

To all the praying Saints at Manatee Life Church,

SCRIPTURE:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (MSG); Larger Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
*Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens.
This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.*

STORY:

A non-Christian after visiting in an Asian country related that a native woman threw herself upon the steps of a pagan temple and prayed that her sick child would be cured. When she had finished, the visitor asked the woman to whom she prayed. “I do not know,” she said, “but surely somewhere there must be someone to hear a mother’s cry and keep a mother’s heart from breaking.”

OBSERVATION:

Most of us have in the shoes of that dear mother. Oh, we name the one to whom we pray in the hopes that God will keep our hearts from breaking. Prayer is a powerful and meaningful spiritual discipline. It is a constant connection with God. When you consider the dynamics of prayer, apart from “Grace” over a meal and/or an occasional “Thank you, Lord”, all other prayers are Intercessory Prayers at their core ... either for yourself or for someone else.

We should remove the concept that God is some kind of “Celestial Bellhop” from our thinking ... you just ring him up and BINGO, room service. I’ve encountered too many people over the years that have approached prayer in that fashion and got mad at God because he didn’t answer their prayers, as they desired. Some have even discounted Intercessory Prayer because they found it frustrating because answers were not forthcoming ... “why waste your time!” has been their general response. Or, they were praying for a healing and the person died resulting in the conclusion that they must have been mistaken about this whole “prayer” thing.

And, then there was the pastor, during our son Tim’s illness and death, who preached a sermon that sickness and ill health is directly linked to sin and our negative attitudes. Ouch ... that sure was a negative ... and definitely not scriptural.

Let’s begin with what we mean when we go to God in prayer for a healing for a particular person. Normally we mean “physical” healing instead of leaving it up to God as to what is best for the person or persons involved. Healing comes in various forms – physical, emotional, mental, relational, and even death itself. Why limit God to only one kind of healing? We should be open to whatever God offers for the situation. In our case, Tim lived longer than the doctors anticipated him living because of the type of leukemia that he had and the doors flew open when we began the process to adopt Erin ... both of them were healing's from God.

I've witnessed terminally ill patients "rally" when they discovered that people were praying for them. Could it be that we who were praying for the sick person shared some of our strength and energy with theirs giving them the ability to "rally"? As I have often said that when we offer up an intercessory prayer we should direct it in two directions, to God and then to the person being mentioned in the prayer so that they will receive our energy and be open to whatever God has in store for them. On several occasions I've had congregations in deep committed prayers for a person only to find that the sick person really didn't want to get better or believed that God really couldn't do anything in their case. Our spirits were fighting their spirit over the issue of their future.

Then there are those who ask for "traveling mercies" for a dear loved one. While it sounds nice, what does that really mean? Can you conclude that if a family has an accident they had no one praying for "traveling mercies" for them ... or God simply decided that they were not worthy of "traveling mercies" for that particular day? It is a difficult question and one over which we really should struggle.

Just what are we praying for and how does that lineup with scriptural teachings? Scripture does teach us to "prayer for each other" and to "pray without ceasing". Both of them I can do, but it is the scripture that shares, "if you ask anything in my name" that gives me the most trouble. I'm still trying to sort that one out. I've read about what it means to ask "in my name" as in harmony with his purpose and in conjunction with God's purpose for the Kingdom here on Earth ... that thinking all sounds good, but I'm still struggling with the fuller meaning ... actually I find it one of the tough sayings of Jesus. I actually have a file for those "tough sayings of Jesus" – these are things that I would have wished Jesus had left out of his teachings. My life would have been a lot easier if he had. You see, I'm just a work in process and my theology is still in flux, but as I've been told, "Pray on McDuff ... pray on!" And so I shall!

QUOTE:

Pray as if everything depends on God, then work as if everything depends on you. - Martin Luther

PRAYER:

Okay God, we've talked about prayer today which will cause several to sit around around the breakfast table sharing another cup of coffee as these complicated ideas are shared. Bring your revelation to our soul. Shed a light on our think. Ease the burden upon our heart. For we pray in the blessed name of Jesus. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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***WORSHIP SERVICE will be posted this Sunday on our Facebook page.
Discover my own understanding of the concept of Tabernacle.***