

Session 3 The Lifestyle of an Effective Intercessor

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In our last session we considered the effectiveness of Daniel’s prayers as recorded in Daniel 10. His prayers resulted in an increase of activity by high-ranking angels to resist the activity of powerful demons. Daniel’s prayers had a significant impact by shifting things in the spirit realm.
- B. Would you like your prayers to move angels and demons as Daniel’s did? Would you like to experience similar results when you pray? If we want a greater level of effectiveness in prayer along the lines of what Daniel had, we must embrace the values that he walked out in his life.
- C. James emphasized commitment to godly living as essential to cultivating an effective prayer life (Jas. 5:16). In session 3 of part one of *Growing In Prayer* we looked at four characteristics of effective prayer: prayer rooted in faith, prayer in the context of good relationships, prayer from a lifestyle of righteousness, and prayer that is earnest or that engages with God over the years.
- ¹⁶The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain... (Jas. 5:16-17)***
- D. The prayers of a godly person include the prayers of imperfect, weak people who *sincerely seek* to walk in righteousness even as we stumble in our weakness. The Lord responds to His people because they *set their heart* to keep His commands and do things that please Him.
- ²²And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 Jn. 3:22)***
- E. The New Testament has much to say about our lifestyles and their relationship to effective prayer. Walking in obedience is not about seeking to earn the answers to our prayers; it is about living in agreement with love because God is love. It is through the blood of Jesus and our agreement with God in faith that our prayers, though offered in weakness, ascend to the throne of God in power.
- F. Daniel’s life of faithfulness did not earn God’s power in prayer; rather, it positioned him to live in greater agreement with God, and it was this agreement that made his prayers so effective.
- G. What does the lifestyle of an effective intercessor look like? Consider Daniel’s dedication. Especially note his consistency in prayer for decades (Dan. 6:10) and his determination to walk in obedience (Dan. 1:8) and seek understanding of God’s purpose for his generation (Dan. 10:12).

II. CULTIVATING A HISTORY IN GOD: CONSISTENCY IN PRAYER

- A. Daniel cultivated a long “personal history in God.” Every believer has a “personal history in God.” By this I mean a history in the way that we have responded to Jesus in love, faith, and diligence. God remembers this forever. We may forget many of the specific details of what we have done in our responses to grow in and express our relationship with the Lord, but He never forgets our love.
- ¹⁰For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)***

- B. Daniel prayed three times a day. This was his custom from his youth. One of the most remarkable aspects of his life was his consistency in prayer for more than sixty years.
- ¹⁰...he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. (Dan. 6:10)***
- C. It is never too early or too late to start. We can begin today and make it our custom to be faithful in prayer for the rest of our days and start to cultivate a deeper personal history in God.
- D. Daniel was forcibly taken to Babylon as a prisoner of war in his youth. Yet even as a captive in a foreign land and culture, he determined to seek God with all his heart for all his days. Some people are easily offended. If they don't get on the worship team or aren't hired for the job position they were hoping for, they cry out, "How could God allow this to happen to me?"
- E. It is common to face disappointments in one's twenties and thirties. Daniel suffered the same setbacks. The details were different, but the general disappointments were the same. Yet he refused to be offended by what God "did not do" for him in his young adult years or to be bitter toward those who mistreated or betrayed him. He also refused to be distracted from his prayer life even by the great amount of work that came his way due to the rapid promotions in his political career.
- F. I have no doubt that Daniel also faced many pressures and opportunities in his fifties and sixties. It is easy for well-meaning, middle-aged believers to drift away from the commitment they made in their youth about their relationship with Jesus, including their prayer life.
- G. Despite the setbacks, resistance, pleasures, growing responsibilities, and wonderful opportunities throughout the years, Daniel remained consistent in prayer for decades. His consistency is one of the primary reasons he had such an effective prayer life in his eighties.
- H. The Lord spoke to Ezekiel about Daniel's life and prayers (Ezek. 14:13-20). God highlighted three men—each set their heart to live godly and stood nearly alone in the midst of an evil generation.
- ¹³"Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. ¹⁴Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves"... ¹⁹"Or if I send a pestilence into that land...²⁰even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would...only themselves by their righteousness." (Ezek. 14:13-20)***
1. Both Daniel and Ezekiel were Jewish captives who lived in the city of Babylon in the same generation. Ezekiel lived in the "work camp" that was undoubtedly in the poor part of the city of Babylon, whereas Daniel lived in the king's court. They were men of like spirit even though they lived in two different parts of the same city.
 2. Imagine the implications of this fact: Daniel is the only man in the Bible about whom God spoke from heaven while he was still alive. In other words, God held him up as one who was faithful in prayer while he was living; yet in the Scripture we typically find the Lord honoring a person's dedication and godliness only after he has died.

III. WHOLEHEARTED OBEDIENCE

- A. The record of Daniel’s story in Scripture begins when Daniel was possibly in his late teen years or in his early twenties. In his youth he purposed not to defile himself related to food or any pleasures.
⁸ ***“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank” (Dan. 1:8).***
- B. The main point is not what specific food he avoided but that he determined to walk in *wholehearted obedience in the face of peer pressure*. He saw the lifestyle of other young people around him, yet made the choice *not* to live the way other young people lived. I encourage you to set your heart not to be defiled—by what you put in your body, or by immorality, porn, slander, or anything.
- C. Daniel set his heart not to be defiled all his days. I am sure at the end of his life, when he stood before God, that he had no regrets about giving up various pleasures in his youth. I am confident that he did not wish he had spent more time in recreation. On the last day when we all stand before Jesus, no one will regret having spent too little time playing video games or watching movies.

IV. THE REWARD OF FAITHFULNESS

- A. The Lord revealed His love to Daniel in a deep way through an angel who addressed him as “greatly beloved.” Imagine an angel telling you something similar to this, “The Lord is moved by the way you live. He is moved by your hunger for Him and by your lifestyle choices and prayers.”
¹¹***And he [the angel] said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved...I have been sent to you” ...***
¹⁹***And he said, “O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!”***
(Dan. 10:11, 19)
- B. We know that God so loves world—He loves every unbeliever, yet He does not enjoy a relationship with them. Then there are those in whom God takes special delight as He delights in the choices they make for Him and the way they cultivate their love and loyalty to Him. In this sense His love for them is different from that with which He loves the world. He takes greater enjoyment in the relationship of those who seek to love and obey Him with all their hearts. In essence He told Daniel, “I am moved by the way you care about My kingdom and your relationship to Me; it touches Me.”
- C. Jesus taught that the Father loves all who obey Him. He loves or greatly enjoys the relationship He has with all who keep His commandments, and He loves their life choices.
²¹***He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (Jn. 14:21)***
- D. Jesus made the amazing statement that He would manifest Himself to those who show their love for Him in their lifestyle choices. No one is “good enough” to deserve the manifestation of God’s glory. It’s not about being good enough but about positioning ourselves to receive more from God. Every believer can have a close relationship with the Lord. Jesus not only loves those who love Him, but He loves first *before* any love Him (1 Jn. 4:19).

- E. It is a miracle of grace for someone to stay consistent in seeking the Lord for decades in the face of the positive and negative experiences in life that we all have!
- F. In my forty years of ministry I have seen many people go hard after God for five or even ten years. Most of them were young and in their twenties. By the time they reached thirty-five, many found “good” reasons for drawing back and being more “practical.” I have seen only a few people stay consistent in seeking God with diligence for twenty or thirty years or more.

V. EXAMPLES OF OTHERS WHO CULTIVATED LONG HISTORY IN GOD

- A. An angel appeared to Cornelius to let him know that his many years of prayer and faithfulness would be remembered by God forever (Acts 10:3-4).
²A devout man...who feared God...who gave alms generously...and prayed to God always. ³...he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”...So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.” (Acts 10:2-4)
- B. Anna prayed consistently for many years (Lk. 2:36-38). She was widowed after seven years of marriage (v. 36). After that she gave herself to much prayer. At eighty-four years old—about sixty years later—she was still ministering to the Lord in much prayer. What a remarkable life!
³⁶There was one, Anna, a prophetess...she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. (Lk. 2:36-37)
- C. Mary, a young single woman, was never mentioned in the book of Acts. She was not known in the courts of man for her ministry. However, she will be known forever in the courts of heaven for her faithful love. Each time the Spirit highlighted her in the Scripture, she is described as sitting at the feet of Jesus (Lk. 10:39; Jn. 11:32; 12:3). Jesus prophesied that Mary’s heart of faithfulness and devotion would not be taken from her. He was prophesying of grace on her life that would sustain decades of faithfulness to Jesus as she continued to choose that good part.
³⁹...Mary who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word...⁴²But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Lk. 10:38-42)
- D. The priests of Zadok were faithful in maintaining God’s sanctuary. God promised to bless their family line in the age to come. How much more will God reward the individual priests of Zadok who actually kept the charge of the sanctuary by their faithfulness over decades in it in their day?
¹⁵“The priests...the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me...” (Ezek. 44:15)
- E. David expressed his lifelong focus to seek the Lord “*all the days of his life*” (Ps. 27:4). We must set our hearts like David to be a “person of one thing” for decades. We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us not to lose this focus by intervening to speak to us if we drift from a “one thing lifestyle.”
⁴One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (Ps. 27:4)