

THE MISSING ESSENTIAL
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Luke 18:1-8

1. A study of the first several chapters of Acts reveals what characterized the corporate life of the early church.
2. The first thing we notice involved prayerfully waiting upon God.
 - a. Acts 1:4-5
Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, **but to wait for what the Father had promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
 - b. Acts 1:12-14
Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. **14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
NOTE: They obeyed the Lord with one exception. Peter decided that they needed to replace Judas; something Jesus had not told them to do. Matthias was the church's replacement for Judas, but Saul of Tarsus (later Paul) was Heaven's replacement. Their action was not Spirit-led because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given.
3. The other things that characterized the life of the early church are noted in Acts 2:42. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
NOTE: To some degree three of the four disciplines mentioned are still priorities; Bible teaching and preaching, various forms of fellowship, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. While prayer is often talked about it is no longer a foundational practice.
4. Until prayer reclaims its rightful place in the lives of individual believers, and in the corporate life of the church, we will continue to see the church operating in the flesh rather than the Spirit.
NOTE: Most of what goes on in the average American church can be explained by good planning, programing, and promotion, or the personality and persuasiveness of the preacher.
5. Note with me what Jesus had to say in the passage before us.
 - I. **A priority proclaimed.**
 - A. "Also Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to turn coward (faint, lose heart, and give up)." (AMP)

B. The Apostle Paul emphasized this priority as well.

1. Eph 6:18-20

With all prayer and petition **pray at all times** in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

2. 1 Thess 5:16-18

Rejoice always; 17 **pray without ceasing**; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

C. However you chose to interpret Jesus's words and those of the Apostle Paul it is clear that consistent, ongoing prayer is to characterized our lives.

D. We are to be dependent upon God, God-conscious, and preoccupied with God.

E. Every moment of every day we should be sub-consciously aware of God's presence and dependent upon His power.

F. Jesus made it clear that no person can live a life that honors God and advances His purposes apart from living in an attitude of prayer.

II. A parable pronounced.

A. The point of the parable was to point out that if persistence works to advance our personal agenda with people who do not really care, how much more it will work to advance God's agenda in our lives and through our lives.

B. Jesus taught the truth a little differently in Luke 11:1-13.

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." 2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. 3 'Give us each day our daily bread. 4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" 5 Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' 8 **"I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.** 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. 11 "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 **"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"**

NOTE: Verses 9 and 10 are written in a Greek tense that denotes continuous action.

III. A promise provided.

- A. In both passages Jesus promised that heartfelt, ongoing, persevering prayer will move God to act on our behalf.
- B. Luke 18:7-8 reads this way in the Amplified Version.
“And will not [our just] God defend and protect and avenge His elect (His chosen ones), who cry to Him day and night? Will He defer them and delay help on their behalf? I tell you, He will defend and protect and avenge them speedily...”

IV. A problem possible.

- A. Notice that Jesus ended our focus passage with a question.
- B. He asked, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find (persistence in) faith on the earth?” (AMP)
- C. This is not a rhetorical question; rather it is a prophetic statement implying that in many instances He will not.

APPLICATION

1. Underlying and impacting every area of our lives should be our dependency upon God.
2. The level of that dependency will be revealed by the degree to which we are purposeful and persistent in prayer.
3. It is important to remember that God knows our hearts; which means He also knows the motivation behind our praying.
4. The major focus of our praying must reflect kingdom values and concerns.