense something different in you. Did you, the second time when Donna had cancer, did you pray for her to be healed?" And Sherry said, "You know I did not feel that's what I ought to pray." I said, "So what did you pray?" She said, "I prayed for the family, that they would get through it." Now this is why it's critical and this is why you won't do it. Because, number one, He's going to have you pray for things you don't want. And number two, it's a whole lot easier to Facebook pray. Because to do this, it's easy to find objectively what to pray, but it's going to be hard to hear Him subjectively to know what to pray. We simply don't want to do that. Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Pray His kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Here's where most of us live. We allow God to be Lord in all these areas of our life except our prayer life. We come in, we have our list, we lay it out, we start going down our list the way we want it handled. We basically allow Him to be Lord in our life, but not in the most powerful thing we do which is our prayer life. There's nothing you do more powerful than prayer. Elijah changed the entire nation off his intercessory prayer, but based on what God told him to do. The greatest genius of the enemy has been to make us pray and you waste your prayer time. You say you don't waste your prayer time. Oh, yes, you do. When you don't pray His will, does He hear you? No. So you waste your prayer time. This is why I said a couple weeks ago, if you're sitting there praying for your child to have a mate. "Oh, God, let my child find a Godly man who will love her in Jesus, who will be her spiritual leader." You're praying all that and then you discover at age 29 that your child is not going to marry and doesn't feel called to marry and feels called to singlehood. You've wasted 29 years of prayers. "Well God wouldn't do that." He's God. You are not. Therefore, when you step into that closet, you pray what He wants, not what you want. Your

agenda for your daughter may be to marry, that may not be His agenda for your daughter. And you waste 29 years of prayers. Now at birth He tells you to pray for that, then you pray every day for that. But if He doesn't tell you that, then you don't pray what you want for your children. You pray what He wants for your children. It's been the genius of the enemy that we spend the most powerful moment in our life a lot of times wasting it. This is difficult because this is going to require that I hear Him and that I go into my closet and I open up my list and I start, let's say Brittany's at the top of my list and I start with Brittany and she's got an issue in her life and I bring the issue to the Father and I say, "OK I'm listening. How do You want me to pray for her with this issue?" And I have to get quiet and listen to what He tells me to pray and that's when it gets hard and we wind up going, "I think I'll just go back to the Facebook prayers." And that's why, by the way, why do you think most of us that pray, we have the yes, no, wait, why do you think we have these?" Why do you think you have a yes and no when the Bible says it's always yes? Do you know why? Because in your prayer time part of the time you guess right. And maybe times you're praying for healing and God wants to heal them and your prayer brings their healing, it brings God's hand and He heals them, you guess right. But then you pray for somebody to be healed and they didn't get healed, you say, "Well God's answer was no." No. That's not his answer. You prayed incorrectly. Now this is really, I think the easiest thing to process in the world from the scripture. But it is the most difficult to live.

When I go into a hospital room I always walk in as best I can sensitive to what I think He's going to want me to pray. When I don't know what to pray, and there are times I walk in and I don't know, I pray the best I can objectively. I'll pray, "God I trust them to Your heart, to Your love, to Your glory in their life,

You have to wait for Him to tell you how to pray your list instead of you telling Him what He ought to do with your list.

and to Your best for them." I can pray those things because those are inside the objectivity of scripture. There are times when I've gone in and I've known I'm not going to pray for this person's healing because that's not what He wants here. That's tough, as a matter of fact, and this is really hard for us. I taught this to the Doctor of Ministry students last Tuesday. I had them for three hours Tuesday morning. We went through a lot of different things. But I taught this to them and when we finished there was a guy from China in the DMIN program at Southwestern and when I finished all this he looked at me and said, "But we can still pray for healing, right?" Because that's where we are. And the answer is, "No. You can't." Now this is hard because it means you're going to have to quit coming, you can still come with your list, but now what you do is you wait for Him to tell you how to pray the list instead of you telling Him what He ought to do with your list. Those are two distinct things. And it is exceptionally difficult, but if 1 John 5 is correct, you want to pray in a way that He hears you and thus responds to what you pray. So there are two things I have to do. I have to know what His will is and I have to pray. I can't just know His will and assume He'll do it. I have to ask Him to do it. That's why Jesus said, "Pray His kingdom come, Your will be done." Our prayer life brings His kingdom into our families. Our prayer life brings His kingdom into the church. Our prayer life moves His kingdom into Bryan/College Station. I mean we have a powerful purpose, but we better pray what He wants.

Questions

- Q. You said that you thought your friend was a believer. So what did you pray since you felt led to pray for him?
- A. I felt deeply led to pray that he'd be saved. I felt an impetus to pray that and Bill did as well.
- Q. I've always thought if we prayed scripture back to Him that's...*(I couldn't hear the rest of the question.)*
- A. No, I think that's exactly right. If we pray scripture back to Him, that's the objectivity of scripture. Absolutely. When you pray 1 Timothy 2, "God take the principal in my school, let my child live a quiet life so the gospel can move out." That's praying scripture. Now you have to be careful with that. Scripture may be, for example, if you're fair with scripture, if you go to 2 Corinthians 12, Paul prayed three times to be healed, God said, "No." So the scripture there indicates I can't always pray for healing. So I've got to be careful because even though the scripture may say God wants me to be blessed, a person may be in a situation in life where they're living in sin and I can't claim blessing for them because they've got to repent of something. So I can't just objectively grab scripture and do whatever I want with it. Even that has some subjective quality to it.
- Q. So we have to utter the prayer and based on God's word we're referencing the part where you're talking about uttering prayer, where does silent prayer come in to play as far as effectiveness.
- A. No, no, no. I don't mean you have to say it out loud. No, no, no, no, no. Uttering a prayer is silent or out loud.
- Q. So we mentioned this a couple weeks ago where we're talking about Jesus was praying in the Garden and like what kind of prayer He was uttering. And you had mentioned that it was more for if there was any other way for God's will to work that He didn't have to go through all that suffering, is that something we can do?
- A. Yeah, absolutely. Someone I love has cancer, I can say, "God is there anything You want to do here? Is it OK?" I mean that's exactly what Jesus said. He knew what it was. The problem with Gethsemane, it's a little different, it's not really intercessory prayer. It's really more of a, "God I'll go, but I don't want to." I mean that was more of a dialog between Him saying, "I don't want to go, but I will." He knew what it was. He already knew, so He knew what He had to do. He was hoping there was another shot out there. So that's a little different than what this is. I'm finding out what He wants me to pray.
- Q. In Ephesians 3:20 it says God is able to do more abundantly than all that we ask or think, is that the idea of the Spirit advocating for us?

A. Yeah, that's a great question. Her question is Ephesians 3:20:

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power at work in us,

That's the key. The power at work in us is the Holy Spirit. So my ability to have that amazing abundance is I yield to the Spirit, I pray based on that, and then He moves beyond anything I could think. I can't imagine that Elijah thought he could pull fire down from heaven. And I doubt he thought he could control the weather. So it did go far beyond what he thought, but it was based on the power of God working in him.

Q. How do you know when you're going through something whether to pray just yourself, or when to ask someone to help you?

A. Yeah, that's a good question. I think that's another place where you allow the Spirit to lead you. If you're just overwhelmed and you're having trouble praying, I would find some people to pray for me. I think that's always good. I have made mention on the hurricane Sunday that the only thing, the only personal request I would ask is that the church pray for me. It's the only personal request Jesus ever made of His disciples. It was in Gethsemane, "I want you to pray." It was the only time He asked anything personally from them. So absolutely! I think you should have, if you could, have a consistent group of people that consistently prayed for you. What I would do, though, is if I felt God, let me give you an example. Michael Toby who was pastor at First Baptist Woodway, his son came through our ministry, as a matter of fact, we took him to lunch every Sunday, developed brain cancer. And he came out and told his church. What is his church immediately going to do? He came out and looked at his church and said, "I believe it's my time. Psalm 139, my days are here. Do not pray for me to be healed. Pray for my family." So he asked the church to pray specifically for that. And I think you need as many people praying for you as you can. But you want them praying in line with what God wants. And if you're Jackie Toby, his wife, that's not how you want to pray. You want to pray, "God keep my husband here." This is when it gets difficult. It's easy to pray for somebody else's husband. When it's yours, all of a sudden I don't know that I want what He wants, so God's here's my list, you do what I want." And you're wasting your prayer time.

Q. Can you give me an idea of how to pray out loud for someone that is ill and you know they want you to pray for their healing, but you don't have that sense yet that God does want to heal them?

A. Yeah, if I have somebody, and I encounter this frequently, if I have somebody that says, "I want you to pray for my healing." And I absolutely don't feel led to pray that, I pray a couple things. I pray, "God let them see what you want them to see about what's coming to them. Let them, when this comes, and they aren't healed, not be disappointed by it." It's actually what Jesus prayed when He prayed for Peter. He made the statement to Peter, "Look, Satan's asked to have you that he might sift you like wheat. But I've prayed for you that your faith won't fail." That prayer was not that Peter wouldn't deny Him. The prayer was that when he denied Him that his faith would not be destroyed. So I think that would be the kind of thing,

from the objectivity of scripture, I would pray. “God I don’t believe they’re going to be healed, but when they’re not don’t let this wreck their life.”

- Q. So when your praying for unbelievers the scripture says that it’s not God’s will that any should perish. You already know that’s His will. So you’re praying for them to become believers, but their free will is just getting in the way.
- A. Yeah, I’m not praying for them to become believers. I think that violates their free will. I think you go back to what Paul said, “Also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.” I think I pray that I can be bold with the mystery of the gospel, that the Holy Spirit can touch them, but I do not have the right to pray that they become a believer. That violates their free will. Absolutely. So I have to be careful on what I pray for those around me that aren’t Christian.
- Q. If you have someone that wants to pray for their healing, but you don’t pray that and they come to the knowledge that you did not pray for their healing, but in your heart you’re praying the way God wants you to pray. And then come back to you and say, “Well you didn’t pray what I asked you to pray. Is there anything too hard for God?”
- A. No. There’s nothing too hard for God but it’s based exclusively on what He wants. If somebody says that to me, “You didn’t pray for my healing” my response is, and I say this gently and lovingly, “Look I don’t pray what you want. I pray what I think the Father wants for you.” So I’m going to do the best I can in what He wants and I’m not trying to be mean. I’m not trying to be a jerk, but there you go. It’s not an issue, and the question is not, it’s the wrong question. I always hate it when Seminary professors would say this, but it’s the wrong question to say, “Can God not do that?” That’s not the question. Absolutely He can do it. It’s what He wants done, not what I want done. So I think that’s the question based on all these passages.
- Q. So you just said that we should not pray that other people should be saved? Can we pray that the Holy Spirit would work in their heart? Reveal their sin to them? Remove their spiritual blinders? But it’s still their free will? I mean they could see their sin and then just still go on.
- A. I think that’s exactly what we have to pray. Absolutely. Yeah, I think that’s absolutely what we pray which is what he’s saying. Give me to ability to boldly speak the mystery of the gospel. The idea is, let them understand the mystery of the gospel and that comes from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Absolutely! I think, absolutely, I think the key is Judas. He certainly was under conviction, but he never saw his sin. He never saw it for what it was and the odd thing is, he missed two things. It’s weird, there’s this little phrase in John when he discusses Judas’ failure, it says he went out and it was dark. The most amazing thing about Judas, to me, he saw Jesus forgive how many people. And he never thought about going to Jesus and asking for forgiveness because he never processed anything. So absolutely. I think we pray for conviction of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives. But their response to that is not my prayer.

Q. I'm still a little confused, though, because the Bible says that it's not His will that anyone should perish. So are we praying His will that someone be saved?

A. It is true. No. Your prayer cannot violate their free will. If you go back to Samuel, he told Saul, "God forbid that I sin by not praying for you." And yet his prayers protect the nation, but they don't change Saul. Saul continues down his road of self-destruction where he takes Jonathan with him and they die on Mount Gilboa. So I can pray, and I'm responsible for praying, but just because I pray, doesn't mean it's up to them whether or not they respond to the Holy Spirit's response to my prayer. John 16, he says, "The Spirit will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgement." So my job is to pray that the Spirit convicts Michelle about sin, righteousness, and judgement. What Michelle does with that conviction, that's off me. He wants her saved, but He will not make her be saved. Now that's the difference between my view and a Calvinist. And if there are those of you who are Calvinist, that's fine, so long as you let me be not one, you can be one. I'm good with that. But that would be the distinction. They would believe your prayer can, because God's going to choose them before birth. I really don't believe that.

Q. So when you with your friend Bill felt led to ask for his salvation?

A. I didn't pray for his salvation. I prayed for his conviction. I was praying that God would deal with him. It really overwhelmed me and Bill which was a weird thing. And I'm still haunted by the fact that if I had not prayed and Bill had not prayed, would he be a believer today. That's my question.

Q. What about when you get these overwhelming things, but I don't know if it's Him or Satan attacking me.

A. That's next Thursday morning. We're going to talk about how I hear Him.

Q. So you said we can pray for conviction and I understand you can pray for conviction for them to hear the Holy Spirit in their life. If they're not living according to God's will in a certain area of their life, can you pray for conviction in a specific area of their life?

A. First John 5:16 – If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give him life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

So he clearly says you've got a brother sinning, you pray for him.

Q. But do you pray for conviction for him?

A. Yeah, really, the Greek word convict, *elegchó*, is the Greek word that means, it's what a husband never does in an argument with his wife: win. It's really the Greek word. It means to bring a person, I argue with Michelle, I make a point, and the Holy Spirit, *elegchó*, occurs, she finally comes to the point where she says, "Yes, I'm right." That's all conviction is. So

what you're praying for a lost person is that they will see that what the Bible says about them and Jesus is correct. It's the same thing you're praying for a believer. That they will see what the Bible says about their act and how God views it is correct. That they see how God views it and thus begin to respond to that's all conviction is. It's not an overwhelming feeling, it's a recognition that what the Bible says about God and about you is right.

Q. So a non-believer does not have the Spirit in him. They've not been given the Holy Spirit so how does the Spirit convict?

A. Because He convicts from without. That's the point. He speaks to believers inside. He speaks to them in their head. I mean that's one of these issues, you're getting into the question, "How does he do it?" I don't have any idea how He does it. I just remember listening to Billy Graham preach. I'm stuck home with my parents, I don't hear anything in the sermon, I'm bored out of my mind, he makes one statement. He said, "I believe Jesus Christ is coming back within the next 100 years." Boom! I am slammed. And I go back in my room and ask Christ into my heart. What happened there, I got nothing. So it's not a conviction from within; it's a conviction from without.

Q. There are certain things that are absolute; he wants good things, not that we won't have trials and hardships, but His heart is big and so, I work with a lot of kids. They're in situations that are not good. Now they're not believers yet and so in leaving them places or dropping them off or get a phone call late at night, there's almost like an immediate need to fight in the Spirit for protection over them. I don't mean wrong in not commanding, but "Lord, please send angels to protect them and keep them out of harm's way. Stand in the doorways of their bedrooms. Cover their ears and their heart." For those kind of prayers, I don't want to be demanding.

A. Knowing you the way I know you now, you're probably yielding exactly what the Spirit's motivating you to pray. It is a difficulty because, we'll address this in another session, but you do have the issue of theodicy. It's a seminary term for the justice of God. And it is difficult to deal with. We had the Christian girl who was an adopt-a-student who was sexually assaulted in her apartment for four hours by two men out on parole who mocked at her and laughed at her the entire time they raped her; over and over and over. She lived with us for nine months after that. My question; believer, child of God, why in the world would God not, no one heard her screams. There are questions like that that I don't have answers for. And what you're wrestling with, I don't necessarily have an answer for, you may pray for safety, I don't know what's going to happen. It's a difficult, I don't have an answer for that kind of question. It's difficult. That's why I think that prayer life is between you and the Holy Spirit. And this is what we'll look at next week. You stay as in-tuned as you can so that your prayers do impact them as best can be done. But there are things I don't have an answer for.

Q. What about the things that seemed like the Lord changed His mind. So Hezekiah, it didn't end well. And then the woman who asks for healing and Jesus says, "Why would I give crumbs..."

A. Yeah, but He didn't change His mind there. He pushed her. That was a different thing. He never changed His mind. And I'm not sure, it's hard to say that He would change His mind.

God sometimes offers things based on what we do. I think He offered Hezekiah, "Listen, you're supposed to come home." Hezekiah said, "No, I don't want to." And then what happens? Manasseh is born. The worst king, the Bible says, to ever sit on the throne of Israel. So that's a lesson in the scripture that I don't go against what God wants for me. It's a great statement. He certainly didn't change His mind with that Syrophenician woman/the Canaanite woman. But it was interesting, He pushed her to see where her faith was. Which He does with us. He did the same thing with Abraham when He said, "Take your boy up and kill him."

Q. So you think we fall short then in our prayer life? We pray for it, it doesn't happen instantly, we drop it.

A. I don't think there's any question about that. That's why you have the thing with Elijah; seven times sending his servant. He prayed until he saw the answer. Absolutely. You have the weird place in Nehemiah 2 where it's right before he gets to the king. He's talking to the King, he says, "Why is your face down?" He said, "He prayed to the Lord and then he brought his request to the king." So sometimes it's a quick prayer that affects and sometimes it's a longevity to pray. You've got that parable of the unjust judge and the widow wearing him out to where he finally says, "Look I don't even care about God or man, but this chick is wearing me slap-dab out. So I'm going to give her what she wants." So the idea is perseverance in prayer. That I know what His will is, I pray until I see it enacted. We'll look at that with Daniel, by the way.

Q. On the other side of that. I've always said God changed my prayer. And through it all He changed me. So was I wrong?

A. No. You were absolutely correct. I think He did change your prayer. That way your prayer is not wasted. If Sherry prays for Donna to be healed the second time when she's not, her prayer for the family is lost. And here's the problem, right. How much time do we have to pray? We don't have much time really; in a day. So you better make sure that limited time you have is used wisely. We don't pray all day. We go to work, we raise children, we deal with husbands, so we don't pray all day. So that limited amount of time you've got, you better do it correctly.