

40 DAY
PRAYER
CHALLENGE

Day 13: One Day

One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. Acts 10:3

The best way to zap our energy for prayer is to ask God for something that is achievable. God is honored when we ask for something big, something for His kingdom's sake that is beyond our abilities and resources. In fact, for a long time, I assumed that if I didn't know how a prayer could be answered, then I didn't pray for it. Consequently, I grew comfortable

praying for achievable (and boring) prayers. No wonder I struggled with my prayer life. How about you?

Batterson writes, "The size of your prayers depends on the size of your God. If your God is small, you'll pray man-sized prayers. But if your God knows no limits, then neither will your prayers."

Personal Growth: Write down a prayer that is so significant and so beyond your ability to accomplish that it requires God to show up. Don't attach any conditions such as when it happens, how it happens, or your preferred way God answers. You plant the prayer seed day-by-day and let God do the watering.

Bethany Growth: One of our big visions for Bethany for 2019-2020 is for every active member of the congregation to experience the transformative power of the Holy Spirit through worship, groups or generosity. Please join us!

Day 14: Speak to the Mountain

"Say to this mountain 'Move from here to there,' and it will move." Matthew 17:20

One of my favorite games to play is foosball. It's the table-top game that plays like soccer only without all the running around. Defense is my specialty, especially goaltending. Over the years I have learned to anticipate my opponents shot and 'stand' in front of it in a way that is a thrill. One thing that I am learning about following Jesus is that there is a time to play defense and a time to play offense.

Jesus didn't just resist the devil in the wilderness, he went on offense. He leveraged God's Word and put the devil in his place, a place without authority. I love how Mark Batterson explains going on offense; 'Maybe we need to quit letting our circumstances get between us and God and let God get between us and our circumstances.' When you seek the kingdom first in your life and your circumstances, that is, when you start your day in prayer and commit to make God's will your will, you move to the front lines.

Personal Growth: Under the command of the Lord who is the Lion of Judah, pray for God to go before you today in your circumstances. For that difficult relationship, circle that relationship in prayer and allow God to go before you. The more opposition we experience, the harder we must pray. And the harder we ; the more miracles God does.

Bethany Growth: One of the core values for Bethany has long been risk-taking mission. We could play things safe as a church; let people show up at our door, lean on the leaders to do what they are hired to do, give when we think we comfortably can give. What does a church look like that goes on offense? Pray that Bethany enters the front lines so that we might seek creative ways to engage the lost, mobilize thousands to use their gifts, and become an even stronger influence for the goodness of the lord in our community.

Day 15: Contend for Me

Contend for me, my God and Lord. Psalm 35:23

From Draw the Circle; 'Prayer is the difference between you fighting for God and God fighting for you.' Like my childhood backyard game of fort, when you think of prayer like a fort to dwell with God, you develop a sixth sense. You begin to see where daily prayers serve as armor against voices of criticism and judgment.

It's important to have people in our lives who can speak words of truth, but those are usually people with whom we have a relationship. Beyond those accountability partners, I find that criticism is like the devil complaining. It's not worth being sidetracked from what God is doing in you.

Personal Growth: God is fighting for you which means we don't need to take a posture of aggression with difficult relationships. If your cause is just and your heart is right then life is too short, and the mission is too important. Let God defend and contend on your behalf.

Bethany Growth: A common virus in local churches is side-to-side communication, or gossip. Pray that Bethany continues to embrace healthy communication where people show each other respect by communicating directly, one-on-one.

Day 16: Lord, Surprise Me

"The wind blows wherever it pleases." John 3:8

Yesterday Bethany received a generous gift from the estate of a family who belonged many years ago. It was a prayer answered, but it was a wonderful surprise. Mark Batterson notes that when we pray, God loves to throw surprise parties! He goes on, "Every miracle, every blessing, every divine appointment has a genealogy. If we trace them back, we'll find a genesis prayer that set in motion the sovereign act of God." In God's providential will, God has determined that there are some things He will only do in response to prayer. Jesus told us so, "You do not have because you do not ask God."

Someone asked me the other day if we have to say our prayers 'out loud.' My first response was no, we don't have to verbalize prayer in a way that is audible to other people in the room. But we do have to verbalize them to make them audible to God. The greatest growing edge in my own prayer life comes when I stop assuming God knows my prayers and start silently verbalizing them.

Personal Growth: Some people use a prayer journal to help them be specific and detailed in their prayers. Consider journaling today, or simply write down your prayers in a private place. Watch and see, you might be surprised by the joy God takes in answering a prayer that is asked.

Bethany Growth: We continue to ask God for the resources to fuel the faith of a thousand people through worship, groups, and generous giving. Pray that as a community we continue to work like it depends on us, and that we pray like it depends on God.

Sunday

Day 17: Do Not Delay

“O Lord pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God.” Daniel 9:19 ESV

Very rarely are our prayers answered as quickly or easily as we'd like. If you are praying hard then you know that praying hard is hard work. Mark Batterson recommends the use of the acronym ALAT to center prayer expectations. We want God to answer our prayers ASAP, but Mark's advice is to attach ALAT, or As Long As it Takes, to each prayer. A prayer answered too quickly can confuse us into thinking that we should take the credit. When we pray with confidence, we stay at it ALAT. God will answer accordingly so that God gets the glory.

Personal Growth: God is never early. God is never late. God is always right on time. Go back to a prayer from the first week of the 40-day challenge and refine it. When the prayer is answered how will it honor God? When you pray for it does it release you from worry over the outcome? Keep at it!

Bethany Growth: Bethany has long been a positive influence in our community. Now, we are in discernment for where God is calling us next to impact our community in tangible ways. Ask God to reveal a vision for our Mission leaders.

Day 18: Keep Circling

“On the seventh day, march around the city seven times.” Joshua 6:4

When you begin to pray, you stop believing in coincidences and begin to see God's provision. Prayer gives us a sense that God is up to something and we are a part of it. Or as Mark Batterson preaches, “I believe there is a God in heaven who directs our steps, who prepares good works in advance, who causes all things to work together for good, who fights our battles for us!” In his book, The Circle Maker, Mark insightfully explains that it is not enough to ‘pray for’ something, sometimes we must ‘pray through’ something. Why? Because God rarely does things the way we expect, or how we expect. Sometimes God will push us to our limits of faith or patience or to the limits of our gifts. It is how God stretches our faith and builds our character.

I think back on the dreams I gave up on because I stopped praying. It usually happened because I was thinking in present-tense terms. If the Israelites had stopped circling Jericho, they would have forfeited their first victory in the Promised Land. But more than that, they would have forfeited the Promised Land altogether.

Personal Growth: I don't know if you have heard a yes, a no, or a not-yet for your prayers. You must praise God if the answer is yes and trust him if the answer is no. If the answer is not yet, then pray through.

Bethany Growth: We have many members listed on our prayer list seeking healing and wholeness. Please pray a general prayer for God's provision for all those who are physically suffering. If you wish to be one of our prayer ministers, please contact the office.