



UNLEASHED
Power of Prayer
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Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are beginning a series called “Unleashed.” So often, the biggest thing keeping us from the life God has for us is actually us. What would it look like if we, as a church and as individuals, fully unleashed God’s purpose in our lives? What if we pursued God fully and prayed completely over that pursuit? We are embarking on a journey to discover what living an unleashed life looks like as God uses prayer to release His power in us. Our goal is to spiritually re-engage our hearts and souls and realign with God after the distractions of the summer.

SCRIPTURE¹

James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

James 5:16-18 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Mark 11:17 Jesus said, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

OBSERVATION

We are unleashing the church to be the hands and feet of Jesus this week and we know that God does something in us when we begin to pray. Yet haven’t you wondered, if God knows everything, then what is the point of prayer? Can we really change the mind of God or is He even listening to us? Well, James surely has a lot to say about these thoughts in his epistle. St. Paul also has a lot to tell us about expressing thankfulness. He endured prison, beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, snake bite, and a thorn in the flesh yet he always maintained a grateful heart.

Question: In the past, under what circumstances have you fervently prayed for God’s help? What was the result?

APPLICATION

God is telling us, “When you are in trouble I want you to pray. I want you to come to Me. I want to respond and meet your needs. “ Did you know that there are songs being sung around the throne of God? Then all of a sudden it is silent as our prayers rise to Heaven. God is listening, He is caring, and He is acting upon our requests. So why are we still asking ourselves why we should pray? Here are more reasons for us to consider.

1. We pray because we’re in trouble. James is asking us if anyone is in trouble. There are certainly degrees of trouble, but he isn’t interested in that, is he? So we all have to answer “yes” to James’ question because our times are full of trouble. There may be nowhere else to turn, or we may be desperate for an

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

intervention, or a routine physical brings on our worst medical nightmare. James' response is to pray. When we're in trouble our Heavenly Father wants us to pray. A loving parent always responds. And God may not answer in the way we want Him to, but He will respond in a way He thinks is best for us.

Question: What situation today seems to be dire to you? How much time have you spent praying about it this week?

2. We pray because we are grateful. Ingratitude leads to a life of discontent, complaining, making judgments, and being dissatisfied. But out of a heart of gratitude we sing songs of praise. We are thankful for all God has done for us and how mightily He has blessed our families. King David wrote and sang many songs of praise and they are preserved for us in Scripture because God wants us to have a model for praise. David was a sinful man, but his sinfulness made him humble and thankful for God's mercy. He is another giant of the Bible who runs with us as we make our own way through life.

Question: When have you been ungrateful and dissatisfied? Were you able to recognize the cause of those feelings? What was it? What did you do about it?

Question: What songs do you love to sing that express your gratitude to God?

Part of gratitude is realizing that no matter how bad a situation seems, it could always be worse. There could always be more danger, or more cost or more consequences involved. When we live with hearts full of gratitude, we count the positives, too, and that changes us.

Question: How do the people around you know that you love God and are grateful to Him?

3. We pray because we need a place of complete honesty. One of the values we hold here at The Crossing is that life change happens best in relationships. There is enormous freedom in finding a few people we can connect with and trust their confidentiality. We can unmask ourselves and know that something therapeutic and healing will happen during our conversations. Unfortunately, some subjects are too embarrassing, too deep, or cause us so much shame that we can't be forthcoming enough to reach a breakthrough. Then we have prayer closets where we can be honest with God and can ask Him to search us, know our hearts and see if there is any offense in us.

Question: St. Paul says that the gift of tongues is a lesser gift, but as a personal prayer language it provides another intimate way of communing with God. Have you ever considered asking Him for this gift?

Question: There is shame in all of our pasts. What qualities would a loving friend need to have for you to choose to confide in him/her?

4. We pray because prayer is powerful and effective. We know that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective and Elijah, who was an ordinary human being, proved that. Elijah was another hero of the Bible and God magnificently answered his prayers. But we think He doesn't work that way with us. James says the opposite. These miraculous and powerful prayers are available to all of us who pray earnestly, serve and follow God.

Question: Why do you think that God relates to us differently than He did with people in scripture? How do you support that thinking?

Question: What is your plan to join the church fellowship in three weeks of persevering in prayer? In what ways do you hope this time together and with God will change in your life?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We are committing ourselves to persevere in prayer over the next three weeks and ask that you teach us how to pray more powerfully during that time. It is our purpose to grow closer to You and to continue on over the rest of our lives as we become prayer warriors for our church, our families, and our nation. Lift us up, Lord, and draw us closer to You and each other through this time. In Jesus' name. Amen.