

Persistence in Prayer

Ryan O' Hara

Hi, this is Ryan O'Hara and I'm excited to be back with you for talk number three on the Pray Method on Ask. I'm excited to continue this series and let's pray,

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God, I pray that you would increase our faith, that you would give us a vision for and a desire to ask big things of you, to be your sons and daughters, and to grow in our trust of you God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray all of this in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Are We Asking Enough?

So, I want to start with a question this time. So, if, if God answered all of your prayers, how different would the world be? How different would the world be if God answered all of your prayers? Would the church be stronger? Would there be more people becoming Catholic or being strengthened in their faith? Would the church be growing? Would the anthem of freedom and justice be the songs that fill our streets? Would there be less crime, less hunger, more healing, and more hope? Or would we just kind of notice a difference, in our world, in my life, in my family? We are more protected and more blessed because when I sort of default to what it is that I ask God for the most, it's protection and blessing of my family and of me, and I tend not to think much bigger than that. Yes, some prayer requests come in and those are some things that I am praying for.

But how different would the world be if God answered yes to all of my prayer requests? And that's really the question that we're here to consider today. Are we asking enough of God? Do our prayer requests, when we ask God, do they reflect how big and how capable and how strong we believe God actually is? And so here we are in the third step of the Pray Method, we started with praise, we went on to repentance and this next one is on ask or asking.

Ask in the Scriptures

Okay, well, first of all, what did the scripture say? Do we have any reason to believe that we should ask God things in prayer? In the scriptures, do we see it? And the answer is absolutely, oh my gosh, it is all over the scriptures. As I said in a previous talk, this is kind of the method, or I should say the step that we most commonly associate with prayer, that we come before God

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asking him for things. And so, we see it in the scriptures. It says that we should ask, seek and knock, whoever asks will hear, how does it go? No, whoever seeks will find, whoever knocks the door will be open to them, and whoever asks will be answered. And so, we should ask and seek and knock.

We also know there's that great story of persistence in prayer, where the neighbor comes over, he's got, the neighbor has a guest coming over late at night and he knocks on the door and the neighbor is like, go away, I'm in bed, the doors shut, we're all asleep. And he keeps knocking and knocking. He's asking for bread or for whatever he needs for his guest. And finally, that person gets up out of bed and provides for this persistent neighbor. So, we should ask, and we should do so persistently.

And then in James 4:3 it says that, "the reason we don't receive from God is because we don't ask." And so it just is put out so plainly. Are we asking for everything we can of God in prayer? And so there's a couple of categories that you can split this into. When you get into your prayer time, again in just a minute, we'll look at Luke 3, 10 to 18, and to see how that might prompt us to ask a couple of different things, just like any gospel could prompt us to ask of God different things. But there's really kinda two ways to do it, to look at your prayer intentions. What do you want to ask God for? And then to look at the prayer intentions of others, what have others asked you to pray for?

Document Your Ask

And so, when it comes to the things that you're praying for, either on behalf of yourself or on behalf of others, the first thing that I'd recommend is that you have some kind of journal, some kind of way to document what it is that you are asking of God and what it is others are asking of you. For a long time, I used a physical journal, but what I've done lately is to use a different note on my phone or different apps, actually that can track that sort of thing. I don't have anyone that I would recommend in particular. There's a number of them out there. You could just search for that, but we all need to find some way I believe so that we can see what it is that we're praying for. And we can note when we feel like God has really answered that particular prayer, and there may be some things, I know there's some prayer requests from my own life that have been going on for years. And I'm not sure when I'll see the answer to those prayers, but I keep asking.

And so, some way to document what you're praying for and what others are asking you to pray for is really crucial. Now, one of the things that happens a lot first is that when someone else asks you to pray for them, I think it's really good to do two things; either to have some way that you're writing that down, again, a note in your phone, you're noting, please pray for so-and-so about such and such. And I think it's really good that someone might see you taking that down. Now, sometimes we can't, we can't do anything about it in the moment, but a lot of times, one of

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the best things that we could do in the moment is to say, sure, I'd love to pray for you, could we just pray right now for that very thing? And so, whenever someone either asks you to pray for them and it's sort of spontaneous or you offer to pray for someone, I have a simple method that can help you in that moment. The truth is as Catholics, we're not as comfortable with spontaneous prayer, just sort of talking to God spontaneously and kind of putting together our own prayer in our own words, we love the, Our Father, The Hail Mary and the Glory Be. Those are all fantastic prayers. You should pray those prayers with people when they ask you to pray for them. But I also think it's really great maybe to end with a prayer like that, or to begin with a prayer like that, and then add to it something spontaneous.

G-I-V

And I think a simple way to do that is GIV, can you remember the word, GIV G-I-V spelled without an E, but G-I-V. You start with gratitude, express to God some gratitude for that person and for the gift of him in their life. Some way, God, I thank you for my friend, I thank you for all the ways that you have been working in his or her life. Thank you that we have an opportunity to connect today. Thank you, so you start with gratitude.

The next thing I think you can pray for, and that I think God will always want to answer. Yes, is to pray for intimacy, intimacy with God that they would grow in intimacy and friendship with God. God, I pray that you would strengthen your relationship with them, that they would be open to a closer knowledge and closer connection with you.

And third, you want to kind of think on your feet, it's the letter V which stands for Virtue, to pray for the particular virtue or virtues that might be, that really applies to this situation. Maybe they're having a hard time waiting to hear about a new job. They had an interview, and they haven't heard back yet. So, praying for patients in that situation would be a great virtue to pray for. So, I pray in gratitude for the person and where God has them in life, wherever that may be. I pray that they would grow in intimacy and connection and friendship with God, so GI, and finally I prefer the virtue that would seem to be appropriate for whatever their situation may be. And then you can end it with an Our Father, a Hail Mary or a Glory Glory Be.

And often it's great if they know those prayers to invite them to pray along with you. And so that's just a little tip. So a lot of times, prayer requests come in in that way, and I say, let's pray right on the spot and continue to pray for that person and those things that they've asked you to pray for, but it's really powerful to strengthen the body of Christ in this way, and to demonstrate that, you're talking to God like he's real, and he's right there with you, which he is, and he is when two or more are gathered in his name. And so, it's just a great demonstration of how practical and real your relationship with God is when you can offer to pray with someone in that situation.

Intercessory Prayer

And so, you've got your prayer intentions, you've got other prayer intentions. And so, this is a key piece that we'll kind of come back to day after day after day. And the truth is it can feel a bit repetitive, but when it gets repetitive, I think of that persistent neighbor, minute after minute, knocking and knocking and knocking and knocking on that door. And then finally, after a long time, the neighbor response and really, it's an incredible mystery. I don't quite understand how it all works and why after a certain amount of time, something changes.

And I know that for a lot of what happens in intercessory prayer, it isn't always us changing, it's not us changing God's mind, but it's us growing in union with what God wants. And so our disposition and our heart continues to change and to be formed into a greater hope and greater trust and greater confidence in God as we persist in prayer.

Ask Me Anything

And when it comes to your own life, have you seen these situations, as I started to ask at the beginning, how different would the world be if God answered yes to all of your prayers, are we asking enough? Are we thinking big enough when it comes to our prayer intentions, when we pray? And you know on social media, there's this thing that celebrities do Catholic or otherwise, but they have what's called an AMA an Ask Me Anything. And this kind of feels like one of those ways in which prayer and our relationship with God is like this, but it's not to ask God for, certainly we can ask God for more knowledge of God, but he's saying to us more like AFA, Ask For Anything. And over time, I believe he'll continue to refine those desires. And so I'd rather start big and then come back down to where God wants, than start small and then stop praying or asking God for anything all together.

And I think this is a great challenge to you and to me, what is it, what would you want, how could you begin praying for your family, your extended family, for your neighborhood, for your city, for your church, for your country, for the church more broadly, for the whole world? What would you ask of God? I think it's a great thing to challenge yourself, to think much bigger and not just to look at your own life as important as that is, but God is saying, I want you to ask for anything, and trust that over time, he'll refine you in those requests and refine those desires in you.

Two Asks

And so here we are in the Gospel, Luke 3, 10 to 18, we saw ways in which we can praise God for his attributes and character and the things that he has done. We can thank him from this passage.

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We saw ways in which this passage called us to repent of different things, selfishness and stinginess. What we also see is there's two things that I think are occasion to ask God for in our own life, based on what we see in this passage. And it's at the beginning of the first paragraph and the beginning of the second paragraph.

And in the first paragraph, the crowd is assembled around John, the Baptist and the crowd asks John, what should we do? And when I see that question, I think I want to have that same kind of curiosity. I want to have that same kind of interest to grow in holiness. I want to have that same kind of interest to apply my faith.

So, in this case, I'd say, let's ask that we would have a greater desire for holiness. God, would you give me a greater desire for holiness? God, would you increase my curiosity and not to settle for what's comfortable? And God would you prompt in me a desire to grow? And so those, that line in the scriptures is what prompted me around this question of ask, what should I ask for? So, holiness and curiosity, and a desire to grow. That's the first part of that passage.

In the second part of the passage, it talked about how the crowd had great expectations. And so certainly there were some ways in which their experience of John the Baptist kind of elevated their sense of anticipation. Something is happening, something new is in front of us. Is this the Messiah? Is he going to lead us to the Messiah? And so, they had a sense of expectation. And when I see that, I say, yeah, I want more of that. I want greater expectant, I want expected faith. I want to have greater expectations for God to be acting in my life. And I believe that we largely get whatever it is we're looking for. And if we are really looking for God to act and to move and to intervene in our life, I think we're going to see the evidence of that.

But if we're not looking for that, we won't know what hit us, even if God is moving. And so I saw that line, as they were in, had this great sense of expectation. I saw that line indicating to me, I want to ask for expectant faith, and I want to grow in my sense of anticipation that God will, can, and will act in my life and in others' lives.

What Does This Do With Our Faith?

So, what we've demonstrated in this Pray Method so far is that there's ways in which the scripture, if you read, say the gospel or any scripture for that matter, but you look at it first through the lens of praise, how can this prompt me to praise God, how can this prompt me to repent of my sins? And how can this prompt me to ask more of God? Those three things we've seen this one scripture be able to do all of those.

Now, it's true, I think there could be some passages in Deuteronomy, in Leviticus that might be harder to kind of apply this method, let's say, but all throughout the New Testament, all

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throughout the gospels, and most of the readings that you're going to find in the scriptures are really going to be a springboard for this kind of conversation, this kind of prayer with God. And so what I think is at stake with this one, if what was at stake or what we stood to gain with praise was the theological virtue of hope, and if what we stood to gain with a repentance is the theological virtue of love, when it comes to ask, I think what we stand to gain is the theological virtue of faith that we can grow in faith as we ask more of God and we see him respond to us and we see God answer different prayers in a variety of ways.

And so, what it does is it strengthens a certain boldness, it strengthens confidence, and it strengthens a sense of perseverance and persistence in our spiritual lives. And so I think there is a great opportunity with this part of our prayer to continue to strengthen it, to always remember that we should ask God for anything and to increase the scope and size of our prayer request, to be persistent, and to also not forget that when others ask us to pray for them to do that, to follow up with them and in the situation where they ask, let's go ahead and pray for them right then and there and see what might happen. And so this kind of grabs onto the third step of our prayer method. And I think there's a great opportunity to grow in faith through this part of our prayer time.

Closing Prayer

Let's pray, in name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God, we give you thanks, we give you things that you hear our prayer, that you are near to us, and that you listen to us, and that while you may not always say yes, you hear our prayer. Lord, I pray that you would increase persistence in us that you would increase faith in us, you would give us greater boldness, confidence and hopefulness in prayer. And thank you Lord for this incredible retreat. And I offer up to you everyone who would be experiencing this Pray More Retreat, and that each of us would grow in faith and love and hope. We pray this in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.