



July 1, 2018

“Why Pray?”

Isaiah 38

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Prayer is the most underutilized gift God has given us to connect and commune with him. We are often too busy to pray, but we are only doing ourselves a disservice when we don't make time for prayer. In Isaiah 38, King Hezekiah received word from God that his life was about to come to an end. This news prompted him to pray a simple prayer, and in response, God added 15 years to his life. In this message, Pastor Gary teaches about the benefits available to us through prayer, and why is it important to pray.

Historical Background

1. The Bible also records this account in [2 Kings 20:1-11](#).
2. When Hezekiah received the message from Isaiah that he was going to die soon, he was about 39 years old.
3. We learn from [Isaiah 38:21](#) that Hezekiah was sick because he had an infected boil.
4. Hezekiah prayed, but he didn't ask to be healed, to receive the mercy of the Lord, etc.; he appealed to the memory of the Lord concerning his wholehearted devotion and faithful life.
 - a. [Isaiah 38:3](#) - “*Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.*” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”
5. God heard Hezekiah's prayer and saw the tears he shed.
 - a. [Isaiah 38:4-5](#) - “*Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: ‘Go and tell*

Hezekiah, "This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life." "

6. The Lord is acquainted with our suffering and our grief, and he knows when we are in anguish.
 - a. **Psalm 56:8** - *"Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll - are they not in your record?"*
7. The Lord promised that he would heal Hezekiah, and as an added bonus, he promised to deliver Hezekiah from the Assyrians!
 - a. **Isaiah 38:5-6** - *"... I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city."*
8. God doesn't change his mind, so this account is not about God changing his mind; this was a time of testing to see if Hezekiah would get angry at God and curse him or would he get mad at Isaiah or would he would he pray to God?
 - a. **1 Samuel 15:29** - *"He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."*
9. The method by which God healed Hezekiah is remarkable, in that he basically used a Fig Newton to extract the infection from Hezekiah's body!
10. Pastor Gary said: "God is a God of miracles, and he can choose to heal people any way he wants to, but there are times when God will use natural means to accomplish a supernatural end. Don't despise doctors and medicine. Listen, God is [always] the ultimate healer, but God uses doctors and God uses medicine... I just love the way that God [honored] a very simple, non-demanding, broken man's prayer..."

What Is Prayer?

11. A basic definition for prayer would be that it is connecting and communing with God.
12. Pastor Gary said: "[Prayer] is sometimes talking. It is sometimes just listening, [without saying a word]. It can be with words or it can be just from your heart. There's no right way or wrong way to pray. There's no designed or designated prayer posture. You can pray [while standing, sitting, and kneeling. You can lift your hands, close your eyes, or open your eyes. You can pray on the run, in public, or in private. You can pray in the morning, in the evening, or at any time in between]. But the main thing is that we need to pray!"

- a. [Romans 12:12](#) - *“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.”*
- b. [Colossians 4:2](#) - *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”*
- c. [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) - *“... pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

13. When we read strong exhortations about something in the Bible, we need to realize that the emphasis is there because these things don't come naturally.

14. “The difference between talking about prayer and actually praying is the same as the difference between blowing a kiss and kissing.” - G.K. Chesterton ¹

Why Pray?

15. Pray because you may not receive what God wants you to have until you ask.
- a. [James 4:2d](#) - *“You do not have, because you do not ask God.”*
 - b. [Matthew 6:8](#) - *“... your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*
 - i. Pastor Gary said: “Why bother asking? Why doesn't he just give me what I want or what I need? Why doesn't he anticipate everything - because God knows everything - and then just go ahead and deliver without my having to ask? What's the purpose in prayer? Why would God withhold things from me until I ask? [God doesn't withhold everything from us until we ask, because no loving parent would do that, so why would God?] There are times when God is waiting for us to ask. [In] asking, we're learning some things.”
 - 1. Humility - It takes humility to ask.
 - 2. Patience - We learn patience while we are waiting.
 - 3. Gratitude - We learn to be grateful for what we receive.
 - c. Pastor Gary said: “God, as our Father, is going to filter through all of our requests. ... We don't have the understanding or the capacity to realize that some of the things we want aren't good for us. Don't think that God is a vending machine or a genie in a bottle. That's not what prayer is about. ... Sometimes his answer is going to be, ‘Yes.’ Sometimes his answer is going to be, ‘No.’ And, sometimes his answer is going to be, ‘Not now.’ And we have to be willing to trust him because he is our Father in heaven, who always does what is best for us.”
 - d. God isn't obligated to deliver to us what we ask for when we have wrong motives.
 - i. [James 4:3](#) - *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask*

¹ https://www.wycliffe.org/Resources/Prayer/why-prayer-doesnt-work_excerpt.pdf

with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

- ii. Pastor Gary said: “How can I know if my request is one with wrong motives? Answer: when you don’t get what you ask for! ... Sometimes God is protecting us from our own selfish ambition that are not in step with his purposes and plans for our lives.”

16. Pray because God delights to show himself strong on your behalf.

- a. **Isaiah 37:1-3** provides the account of the field commander of the Assyrian army, who came to “trash talk” God and the people of Judah.
- b. Hezekiah’s response was to pray!
 - i. **Isaiah 37:15-17** - *“And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: ‘O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to all the words of Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.’ ”* (Emphasis added)
- c. God’s response to Hezekiah’s prayer was remarkable!
 - i. **Isaiah 37:21** - *“Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: **Because you have prayed** to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word the LORD has spoken against him...’ ”* (Emphasis added)
 - ii. **Isaiah 37:36** - *“Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eight-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning - there were all the dead bodies!”*
- d. Pastor Gary said: “Prayer builds your prayer life. ... [As] you pray you can see answers to prayer. You can see the different ways that God worked in wonderful and miraculous ways, and it motivates you to pray more.”
- e. **2 Chronicles 16:9a** - *“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”*
- f. **Psalms 50:15** - *“... call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”*

17. Pray because prayer bends your will to the will of God.

- a. Pastor Gary said: “I have a will and God has a will. Same with you. You have a will and God has a will. Now, sometimes those wills align; what God wants is the same thing that you want. And sometimes [your will and God’s will] do not align; God wills something, and you don’t will it. So, in those moments when [our] will doesn’t align with the will of God or when [we] don’t know if [our] will aligns with the will of God. ... What

happens in prayer is that it helps to bend [our] will to the will of God. If it's already aligned, then there's not much bending, but if it's not, then what happens is that in [our] heart God begins to move in such a way that [we just surrender] to the will of God; [our] will bent toward the will of God. Now here's why I need to clarify this; it's because I've heard people [throughout] my years of ministry who take issue with this. They would say to you, 'It's a faithless thing to end your prayer saying, "Your will be done." And the reason is because some believe that in prayer we should come boldly before the throne of grace... [declaring] to God in faith, believing, and that if anything else other than a strong declaration of believing enters in... then it's almost a statement of a lack of faith. They will often quote [James 1:6-8](#). ... You can go and look at [verses like these] and it almost sounds like that [we] need to go and kind of assert [ourselves] to God and not doubt, [and stand strong and be a person of faith]. ... [In [James 1:6-8](#)], I believe the doubt [James was] talking about is doubting God. If you doubt that God is able, then you're a double-minded person. Why are you asking God for something that you don't really believe he's able to do? [So] don't ever doubt God, because God is able to do exceedingly [and] abundantly, beyond what we can hope or imagine. [To] defer to his will is not doubting God, [because] that is a posture of humility. ... [Prayer helps to bend our] will to the will of God. This is not weakness; this is meekness."

- i. [Hebrews 4:16](#) - *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*
 - ii. [James 1:6-8](#) - *"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does."*
 - iii. [Matthew 6:10](#) - *"... your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*
 - iv. [Luke 22:42](#) - *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*
- b. "Prayer is surrender – surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boat hook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God." – E. Stanley Jones ²

18. Pray because prayer combats anxiety, fear, worry, and temptation.

- a. [Philippians 4:6-7](#) - *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your*

² <https://bible.org/illustration/prayer-surrender>

requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

- b. **Matthew 26:41** - *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”*

19. Pray because prayer is the pathway for forgiveness.

- a. **1 John 1:9** - *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*
- b. **Psalm 51:1-2, 10-12** - *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit with in me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”*

Pray!

20. Pastor Gary said: “If you want to get closer to God, pray. If you are sick and need healing, pray. If you are worried or fearful, pray. If you are tempted, pray. If you need answers to questions, pray. If you are in doubt, pray. If you don’t know what else to do, then by all means, pray!”

21. “You can do more than pray after you have prayed. But you cannot do more than pray until after you have prayed. - John Bunyan ³

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Isaiah 38:1-6** and provide an overview of the historical background to set the foundation for your Bible study time. (See #1 through #10 above)
2. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s definition of prayer. (See #11 above)
3. Read the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared and discuss his remarks about prayer. (See #12 above)
4. Read and discuss G.K. Chesterton’s quote about what it means to talk about prayer and praying. (See #14 above)

³ <https://www.christianquotes.info/quotes-by-author/john-bunyan-quotes/?listpage=5&instance=2>

5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments about why we need to pray. (See #15 above)
6. How have you seen God show himself strong on your behalf in response to prayer? (See #16 above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's lengthy remarks about bending our will to the will of God. (See #17a above)
8. Read and discuss E. Stanley Jones' insightful remarks about prayer. (See #17b above)
9. Spend time reading and talking about the way that prayer helps us deal with anxiety, fear, worry, and temptation. (See #18 above)
10. Spend time reading and talking about the way prayer helps us receive God's forgiveness. (See #19 above)
11. Read and discuss John Bunyan's statement about action before prayer. (See #21 above)
12. Close your time by having someone be prepared to read Pastor Gary's remarks about prayer, and then pray as the Holy Spirit leads. (See #20 above)

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).