



10 Ways to Prevail in Prayer

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I'm going to talk about a very important topic this morning. The title is "10 Ways to Prevail in Prayer." This morning I was reminded—I came up here and actually wrote it down—we have worship in the morning. We turn worship on around 6 am in the morning. We have worship on—loud, no lights really, and we're just worshipping God for about an hour to an hour and a half, till around 7:30 am). God reminded me this morning that this is one of the most important points, and I forgot it—when I say that I mean I was prompted to write this down—but to prevail in prayer we must add worship to our daily lives. Worship is where you clear out the junk. Worship is when you get the heart right. It's where you repent. It's when you trust God for things. And I've noticed that sometimes it takes three or four songs, or five songs, until you're finally getting that heart more tender to hear from God.

So my encouragement is to be here. Try to be here at 6:30 in the morning on Sundays. I know it's difficult, but it's usually the flesh that is prevailing, right? Too tired, want to sleep, want to eat, want to get ready, do my hair—all those things. *Oh, I don't have enough time.* Just come, and you will not be disappointed.

Someone told me this morning and I have to agree with them that that is probably the most important service of the day. I feel the power of God at that service more than the other services by far because we're engaging God, we're worshipping.

So I just want to add that eleventh point that you must add worship to your day. It must be a part of your praying and worshipping. Choose the music you like. Choose the songs that will put you in that frame of mind. I believe that God has given us worship for that reason. The music does something that the preaching can't do. It does something that even just praying by yourself can't do. There's an engagement that takes place.

I'm going to read from Isaiah 40:27–31 on how to prevail in prayer. I'm assuming that most of you want to prevail in prayer, correct? And you know what that means? *Prevail* means to win. Win in prayer. I want to win; I want God to hear my prayers. Isaiah 40:27:

Why do you say, O Jacob,
And speak, O Israel:
"My way is hidden from the Lord,
And my just claim is passed over by my God?"

Basically, the nation of Israel, God's people, are saying to God, "Why don't You hear us? Why is Your way hidden from us? We don't know what Your will is. We don't know what Your way is. Why aren't You hearing us?" And God reminds them, "Why are you saying that? My way is not hidden. My silence doesn't mean that I don't hear you."

See God's saying, "I hear you. Just because you don't see Me moving, just because you don't feel things. I'm moving, I'm there. I'm still the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. Israel, hear Me. I am telling you, I am here still." That's the Idleman paraphrase, trying to encapsulate that a little bit.

So the first point is this:

1. Continue in prayer even when you don't see anything.

How many of us quit when we don't see anything? How about if I add *feel anything*? And let's just get the elephant out of the room right now—the reason most of us don't pray more, the reason sometimes we're not here early in the morning is because we don't feel like it. We don't feel like it. So we dictate how we're going to seek God by how we feel. God actually says, "If you seek Me, regardless of how you feel, you will find Me." Can you imagine that relationship? I'll seek you when I feel like it. Try that with your marriage. *We're married today because I feel like it, but tomorrow, can't guarantee anything. I don't feel like it. I don't want to.*

I got this term from a book written 150 years ago. They used to talk about *prevailing* in prayer. Praying through. Do you know what that means? I'm going to pray until God answers my prayer. *Lord, I don't feel You. I don't feel like it, I don't see anything moving.* But God says, "No, trust in Me. Don't go by your feelings. Don't go by what you see." Because what I found, and what you know is true, is that the natural should not influence the spiritual. The natural—what's going on in the natural?—what I see. I don't see my child coming back to the Lord, so I'm going to stop praying.

God says, "Oh, don't stop there. Don't stop there. That's not when you need to turn down the volume; that's when you need to turn up the heat. Continue to pray. You don't know what's going on in the background. You don't know what's coming up later. You don't know what I'm working on now. Regardless of what you see, regardless of what you feel, seek Me."

That's genuine prayer because you're telling the flesh, "I don't care how you feel. We're going to seek God with all of our heart, with all of our strength. I'm going to bring you, flesh, dragging, kicking, and screaming." Have you ever taken your kids anywhere kicking and screaming? That's what you have to do to your flesh.

I don't want to get up.

I don't care, we're getting up.

I don't want to pray.

I don't care, and actually, I'm going to pray longer now.

Make your flesh mad. Deal with it. You discipline your body. If I could preach on this all day, I would tell Christians this: You discipline your body. You bring it under subjection. You say no. You control your body. Your body doesn't control you. As believers, no temptation has overtaken you but what is common to all of us, that God has given you the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

The hidden jewel of the Christian flesh is discipline because we're raised in a culture that says discipline is not good, humility is weak, microwave Christianity, microwave food, everything's quick, easy, convenient. The Bible says no, discipline yourselves. Persevere. Fight the good fight. Get back up and go again. Things we aren't taught [by the world]. But Paul said, "I discipline my body, and I bring it under subjection." He's talking about beating his body black and blue. That's ok to do to the flesh—mentally—don't hit yourself.

And I believe in my own life, God has rewarded me more times than I can even mention when I did something when I didn't feel like it. I'm just going to be honest because I know a lot of you can relate, but when I saw the clock this morning at 4:20, I didn't even want to come to church. *How can you say that?* Because you know. But I got up, even when I didn't feel like it. And when we got to worship, oh, it was just amazing because God says (and the same with you), "I'll honor that commitment."

The Bible has it differently than the world. Discipline then reward. We want reward, and then I'll consider doing something. It's a self-entitlement society that we are creating. Are we not? You know what entitlement is, don't you? I deserve the government to pay me. I deserve this. I am entitled. No, the very breath that you breathe is held in the palm of God's hands. You are not entitled to anything. I am not. God dictates those rights. God gives us those freedoms. Freedom is from God.

So if you want to prevail in prayer, you must continue even when you don't see anything. Don't gauge your prayer life by your feelings alone. They go together, right? If I don't see anything, I usually don't feel anything. But if I see something, I feel it because feelings are tied to it. "Ah, I'm getting excited, Lord. I see them coming around." But God says, "Even in the midst of the storm, seek Me and you will find Me. Even when all hell is breaking loose, seek Me, and you will find Me." Even when your flesh says no, the spirit is crying, "Abba, Father." The spirit is saying, "Yes, I want to seek You." Don't let your feelings control you and prevent you from a powerful time of prayer with God.

And then God said—we can keep reading, verse 28:

Have you not known?
Have you not heard?

I would love to see God saying this. "Have you not known? Have you not heard?" which is Him saying, "Of course you have!"

Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God...

Check this out; this is encouraging—the everlasting God, meaning from time past to time beginning. Whatever your view is on time, it doesn't matter, God was there.

[Everlasting Father], the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable. (v. 28)

He's saying, "I don't get tired like you." That's why I say you can call on Him at two in the morning. You can wake up and call on God and have a relationship with Him. He doesn't faint from exhaustion or become weary. We do. He's contrasting Himself with the people. "Listen, you get tired, you get weary. Don't rate Me on how you act. I never get weary. I'm an ever-present help in time of need." Where does my help come from? My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth. So here's the next point.

2. Remind yourself who God is.

Isn't that healthy? Remind yourself who God is. Because we keep reminding ourselves how bad it is in the world, how bad it is in America, "Oh, woe is me." The people that should be most thankful are often the most critical. You should talk to people in the underground church in different countries, in the underground church in China. They would just laugh at us. *You're complaining about what? Excuse me?*

Remind yourself who God is. He doesn't faint from exhaustion or become weary. Here's what I remind you as well. His ways are unsearchable. You can't understand the ways of God. So here's what trust is. When we trust in God (we all know it, but it's hard to apply it), we're trusting in who He is, in His nature. "Lord, I don't see how this is going to work out. I'm a little frustrated here. I don't understand, but I'm trusting You because Your ways are unsearchable. We don't know Your ways. We don't know what You have in store. So I'm simply trusting You."

Isn't that real trust? Because it's not really trust if you see how the outcome is going to transpire. If you say, "Lord, help me in this area of finances," but you have tons of money and you have a job, it's not too hard. But you lose that job and the money, now trust takes on a whole new level. It went from praying it and talking about to actually experiencing it.

So He's saying there, "My ways are unsearchable." So in your prayer life, don't let feelings sidetrack you, don't go by what you see, even if that daughter or son is not coming back to the Lord. Don't give up. I've learned the opposite. That's when I'm pushing in more. That's when we're going to wage war against the

enemies of darkness even more. Ok, now I don't see it, I don't feel it, I'm turning up the volume. I'm turning up the heat.

I'm going to press through—something else we don't talk much about. Pressing through. Prevailing prayer. It means continuing until God answers. And there's something very rewarding when you pray and you're like, "Lord, I don't feel like it, but I'm going to sit here, and I'm going to pray." And a few minutes go by. And ten minutes go by, maybe, and you're praying, and now it's built up because the flesh has been conquered, and the Spirit is beginning to minister to you, and you're praying, and you don't want it to end. And maybe you're listening to worship music, and you're being filled up with the promises of God and the hope of God, and the prevailing prayer is beginning to lift your spirits. You say, "I can see now how God can work. I can see how He can answer." But, see, you would've never gotten there had you went by your feelings or what you see. You've got to press through that. I don't know why I'm hanging out on this point so much, but it must be for somebody.

He gives power to the weak
And to those who have no might He increases strength. (v. 29)

Did you know that? Are you weak here this morning? You might not like to hear this, but I am. I am weak this morning. I feel like I need God's increase; I need His strength. It's a good spot to be because you say, "Lord, I'm weak." Men don't want to say that, do we? It's hard to even get out. I mean, do you realize how fragile life is? We take so much pride in what we've accomplished. The breath I just took—a gift from God. The heart that beats millions and millions of times during your life—who keeps charge of that battery? Have you thought of that? Who keeps that going? The lungs? It's just amazing.

When my mom had heart surgery, the doctor came in and said, "Ok, we're moving forward, everything is going good. We stopped her heart and—"

"—Back up. You what?"

"Yeah, we stopped her heart. We have a machine doing it now."

"And so you just reconnect it back up? I'm having a hard time understanding here."

"Yeah, it works fine and...."

So the heart stopped for a couple hours. Then they just hooked the heart back up to the valve, and he said that as soon as he undid it, the blood starting pumping again on its own. That is amazing. You doctors don't think there is a God? It's unbelievable.

So that's the God we're praying to. He told Daniel to mock the king. He said, "Daniel, you tell that king I own all his ways. His breath fits in the palm of My hand. I own everything about him. You tell that king I am the great King." That's who we worship. So He does give power to the weak. He gives might to those who need might. He increases their strength. Here's how it works: "God, I'm weak. I need You. I'm dependent."

"Good, now you've humbled yourself. Now let Me give you spiritual strength to continue."

Listen to Lauren Daigle's new song "You Say." The lyrics go like this:

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
You say I am held when I am falling short
When I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours

And then she goes on to say

And I believe, oh I believe
What You say of me

See, you have to go back to the Bible. Where does the Bible say who you are? Your mom—fortunately, I’m blessed, but not everybody is—your mom that’s going to continue to chew you out and put you down? Or your dad? Or your relatives or your sisters or your brothers? There’s a constant nag, putting down, putting down, discouragement. Friends who shouldn’t even be friends are discouraging and discouraging and discouraging. But God says, “Oh, no, look at who I say you are. Look at My word. That’s concrete. That’s solid. I say you are a child of God. I say you are more than conquerors. I say you’re the head and not the tail.”

It’s good to be encouraged. It’s good to be encouraged. Remember who you are. What does God say of you? Think about that for a minute? What does He say about you? Honestly. Let’s be honest. Not your friends, not your relatives, not your past. What does He say? If you’re a child of God, you’re an heir. You can have the promises of God, the promises of eternity. You can walk in the power and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. You can do battle against the enemy. You have the authority of Christ.

That’s why we pray in Jesus’s name. It’s not some little thing we tag on. You’re actually praying in the authority of Jesus Christ, His merit, His power. I’m coming in *that* authority because if I come in my authority, the devil’s going to say, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but you I don’t know.” That’s why I have to say, “I come in Jesus’s name, so you’d better say you know me because I’m coming in His name, in His authority.” It’s ok for hell to know your name. That’s because you have the authority of Christ in you. Hell will know your name if you’re a true believer.

So who does God say you are? So if you’re lazy, that’s not who God says you are. If you’re discontent, that’s not who God says you are. If you’re a bad spouse or father or mother, that’s not who God says you are. But you’ve got to get up, pull up your bootstraps, and say, “Ok, this is going to take a little bit of work.” I love America, but our blessing has become our curse because we’ve become a lazy society. Push the button and my meal is ready. Sit down and watch this *boob tube*, as they used to call it, that just brainwashes. And we just go through life with comfortable Christianity, but that’s not how God designed us. He designed us to go to battle.

Actually, the weapon of your warfare is prayer. Why doesn’t He use lighter terms? *The weapon of your warfare*. That’s no different than going to war. We send people to war, but we forget that we are in a battle. We are in the battle for the very soul of our nation. We are in the battle for the very soul of many people that we know. We are in a spiritual battle. We need to wake up to that fact.

And then He goes on to say, “Even the youths shall faint and be weary.” He’s contrasting. He’s saying, “I will not grow weary. I will not faint. Even your young men who can run and run and run will become weary.”

And the young men shall utterly fall,
But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength; (vv. 30–31)

So He’s also contrasting you and me waiting on God as being able to go further and do more a youth with tons of energy. Ever see kids with tons of energy? You say, “My Lord, I’m even tired watching.” But you’ll have more strength than that if you wait upon the Lord. Waiting renews and restores and rebuilds your life. As you wait, you begin to get stronger and stronger.

What about Samson? As he began to wait, his anointing came back, his strength came back. It’s interesting. The Bible says he’s grinding with oxen. It means he’s probably pushing this thing around in a circle like an ox would do, and he’s grinding this wheat, barley, whatever it was, just grinding and grinding. And he’d shaven his hair, his anointing was gone, his eyes were plucked out. Terrible situation. But he waited. He waited on God. He repented, and he waited. It’s interesting because you can be in a low spot right now, but if you repent and wait on God, watch out—because your hair will grow back. Not physically, but the anointing, right? It will grow back. That anointing will come back.

And as Samson is waiting and waiting, a young child took him by the hand, and he led him. The Bible says it led him out, and he grabbed the pillars, and he said, "Oh, God, remember me. Avenge me for my two eyes." And he pushed with all his might, and the entire structure came down. And the Bible says that he slew more at his death than he slew in his life. In other words, he killed more Philistines at his death. He repented. That anointing came back, that strength of God came back. Same with you. Same with me. If you wait.

But we think of waiting as putting the feet up and watching a good movie. That's not necessarily waiting. Waiting is praying and seeking God and getting our heart built up. Are there times that you can't talk to somebody? You say, "Just give me some time. I need to process this. I need a couple days. I'm too emotional right now." Right? What does waiting do? [makes deep breath sound] Composure. Waiting.

Same thing spiritually. "Ok, Lord..." And don't move if you don't know what God is saying. So many people get in pickles because they open the pickle jar, and they shouldn't. It's funny that's not funny. It was stupid, not funny. It didn't make sense. But you know what I'm saying, right? You can get yourself in a pickle if you run ahead of God, and you say, "Oh, I don't care, He's not answering. I'm just going to do my own thing." Well, watch out.

So waiting on God makes sure that you make the right decision. I don't know if I've even got into trouble when I've said, "God, You know what? I don't know what to do. I'm just going to wait on You. I don't know what to do." [With most people,] it's usually, "Well, God's not moving quick enough. Let me make this happen. And then he'll bless it." So it's very important to wait on the Lord. And this is point three.

3. Wait on the Lord.

Wait on the Lord, or you could say *stay as you pray*. Stay where you're at. Wait on God. Because you can't always rush into battle. Here's what the flesh does. We often want to rush into battle. The flesh usually wants to rush ahead, right? Somebody hits you, you react. *Let's go rush, let's go rush*. And this is the opposite of rushing. It's waiting, and you can't always rush into battle. Luke 6:12: Now it came to pass in those days that [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, *but He was in a hurry, so He only stayed five minutes*. No.

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12)

If Jesus needed to spend time in prayer, how much more we need to spend time in prayer. And I just remembered this. I don't know if it was a year or two ago now, and the title, I think the message was something like "You Need a Mountaintop Experience." Just like Jesus, you should set aside some time now and then to get away and to seek God. Get that alone time with God.

I believe the enemy keeps us so busy, so busy doing this and that, that we don't get that time that we need. Because that's when we renew our strength. I don't know about you, but if I have the Bible open for an hour or two, and I'm worshiping and praying, I leave built up. I leave edified. I leave strengthened. But if I'm frazzled and don't get that time in and always going, always doing, what happens? You start operating in the flesh. You start to make decisions based on the flesh. So that will lead into number four as well.

4. Recharge the prayer battery often.

Recharge the prayer battery often. It needs to be recharged. I remember when I was younger, we had lots of batteries in construction. Four batteries on a diesel truck sometimes and backhoes and different things. So I would get a battery off, I'd plug it in to the battery charger, and I would say, "Ok, I'm waiting here." I would tell my dad, "Ok, five minutes, ten minutes."

"I need this now."

"Oh no, come back tomorrow morning."

“What?”

It's called a trickle charger. See, it's that little bit of charge. It's that little bit of charge to build that up. But we want quick. And God says, “No, it's the trickle charge you need. You need to just sit wired to Me, and just let Me feed into you. Let Me build into you. Let Me sustain you.”

Because what happens? A lot of times something doesn't immediately happen. There's moments of “God, my attitude's wrong.” That took thirty minutes. And then He starts working through—“You need to release that bitterness. You need to seek forgiveness. You need to give that up. You need to stop that.”

See how the prayer time is trickling in? The trickle charger? Little by little He's beginning to build and change. Woe be to the person who's in a hurry. And I say it often, but it fits perfectly here again. I'd love if we could answer this question. How can we give Cinemark two hours—two and a half with the stupid previews (not all of them are stupid but a lot of them are)? And we just give all this time. Now I'm not against entertainment. Healthy entertainment is good for us. Do it. But how can we give these places a couple hours? YouTube a couple hours. News places a couple hours. Friendships that shouldn't be friendships because they're pulling us down. We give this time, but we don't give God any time.

So to prevail in prayer you need to recharge the battery often. Those who wait have more endurance than young people. Waiting renews strength. And He contrasted it here. Also He said:

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint. (v 31)

So this time with God—the eagle was and is still the most powerful bird that they could contrast, so you get up those wings like an eagle. You'll begin to soar, you'll begin to fly above your situation. You'll begin to just soar where other people will say, “How can you do that? You shouldn't be able to do that.” But you just soar with God. And you'll be encouraged, and even—you will run and not faint, you will not be weary, when you put God first and seek Him.

And you know what? I can't explain all this. I'm just called to preach it. I can't explain how God renews and restores. But I believe that we need rest. We need to spend time with God in order for that to happen.

Also during this time, perseverance and endurance are strengthened. Another two words we don't want to talk about. *Perseverance and endurance. I don't like these things. I want the easy road.* Right? Why do you think the diet industry is a ten-billion-dollar-a-year industry? Somewhere up there, three or four billion. Why? *What's that on TV? Here, order this pill. Thirty pounds in thirty days. Perfect, that's my answer. Or this belt. Just wear this for ten minutes a day.*

No, no, no. That's not biblical. That's not wise. It takes perseverance and commitment and discipline. The easy road is rarely the right road. Because ease and comfort is the call of the flesh, but the call to a deeper life—that's why very few get that deeper life with the Spirit because it's called perseverance and endurance and fortitude and strength and discipline. Isn't that what great men and women are built from? We know that. Do you think the Marine Corps is built on laziness and weak-minded and gentle and convenient? It's built on anything worth sustaining. And anything worth having is built on these character qualities.

5. Embrace the burden.

It [doesn't] make sense at first, but it will when I explain it. To prevail in prayer, you need to embrace the burden. What I mean by this is when you pray, when you're really wanting to pray—I'm talking to those, I don't know who you are, those who really want to pray—when you say, “God, I want to pray, and you commit your life to prayer, you will be burdened.” You will be burdened for something. God gives us a burden. And what happens is we have this burden, “Oh, Lord, I have this burden on me. How do I unload

this burden?" We go to our knees to take this burden off and to pray, and then once that burden is lifted, we feel better.

But sometimes the burden comes again. This is why a lot of us have different burdens. Many of you know my burden is for the nation rejecting God. I look at the Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and I look at where we're going and what we're doing, that we're glorifying what God calls an abomination, we are celebrating it, we're slaughtering children, we're walking away from God, and I say, "Oh, my God, I have a burden." And then my preaching will be affected by my burden. I have a burden for the church to truly come and be filled with God's Spirit, to come to Him and to know Him and to be filled with God, not having a religion but relationship.

But somebody else might have a burden for South America and the missionaries there. Or the underground church in the Middle East. Or a burden for caring at pregnancy resource centers. A burden for battered women's shelters. You name it, there will be a burden. Sometimes you get the burden for your children. Often, "Oh, I just want this burden lifted." Sometimes you need to thank God for that burden because that's what drives you to your knees. Without the burden, we often wouldn't be driven to our knees.

So the burden can be good because it allows a deeper relationship with God, but we get mad at the burden, so we don't seek God. And also I think this is why we need to be careful to not judge each other wrongly because we do say, "Why don't you share my same burden? Why aren't you involved in this area like I'm involved?" "Well, why aren't you?" "Well, why aren't you doing this?"

See, God gives us different burdens. The prophets would say, "The burden of the Lord. The burden of the Lord. The burden of the Lord." I know exactly what they're talking about because in order to preach effectively, you need to have a burden. Because out of the burden comes a passion. Out of the burden comes the depths of despair, and you cry out to God, "God, I've got this burden. I feel this overwhelming burden," just like the prophets did who preached to the nation of Israel, "Come back to God!" They would go and say, "Oh, people, come back to God! Come back to God!" God says, "But My ear is not heavy. My hand is not short. I can hear you, but your sins have hidden My face from you" (Isa. 59:1-2, paraphrased).

So these prophets would have this burden of the Lord to call the nation back to Him. Paul had a burden for the Jews. Jesus had a burden for the lost. He had a burden for Jerusalem, didn't He? I mean, who's going to cry over Jerusalem and say, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! The burden?" And Jesus would have a burden. He would say, "I must go to Samaria and witness to the woman at the well."

So embrace the burden. Out of that burden comes powerful prayer. Out of that burden comes very powerful prayer. I'll never forget it, I think it was the most powerful morning of worship we've ever had. It was right when we talked about—and I don't know if they've even voted on it yet—where they're going to outlaw books and counseling that would help people struggling with same-sex attraction. And our California is getting ridiculous, and Sacramento, they're wanting to pass laws—parental rights and all kinds of things. And a dozen of us were around the altar. I mean, talk about a burden. Talk about travailing. And we were pulling down heaven. But that wouldn't have happened without the burden. Without a burden we don't pray well.

So don't discount that because I've seen people get upset at the burden, upset at this. And instead they should be seeking God with it, and you lift it off when you give it to God. Anybody praying for family members going through health issues? Or prodigal sons or daughters that have left the Lord? Family issues is one of the biggest things we pray for. Family dynamics is number one, bar none. There's not even a close second.

So you have this burden. So what can we do if we're not careful? I have this burden, so I'm going to gossip about them. I'm going to be bitter. *Oh, God, how could You? Why is this? Why don't You answer?*

Instead of using that burden to draw us closer to Christ and allowing that burden to force us into the prayer room.

So *pray through* needs to be your battle cry. You need to pray through. God doesn't always say yes, but He will say, "I've got this." You know if you've been there. You know. God doesn't leave you hanging often. He says, "I've got this. I've got this." Yes, no, maybe so. I don't know what the answer is, but I feel relieved. I pray through. The burden's been lifted.

6. Embrace obedience.

Now this next point. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is why I believe many prayers are not answered. It's a stumbling block. You have to embrace obedience. If you want to prevail in prayer, if you want God to answer prayer, you need to embrace obedience.

What do I mean by that? Well, our prayer life is relational, isn't it? Our prayer life is relational. That's what it is—you're having a relationship with God discussing things, and disobedience hinders the relationship. So if I want to have this relationship through prayer, but I'm in disobedience because I'm not doing what He's told me to do, I can't have communication there. Is your marriage pretty healthy when there's a lot of friction, for those who are married? Same thing—relational.

And we think this about God: Well, eventually He'll change His mind. Next week, next month. There are people who say, "Shane, I know," and they'll cry. "I know God has called me to the hospital homes ministry." "I know God has called me to the children's ministry." "I know God's calling me to go ask my mom for forgiveness." "I know God's calling me to give up this." Every week I'm praying with people: "God's told me to give up these cigarettes and this alcohol and these pills. I know it." But unless we take that step of obedience, those prayers will not be answered often because that disobedience is the block.

See, it's not about perfection. It's about saying, "Lord, I need help in this area. I want to do that. I want to honor You. I'm no longer making excuses. Will You help me in this area and remove that thing that is blocking my prayer life?" Do you ever say, "I don't think my prayers are getting past my ceiling"?

Now, it's not always this. Please don't misunderstand. It's usually the people who are convicted on this point, they email me on this point. "How can you dare say, 'Everything...'" No, I'm not saying that. You're just convicted. But this is a big deal because God said—back to that Scripture I quoted earlier—"My ear's not heavy (meaning, He can hear), My hand's not short (I can save you), but your sins, your sins have hidden My face from you so that I will not hear. Your iniquities have made it so I'm hiding My face. I can't hear. While sin is present, I can't answer that prayer. Deal with that sin, and I'll begin to flood in."

And we say, "No, maybe God will change His mind." God never says, "You know what? It's been six months, and you're not giving in. I guess we'll meet in the middle." We do that with people, don't we? That does not work with God. He will just stand like Fort Knox. "This is not opening. I'm not negotiating. I'm not changing. I love you enough to hold My ground. Deal with that, and then the prayer gates will open."

And again, let me encourage you. If God didn't hear because of sin, we should never pray—because all of us sin at some point. I'm talking about besetting sin, willful sin, where we say, "I know, God, I know you want me to deal with that, but I'm not going to right now. Can we get back on track with my prayer list?" Ooh, that just hurts saying that. Did you feel that, Phil? That was—ooh. But even though we don't say it, that's what we do. Right? How many people are saying, "I know God wants me to fully surrender my life"? "I know I keep coming to church playing church. I know that." Yet we still pray, and we're wondering why God is not answering certain prayers. I would encourage you to deal with this area of obedience. Is there something that God is wanting you to give up or fully surrender or remove?

Here's why. Being filled with the Spirit leads to prayer that prevails. So we're talking about prevailing prayer. Prayer that overcomes is prayer where you are filled with the Spirit of God, correct? When I'm praying according to God's will, when I'm filled with the Spirit of God my prayers are a lot different.

They're Christ-centered. They're not like, "I have to get the last word in." It's not like, "Judge 'em, Lord." It's like, "Lord, would you help them?"

Do you ever get mad at people and say, "God, ooh, just take away their job. Man, have them wake up, and there's nothing in the bank account. I'm so mad at them. Lord, judge them. Judge them." And then the more you spend in time with God, the more you're filled with His Spirit, the more you start saying, "Lord, love them. I love them. What's wrong with me? My heart's not good either." See, you start to line up your prayer focus.

I've had people tell me, "Shane, I was praying for this, and God totally convicted me," and I said well, it's often because of the flesh. You know, we want bigger houses, nicer things. In and of themselves those aren't bad, but where are your motives? Right? "Lord, please give me that big house on the hill." Why? So I can show people I've arrived. I can show my mom or my dad I've finally made it. And I want to keep up with the Joneses, as if God's going to answer those prayers. God answers prayers that often are humble.

Now He'll answer financial prayers. I believe that. But we have to make sure our prayer focus is on the things of God, not things that will pull us down. How hard is it for a rich man to enter heaven? It's hard because riches contend with that relationship. Same thing—when we pray for the wrong things. Here's why we have to be careful. The things we pray for can eventually become our idols. There are professions out there, jobs out there, where people have idolized those jobs. *If I could just become a _____*—you fill in the blank. And we idolize. We pray for God to give it. God knows though that that can become our ruin.

7. Pray according to God's will.

You must pray according to God's will. The Bible says:

This is the confidence which we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:14).

So when we pray, "Lord, what do You have for this church?" That's my prayer—Lord, what do You want to have for this church? What's Your will for this church? It's according to His will. Pray for your marriage. Pray for your kids. "God, I pray that my children would know You at a young age. Fill them with Your Spirit. Lord, give them some gifts at a young age. Lord, I'm praying according to Your will. Help me in this area." And that's how you prevail in prayer. Pray according to God's will. And I've noticed that many don't know His will because they're not in His Word. Pray according to His will.

I know this is an example I've used a lot, but it fits a lot, so that's why I use it a lot. But often couples come to me, and they have so much stress and anxiety. They're just like, "Oh, I'm so stressed out. I don't know what to do, Lord. Oh, Shane, we don't know if this is God's will to get married. We don't know—is this God's will? We don't know." Well, first, move out and stop sleeping together. Start there. "Oh, well, uh, uh . . . well, it's convenient." How are you going to have Him answer *that* prayer when you're not even dealing with *this* area of God's will?

When we're out of sync in an area, when we're out of God's will, and we pray for God's will, it's hard to get direction. It's very easy, in my opinion, to get direction from God. I don't think His will is that difficult. It's clearly outlined in His Scripture. We wait for doors to open. It doesn't line up with God's will. Is there joy? Is there peace? Is there assurance? And God begins to direct. When there are stumbling blocks in the way, and we're out of His will in this area, and we're praying for His will, it often doesn't become clear. We have to start with what we know is right. So you have to pray according to God's will. And I think it's ok to pray, "Lord, if this is Your will."

And according to Romans 8:26, some prayers will be unanswered because we don't always pray according to God's will. We pray amiss. Anybody been there?

Also, here is something about delays. When God is delaying things—has He ever delayed things? Oh, my Lord, it seems like my whole life of prayer is delayed. Everything's delayed. God's timing is never my

timing. I'll tell you that right now. Never my timing. But His timing. Well, here's a good example. When we decided that ok, God's will is maybe that we move up here, I was ready to go. I didn't want to wait. One month. Two months. Three months. Four months. Five months. But see, God was positioning people. Changing hearts, circumstances, situations, and it falls at His timing. Right?

When Morgan and I decided to get married—"I'm not waiting. Next week!" Right? "Let's just head to Vegas." *Eight months? What? Eight months?* But it's good because you put that relationship on the altar. I tell people this: You don't know what God's will is until you say, "I do." Once you say that, then that's a game changer. But always put that relationship on the altar. We want quick things. We're glad it took a while because God was working in our hearts and different things. So delay is not deny. When God delays something, it's often not denial. The reason is we're like kids, and we want it now. "I want it right now. Give it to me right now." We know that God knows best, so delay is not God denying us.

We have a conference coming up in October entitled "How Long, O Lord?" And it's from that theme—how long, O Lord—revival? How long before You move among Your people? How long will You keep us [waiting]? See, and I think it's good. The reason most of you in this room, hopefully everybody, is feeling *I don't pray enough*—I'm feeling it too—that's a good burden because then you'll do something about it.

I know this is hard to believe, but I do get people from time to time that email me and tell me, "I pray enough." "I read the Bible enough." We know the answer to that one, right? Pride. Screaming pride, pride, pride, pride, pride. "I read enough, I pray enough, I'm spiritual enough." No, you're prideful. There should be a burden. "God, I don't pray enough." I'm excited right now to get up tomorrow morning and pray. Right now, because of this, because of the burden, I want more of God.

So don't beat yourself up. "Oh, gosh, you beat me up again. I'll never measure up." No, that's the whole point is this burden, this conviction, changes us, and it propels us to more prayer time, more time with God, more worship, making our entertainment choices different, and being wanting to be filled with the Spirit of God.

W. J. Harney said this:

The one great barrier in the way, the one clog that Satan puts in the will, and the one dark cloud he throws upon the skies is discouragement. He is well aware of the fact that a discouraged soul is easily defeated. Discouragement places us in a fog. It covers a lighthouse and puts us in troubled waters.

The enemy wants to use delay to discourage you; God wants to use delay for you to seek Him more. What path do you take? Because what happens? Are you being delayed? Have you been praying, "Lord, take this away. God, answer this prayer. God, please do this"? Does a delay lead to discouragement or does it lead to pressing in to more of God? Delays can be wonderful, beautiful times for you, if you seek God with all your heart.

And then the next point—and I have to throw this in here; I know you don't want me to, but here it comes.

8. Fasting adds spiritual weight.

If you want to prevail in prayer, let me encourage you to fast, whether it's missing a meal, two meals. I've got book on it you can take free out there—you can take ten books if you're going to pass them out—on [*Feasting and Fasting*](#). What fasting does is it actually starves your flesh. So the flesh is starved, and now I can pray better. I can always pray better when my flesh is hungry. If I'm fulfilling the flesh, if I go to Krispy Kreme and then Starbucks, I cannot pray well. Just me personally. But if I'm starved, the flesh is starved, then, "God, I'm going to fight this flesh, and I'm going to be filled with Your Spirit," it's prevailing prayer. The reason is because the flesh controls us more than we think, doesn't it? *Feed me, feed me, feed me. Lay down, go to sleep, watch this, feed me, comfort, laziness, convenient.* Yes, flesh. Yes, flesh. And we just keep answering the flesh.

If we were to say, “Don’t worry, I’m not going to. We’re going to stay an hour after the second service. We’re just going to pray, and we’re going to worship God,” most of you would head to the nearest restaurant because the flesh needs to be fed. Let’s just be honest. It’d be hard for me too. But see how that dictates so much of our lives? It tells us where to go, when to go, how to go. We’re listening to the flesh.

So fasting starves that voice so you can begin to hear the voice of God more clearly. It’s throughout the Old Testament. Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. They all fasted. Daniel, Elisha, Paul fasted. Somebody by the name of Jesus fasted before He was filled mightily with the Holy Spirit and began ministry.

So this is spiritual warfare. And it’s interesting, a lot of the books I read—a hundred, a hundred-fifty, two hundred years old—there’s fasting throughout it. But you fast forward to America in the 1980s, 1990s, “We don’t mention that anymore. We don’t want to talk about that anymore.” But it’s a very important thing. Fasting adds spiritual weight. I believe it breaks the final chain. It’s the final blow, and it breaks the back of Satan. It increases endurance, physically and spiritually, because as you’re starving the flesh you’re filled with the Spirit. And the more we feed the flesh, the more we are quenching and grieving the Spirit. If the flesh is dominating—there’s nothing wrong with eating; it’s God-given.

But just try this. Your own personal test, if you don’t believe me. Try to seek God for an hour, pray, and worship right after Thanksgiving dinner. Actually, I’m tempted to have a Thursday night Thanksgiving worship night. Um-um. Why is that? Let’s be honest. *I’m going to pray, I’m so excited to pray*, and then I find the Haagen-Dazs and the Oreo cookie. *I don’t want to pray anymore*. Because there are certain appetites. The more you fulfill one appetite, the less you’re filled with the Spirit of God. There is a balance there, I got it, but fasting is very important.

If you can give me a Scripture on why it’s not important, I will listen. But all the Scriptures in context support fasting. Jesus said don’t fast while the bridegroom is here, but they will fast in those days when He is taken away (Mark 2:18–20). When you give, when you pray, Jesus said, right? We quote Matthew 6, when you give, do this, when you pray, do this, and He says, when you fast, do this. So it’s a very common thing.

So the next point. Enter His courts with grumbling and complaining. Nope. What does it say?

9. Enter His courts with thanksgiving.

Enter His courts with thanksgiving and stay there. This is a problem for many Christians, including me. Sometimes we enter His courts with grumbling and complaining. God will not hear the prayers of grumbling and complaining people. He judged the whole nation of Israel. Are you aware of that? Who knows—1.5 million people left Egypt? Two went in to the promised land. Did you know that? He wiped out the entire generation of people in the wilderness. He said, “Because you grumble and you complain.” You’re grumbling and you’re complaining.

We have to be careful as believers. That’s the wrong heart. It’s a critical heart. It’s not God’s nature. But what does the attorney within come up and say, “But . . .” “Yeah, but sound doctrine.” “Yeah, but that church isn’t doing.” “Yeah, but my family member did this.” Be careful. If you want to prevail in prayer, you have to come in with thanksgiving: “God, thank You, thank You for what You’re doing.”

And I’ll just go on a little rant here for a minute, but so many people complain about America, and even our state—California, yeah, there’s a lot to complain about—but that shouldn’t be the heart of a believer. You should be very thankful if you have running water and electricity and hot water and something they call *ice*. We support somebody in Africa, and when he comes here, he never puts ice in his water. I finally asked him why, and he said, “We don’t even have ice.” “Nowhere?” “Nowhere.” (They have other ways to preserve.)

So we take things for granted, yet we’re complaining. I think it’s three-quarters of the world live on \$2.50 a day. But here we are complaining— “the government and taxes, gas price increases, Governor Jerry Brown, Sacramento, California stinks, and the United States stinks . . . blah blah blah.”

I got it. There's a lot of issues. I'm with you. I'm with you right there, but that's not the heart of a believer. A believer should be thankful. "Lord, I have concerns, but I'm thankful. I don't like what's happening; I'm going to pray about it, but I'm thankful. I'm thankful for what You've given me, I thank You for my health, I thank You for my children, I thank You for my church." Going into His gates and praying with thankfulness. That's how you have to prevail in prayer.

Have you ever heard a critical person pray? Not very often, and when I have, it's ugly. It's just, "You know what, just stop." It's not the heartbeat of a prayer warrior. Thankfulness is.

And then the final point.

10. Recognize your authority in Jesus Christ.

This is so important. When you pray in Jesus's name, it means you pray in His authority. So it's not like when we close, and we say, "Ok, in Jesus's name," like we're tagging it, like it'll carry a little extra weight there. I don't even know if you have to say it at the end of every prayer. It could become vain repetition sometimes. I'm not saying don't do it. I'm saying the real reason behind it is this: We're praying in the power and the authority of Jesus Christ. So when I pray, "Lord, have Your will in this place. Would You bind the works of Satan this morning? Would you secure our building?" I'm coming to you in the merits and authority of Jesus Christ. I'm coming in His power and His strength. Actually, I'm just a spokesman. Here He comes, bringing His power and His authority.

In Jesus's name we pull down that darkness. I can't do it. If I do it, nothing will happen. But in Jesus's name we pull down darkness. "In Jesus's name, God, protect this building, protect these people, bless these people. In Jesus's name, come against Sacramento and this ungodly legislation. Come against the government authorities that are not of You but bless those who are of You. Bless the next Supreme Court justice. In Jesus's name, by the power and authority of Jesus Christ. I'm just a spokesman, proclaiming the will of God, the way of God." That's all you are—you're the mouthpiece proclaiming the power and life of Jesus Christ. That's what praying in His name is.

And don't misunderstand, I'm all for saying, "In Jesus's name," but it's not *in Jesus's name* tagging like a Tweet or hashtag Jesus, right? You're actually saying, "In this name, in the name that died for me, in the name that says, 'I have given you all authority. What you loose in heaven will be loose here. What you bind here will be bound in heaven. I give you the keys of the kingdom. I give you the authority to cast out demons.' So I'm coming in Jesus's name, not in my name. I'm not letting these prayers come from just a person praying on his own. I'm need You, Christ, and I'm praying through You and for You to pray for me."

It's ok for Jesus to pray for you. Did you know that? Do you ever say, "Lord, please intercede. Please pray for me? God, I need You, Jesus, I need You to intercede"? I don't remember who it was—maybe Leonard Ravenhill or Robert Murray M'Cheyne—but he said, "If you can hear Jesus in the room next door praying for you, you would not fear a million armies." Isn't that true? If we could hear Jesus praying for us and interceding for us, we would not fear a million armies.

But I don't want to end this sermon without giving this final invitation that if you don't know Him, you're praying to the wrong God. Billions of people pray. Hinduism, millions of gods. Middle East, the wrong god. New Age, higher being, higher power. You have to know Jesus Christ. You have to repent of your sin. You have to believe in the only name that saves. Then you can enter the gates with thanksgiving. Then you can pray to God, the one true and living God. Because the only way we come to God is through Jesus Christ. That's our mediator. You don't need to go to a priest. You go directly to the throne room of grace because of what Christ has done.

So if you don't know Him, you repent of your sin and you believe. And then you can pray to God, and He will hear that prayer. When you say, "God, I need You. Save me," He will hear you.