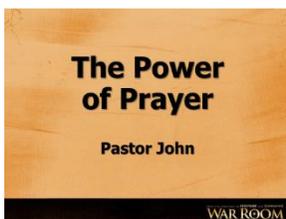


The Power of Prayer

February 5, 2017

John 15: 1-10

¹ Jesus said to his disciples: I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts away every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit. But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit, so that it will produce even more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of what I have said to you. ⁴ Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me. ⁵ I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. ⁶ If you don't stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dry branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire. ⁷ Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered. ⁸ When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honored. ⁹ I have loved you, just as my Father has loved me. So remain faithful to my love for you. ¹⁰ If you obey me, I will keep loving you, just as my Father keeps loving me, because I have obeyed him.



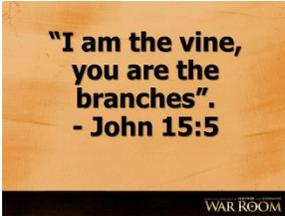
Today we conclude our series on prayer. Throughout this series we have been using themes and scenes from the movie, War Room. To refresh your memories and remind you of all the answered prayer in the movie, please watch this sixty second clip that recaps the entire movie. [Play 1st clip.]

During this series, we have spent time looking at where, when, how, and who we pray to. Today we will look at the power of prayer from a few perspectives. First, we will begin with a story of answered prayer from almost 200 years ago then we will look at the power of prayer found in the Bible. Lastly, we will look at the power of prayer in our lives and in the life of this church. To begin, let us begin with a word of prayer.

Shortly after Dallas Theological Seminary was founded in 1924, it almost came to the point of bankruptcy. All the creditors were going to foreclose at noon on a particular day. That morning they met in the president's office for prayer that God would provide. In that prayer meeting was a man by the name of Harry Ironside. When it was his turn to pray, he said, "Lord, we know that the cattle on a thousand hills are Thine. Please sell some of them and send us the money." While they were praying a tall Texan stepped up to the business office and said, "I just sold two carloads of cattle in Ft. Worth. I've been trying to make a business deal but it fell through and I feel compelled to give the money to the seminary. I don't know if you need it or not, but here's the check!" The secretary took the check and knowing how critical things were financially, went to the door of the prayer meeting and timidly tapped. When she finally got a response, the president took the check out of her hand. It was exactly the amount of the debt! When he looked at the name, he recognized the cattleman and turning to Dr. Ironside said, "Harry, God sold the cattle!"

In this example of answered prayer for the Dallas Theological Seminary, for all the examples we have in the Bible, and for all of the answered prayers since the

Bible was written, there is only one source for the power to answer prayer. God alone has the power to answer prayer. Only God could orchestrate this cattle deal. For us today, the source of power in our prayer life is still found in God alone. We connect to God's power through our relationship with Jesus Christ. To tap into that power, we must be connected to the source of power. In verse five from today's reading, hear Jesus' words: *"I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me."* There are, of course, many ways that we produce fruit in our lives. Prayer is just one of them. To produce any fruit, we must stay connected to Jesus, the true vine. We stay connected by practicing the things we have been talking about: daily, private time in prayer; reading and meditating on God's Word; and, offering God our praise and worship. There is great gain when we live our lives connected to Christ. But we are doomed to lose when we are not connected. Hear again the last line: *"You cannot do anything without me."* Without Christ, life is a battle we cannot 'win'. We must be in Christ. We must stay connected to Christ.



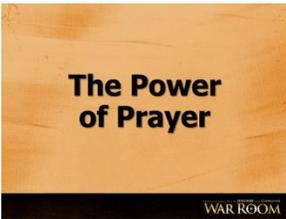
**"I am the vine,
you are the
branches".
- John 15:5**

WAR ROOM



**"You cannot do
anything
without me".
- John 15:7**

WAR ROOM



**The Power
of Prayer**

WAR ROOM

In verse seven, we hear the results of staying connected:

"Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you.

Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer

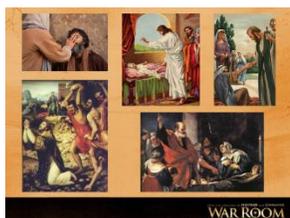
will be answered." Please do not dismiss the first half of the verse and only hear the second half. Staying joined to Christ and allowing Jesus' teachings to shape

and transform into His image us must happen first. It must happen first because then when we pray, we will pray as Christ prayed, in alignment with God's will and purposes for our lives and world.

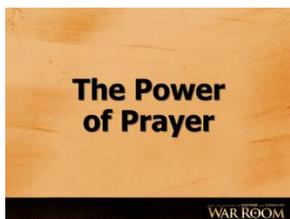
Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see many examples of God answering prayer. In the Exodus, God hears the prayers of the people and frees them from the oppression of the Egyptians. In Judges, Samson prays for strength one last time and brings the temple of Dagon crashing down. In 1 Samuel, Hannah prays for a son and Samuel is soon born. In 1 Kings, Elijah prays for fire from heaven and fire falls and consumes the offering, the altar, and the water as well. Nehemiah prays for God's strength and protection and the walls of Jerusalem begin to be rebuilt. These are but a handful of the many answered prayers found in the Old Testament.



As we move into the New Testament, in the gospels we frequently see Jesus praying to His Father. Jesus prays for healings of many kinds – the blind receive sight, the mute speak, the lame walk, the lepers are healed, the demons are cast out. Jesus also prays many times for the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of life. Throughout the remainder of the New Testament, God continues to answer prayers. Peter prays for and brings healing to the lame man. Stephen prays for his enemies as they stone him. This prayer is later answered as the resurrected Jesus meets Paul on the road to Damascus. Peter prays for Tabitha and she comes back to life. Again and again, in the Bible we see God answering the



prayers of the faithful. In these experiences from the Bible we gain the confidence to come to God with our prayers, knowing that God delights in answering the prayers of the faithful.

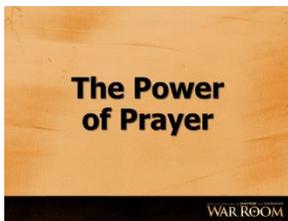


To this day, same God continues to answer the prayers of the people. Throughout history, God has remained faithful and has answered our prayers. Martin Luther prayed for the reform of the church and the Protestant movement began, fueled by God's passion for His children to once again draw close to Him. John Wesley prayed fervently for the reform of the Anglican Church so that the church could bring God to the common people. Methodism was God's response. Martin Luther King, Junior, prayed for an end to injustice and segregation. Our nation has moved forward great distances, offering equality and opportunity to millions. These are but a few examples of well-known answered prayers. This handful pales in comparison to the innumerable answered prayers of billions of Christians throughout history. People have lifted countless prayers for healing and many have been healed. People have prayed over and over for sons and daughters' safety amidst war and violence and God's hand has been upon the children. People have prayed for centuries for forgiveness and God's grace has come rushing in again and again.



Throughout the movie War Room and this series which draws from the movie, we have been witness to the power of prayer at work. The movie is based on a true story and is a testament to how God can work in and through our lives when

we are willing to surrender our lives to God's will. In the movie, a wise and battle-tested woman named Miss Clara prayerfully seeks a person that she can pour into and train up to be a prayer warrior. Elizabeth is God's answer to her prayers. In the closing prayer that we saw last week, Miss Clara demonstrates her desire to be used again as she prays for God to 'send her another'. I would like to share a short clip about a 'real life' Miss Clara. Her character draws from the life of a woman named Molly Bruno. Please watch this short clip. [Play clip.]



Many of us know real-life Molly Brunos. They may not be 91-year-old Italian prayer warriors, but they are our mothers, our grandmothers, our fathers, our grandfathers, our parents.

Many grew up knowing that their grandparent or parent prayed for them each day by name and with specific requests of God. The prayer warriors that surround us include our friends, our children, our spouses, our coworkers, our small group members. We too are all called to be prayer warriors. Many of us are. We rise and go to our private, secluded place in prayer each morning. We kneel beside the bed or lay our head down at night and go to God in prayer. Prayer pops up throughout the day as the Spirit moves in our hearts and draws us to pray for this person or that situation as it comes to mind. We pray often because we have experienced the power of prayer. It is through prayer that we experience the power of God at work.

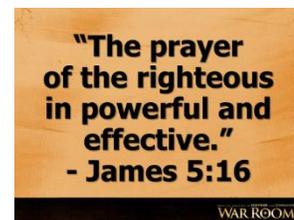
This is a church and a congregation that prays regularly and experiences the power of God at work in our lives. At the start of the new year, we heard from a young man who has been profoundly shaped by his experiences with answered

prayers. On his recent mission trip, Brody was an eye-witness to several healings that came through the power of prayer. He will never again look at the power of prayer the same way again. Two weeks ago, I shared the text of a person who experienced a newfound peace and a deep connection to God by spending time in a newly created prayer closet in their home. A few days after that I received a text that simply read, "Church was awesome this morning!" Through the testimony about the power of prayer and the transformation that it wrought in one person's life, another experienced the power of God speaking into their heart. The following Monday I received an e-mail that shared the impact of the power of prayer. It read, "After Christmas I was at my parents' home; someone come to look at the farm. I asked God to sell that place. They agreed to buy the farm the day." These are but a handful of the ways that God has faithfully answered the prayers of this congregation.

In closing, one more word of encouragement from the Word of God to come to Him in prayer. Reading from James 5, verses thirteen through sixteen:

¹³ Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Come to the Lord in prayer. "*The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*" Your prayers are powerful and effective. Pray, pray, pray. In all things and on all occasions, come to the Lord in prayer. God is faithful. God wants you to experience the power of prayer in your life. Amen. Let us pray.



GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) How do you stay 'connected to the vine'? What daily practices allow you to remain connected to Jesus throughout all that life brings?
- 2) What examples of answered prayer from the Bible do you cling to when you are in a trial or struggle? How do they encourage you?
- 3) When have you experienced the power of prayer being answered in your life? How has this affected the way you pray?
- 4) James 5:16 reads, "*The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*" Where do you need powerful and effective prayer? Lift it up to God!