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"Practice Persistent Prayer"

[Luke 18:1-8](#)

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Sometimes when we pray, we don't always get WHAT we want, WHEN we want it. Nevertheless, Jesus encouraged us to keep on praying and to not become discouraged. He taught a parable about a widow who continually appealed to a judge for justice until the judge finally granted her wish. The point of the parable was this—if a cold-hearted judge gave a poor widow what she needed, how much more will our warm-hearted Father give to His children what we need!

1. The Parable of the Persistent Widow

- a. [Luke 18:1-8](#) – *"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: 'There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, "Get justice for me from my adversary." And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, "Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."' Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?'"*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "A parable is basically an illustration drawn from everyday life to communicate a deeper spiritual or moral truth ... and Jesus often employed this tool of communication. He would use a parable to teach, to help his hearers ... stretch in their understanding of something that was deeper. ... A lot of times when Jesus would teach a parable, he would teach it intentionally with the idea of causing people to have to think more intently and to read between the lines."

- c. Pastor Gary said, “Now what I love about this particular parable is ... Luke [gave] us the point of the parable, the purpose of the parable, right at the beginning: “That men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” He [told] us right up front ... that Jesus [wanted] to encourage us. He [encouraged] us to pray and to keep on praying and to not be discouraged. ... Most of the time when it comes to the topic of prayer, we’re more concerned about the posture of prayer, especially those who are new to the faith. People don’t know: is it right to pray with your eyes open, eyes shut? Should I stand or should I sit? Hands folded, hands raised? What’s the proper posture? ... I can just tell you that God is not nearly as concerned about your prayer posture as he is your prayer persistence. And that’s what this parable is all about.”
- d. Pastor Gary said, “There’s the type of persistence that Jesus [talked] about here, where he [encouraged] you to pray and to not give up, to be persistent in prayer. And so, he [used] this example ... about a woman, and this woman ... [happened] to be a widow, and she was seeking justice for some wrong treatment that she [had] received. ... So [she appealed] to a judge in a court of law, and the judge in the story ... did not fear God, and he did not regard man. ... So, he [could] just decide whatever he [wanted] to decide without any real regard or reverence for God. ... The more that this judge dismissed this woman ... the more persistent she became. ... She just [wore] this guy down. ... Finally, the judge [said], ‘You know, I don’t really care about people. I don’t fear God ... but because this widow troubles me, you know, like just to get her off my back, I will avenge her. OK, I’ll get justice for her, lest by her continual coming, she [wearies] me. ... So, because of all the nagging, I’m just going to grant her request.’”
 - i. [Luke 18:6-7](#) - *“Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.’”*
- e. Pastor Gary said, “We have a patient God. He loves us, and so will he not also give us justice when we cry out to him day and night, day and night and day and night?”

2. Parable of contrast

- a. Pastor Gary said, “Now, some people have a hard time with this parable, and the reason that some have a hard time with this parable is because they interpret it incorrectly. And they look at this parable and they basically think that Jesus is comparing us to the widow and God to this unjust judge, and that the idea, they think, is that if we just wear God down enough with our constant nagging about something, that he will eventually give us what we want. ... This is not how the parable is supposed to be interpreted because the parable is not primarily a parable of comparison. The parable is primarily

a parable of contrast.”

- b. Pastor Gary said, “What you have here is this woman who [was] a widow, and as a widow, she [was] in one of the most disadvantaged classes of society at this time. ... Jesus intentionally [chose] a person of this kind of social status to show her desperation, and she [was] crying out to this judge ... until finally, he [gave] her justice. The point of the parable [was] that if an unjust, uncaring judge would do for this poor lowly widow what he did, how much more will a caring, loving Father in Heaven do for you and me? That’s his point, which is why we need to be persistent in prayer because our Father in Heaven delights to do good for his children.”
- c. Pastor Gary said, “The very fact that this is a parable, though, that challenges us to be persistent, implies what? Well, it implies that we won’t always get what we want when we want it from God... If every time we prayed about something and we got what we wanted when we wanted it, Jesus would have no reason to exhort us—keep on praying, hang in there. So the very reason that he’s teaching this parable is because when we pray, we will not always get what we want ... and we certainly won’t always get it when we want it, which is why [he was] telling us here to be persistent in prayer. Don’t give up. Keep praying, even though you don’t get immediate answers.”

3. Why don’t we always get what we want when we want it from God?

- a. It’s not his will
 - i. Pastor Gary said, “God has a perfect will for your life. You also have a will for your life ... and sometimes those things are aligned and sometimes they’re not. ... So, the question is, the issue is, how quickly will I discern his will to join in on what his will is for my life?”
 - 1. **Matthew 26:39b** – *“Oh My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “Now the cup [Jesus was] referring to is the cup of suffering, and Jesus was basically saying that, ‘My will is if there is some other way to accomplish the plan of redemption without my going to the cross, that would be my preference, but nevertheless your will be done, not mine,’ and so he surrendered his will to the will of the Father, and that’s what we have to be about. ... E. Stanley Jones said it this way: ‘Prayer is surrender, surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. ... If I throw out a boat hook from a 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.’”
- b. It’s not his timing
 - i. Pastor Gary said, “You might discern God’s will properly, but it’s not only knowing ‘the what’ of God’s will, it’s also knowing ‘the when’ of

God's will. ... Moses knew that he was God's deliverer, that God would raise him up to deliver the Hebrew slaves after four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, but he had the timing wrong. ... He [saw] an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave. He [intervened] to rescue one of his fellow Hebrews, [killed] the Egyptian taskmaster, and [said] that he did it because he thought he was God's deliverer. Well, he was God's deliverer, but he didn't have to go slaughtering all the Egyptian taskmasters. God was going to do it in miraculous ways. ... God had to train Moses on the back side of the wilderness of Midian for forty years until he was really ready to be a shepherd who would lead the people out of slavery... [The] Apostle Paul, when he was on the road to Damascus and had this wonderful encounter with Jesus and got saved and became a believer; he didn't just get up immediately and start preaching the gospel. ... There [were] ten years ... that Paul was seeking the Lord, and God was working on his heart to prepare him for what he was calling him to do. ... Jesus knew he was the Messiah. ... When people tried to prematurely make him king, what would he say? 'My time has not yet come.' God has a perfect timetable for you, and it might be different from your timetable, but his timing is never early. His timing is never late. God's timing is always perfect. He's always on time."

1. **Psalm 27:14** - *"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!"*
2. **Micah 7:7** - *"Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."*

c. It's not his best

- i. Pastor Gary said, "God always has his best. Think about what happened in the gospel of John. ... Lazarus had died, and Lazarus [had] two sisters, Mary and Martha. The Bible says they sent word to Jesus when Lazarus was sick, hoping that he would come to heal their sick brother, and when Jesus got word, he just tarried where he was for a few more days while Lazarus died. ... By the time Jesus [showed] up, Lazarus had been dead a few days, and both Mary and Martha independently [said] to Jesus ... 'If you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died,' but you see, Jesus performed a greater miracle. What was the better thing—to make a sick man well or to make a dead man alive? ... Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers, not because he's late. Jesus was perfectly on time, but because maybe what we're praying for is not God's best. ... We don't know what God's will is, we don't know what God's timing is, and we don't always know what God's best is; that's why we need to keep praying with persistence until we find out, until it's clear."

1. [Matthew 7:7](#) – “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”
- ii. Pastor Gary said, “All three of those verbs—ask, seek and knock—are in the Greek present active imperative, meaning continual action. It literally translates ‘ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, [and] knock and keep on knocking.’... We don’t know always what God is up to, so it’s good for us to be persistent in prayer until God reveals his will, his timing and his best for us.”
 1. [Romans 12:12](#) – “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” (1984 NIV)

4. Chart of Contrasts

- a. Pastor Gary said, “Look at this quick chart of contrasts. Here’s the widow, [and] here are Believers who trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. Notice she was appealing to a cold-hearted judge. We are appealing to a warm-hearted father. She approached a court of law. We approach a throne of grace. She got justice. We get mercy. So how much more should we be persistent in pursuing God? He loves us. He cares about us.”

The Widow	Believers
She was appealing to a cold-hearted judge	We are appealing to a warm-hearted Father!
She approached a court of law	We approach a throne of grace!
She got justice	We get mercy!

- b. Pastor Gary said, “Prayer is not an obligation. Prayer is an invitation ... to commune and connect with God. It is sometimes talking to him. It is sometimes listening to him. It can be with words or just from your heart. It can be making requests for yourself or interceding for others. There is no right way to pray, and the only wrong way to pray is if you don’t. There is no designated prayer posture. You can stand, you can sit, you can kneel, lift hands, close eyes, open eyes. You can pray on the run, you can pray in public, you can pray in private. You can pray in the morning, pray in the evening and pray every time in between, but the main thing is, be persistent in prayer.
 - i. [Colossians 4:2](#) – “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (1984 NIV)
 - ii. [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) – “Pray without ceasing.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Luke 18:1-8](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What was the point of the parable Jesus told in this passage? (See #1c above)
3. What did Pastor Gary mean when he said it was a “parable of contrast?” (See #2b above)
4. What does Jesus’ telling of this parable imply? (See #2c above)
5. What does prayer accomplish in terms of God’s will for our lives? (See #3a-i and #3a-ii above)
6. Sometimes we can discern God’s will but miss God’s _____. (See #3b above)
7. Read [Psalm 27:14](#) and [Micah 7:7](#). How should we respond when God’s timetable doesn’t line up with ours? (See #3b-i-1 and #3b-i-2 above)
8. Think about the story of Lazarus and the way Jesus delayed going to Mary and Martha. Sometimes God doesn’t give us what we’re asking for because it’s not his _____. (See #3c-i above)
9. What is the literal translation of [Matthew 7:7](#) from the original Greek? How should we apply this instruction to our prayers? (See #3c-i-1 and #3c-ii above)
10. Contrast the appeals of the widow in the parable with those of Believers in prayer to God. (See #4a above)
11. Read [Colossians 4:2](#) and [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#). What is the main instruction for prayer? (See #4b above)
12. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)