

Have you ever wondered if God hears some prayers more than others? Have you ever wondered if God hears your prayers? Have you ever thought I cannot pray well, I do not know the right words to say, I'm not sure how to talk to God. These are all very good questions and I hope to help answer them this morning. I must say and it probably goes without saying, but I am a very simple prayer kind of guy. My prayers are by no means elaborate; I do not use elaborate words mostly because I don't know them. I cannot make them sound pretty. I have heard many people who can do all those things very well, that is just not me. And I am completely ok with that. If you are praying selfishly, I would say that God is not going to be listening to closely to you. "God, I pray for a new truck, you know Bob next door just got a new truck and it is so nice...I really Need a new truck". I would imagine that falling on deaf ears.

I have heard people say that they do not know what say or how to talk to God. God wants to hear from you, we explain it to the youth like this. How many of you have best friend, could be a friend, could be your spouse, every man with a wife should be raising their hands right now. What do you tell them, everything right, they know your deepest fears, to the funniest thing that happened to you today. They understand your thought process (for the most part, I'm not sure Jennifer always understands my thought process), they just get you. Sometimes you don't even have to tell them things because they already know but if you're like me, you tell them anyway. This is exactly what God wants from you, He wants the type of relationship we have with our closest friends. He wants us to talk to Him throughout our day and this can be just a conversation you have while walking around work, school or the store. I do want to add walking around the store looking like your talking to an imaginary person will get you some funny looks. When it comes to prayer, this is a little more structured. There are some things that we should do in our prayer to make them a little more effective. I'm not saying this is the only way God will hear you but this sure helps. Let's read Daniel chapter 9 verse 1-19.

Acknowledge God

Admit sin

Ask boldly

VS 1-3 We left off in the last chapter with Daniel reflecting on the vision he had about the Ram and the Goat. In the final verse Daniel says he was exhausted; the vision was so overwhelming and difficult to understand that it left him worn out. When he rises up from the few days of rest he says, "Then I got up and went about the king's business". In this first verse he leads off with a timeline that we need to explain a little better for some clarity.

In 626 BC King Nabopolassar founded Babylon after challenging the Assyrians and succeeding. This is 21 years.

In 605 Nebuchadnezzar took over Babylon and he almost immediately attacked Jerusalem. This is the beginning of the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was in command until 562. This is a total of 43 years.

Amel-Marduk was from 562 – 560, only 2 measly years and we really don't know much about his time in office.

Neriglissar was 560 - 556 equaling 4 years.

Labashi-Marduk 556 - 556 not even a year who was then overthrown.

Nabonidus was voted in (not really, the people didn't get a say in who their leader was like "we do"). 556 – 552 another whopping 4 years.

Lastly before the Medo Persian army invaded was Belshazzar from 552 – 539 coming in at 13 years.

If your good with math that totals 66 years, so Daniel is a few years early of the 70 years of serving the Babylonian king. This was not too soon for Daniel to begin praying. Daniel had the foresight to look ahead three or four years and to begin praying.

Have you ever known something that was a sure-fire thing and would without a doubt come to fruition? So, you pretty much didn't think about it or worry about it at all? I have mentioned that I do not worry about much, some would say that I don't worry about anything. Most of this is because I know God has a plan for me, and I am down for the ride no matter what happens... so why should I worry about it?

The problem is we should not take for granted that God says He will do something and just sit around doing nothing. Here Daniel 100% trusted God at His word but we see him praying for Gods will to come true anyway. It is not that God needs our help to complete His plan, but we should not assume that God will carry out His sovereign plan for us no matter what we do. Too many times we are only interested in prophecy because we are curious, we need to be about the king's business.

There are 2 overlapping 70-year periods.

1. Serving the king of Babylon found in Jeremiah 25:11, which is what Daniel is referring to. "This whole land will become a desolate ruin, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years".
2. The "desolation" of the land. Each component seems to have been fulfilled over slightly different, yet overlapping, periods of 70 years.

The captivity of the Jewish people, which began prior to the destruction of the temple with the first deportation of Jews to Babylon and ended with a decree from Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem, was 70 years.

The 70 years of desolation of the land can be calculated as the time between the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians—which was indeed a desolate time for the city of Jerusalem—and the rebuilding of the temple.

The first deportation of Jews to Babylon (which included Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) began the 70 years of captivity. We can trace this back as occurring 607 - 605 B.C. Various sources say the date of the return of the Jews to Jerusalem occurred between 539 and 536 B.C.

As for the period between the destruction of the temple and its being rebuilt, commonly used dates are 586 or 585 to 516 or 515 B.C. Although it is hard to identify exactly, the year's most commonly used do fit the prophesied 70 years.

Daniel says he turns to God, other translations say it better they read, “I set my face towards the Lord”. Daniel is determined to reach God with his prayer, so intently that he is approaching this a man who will not be turned away. Why is Daniel so adamant about this prayer? Because Daniel truly believes that he is praying in the will of God, not for his motives.

Daniel could see what was going on and did not want to sit idle on the sidelines, I’m sure like us Daniel believes that God will follow through with his promises. But praying to God to please complete His plans even when they are not the easiest of paths for us, is truly following God closely.

In the last part of verse 3 Daniel explains how he prepped for this prayer, in fasting, in sackcloth and in ashes. These are all symbols of humility and mourning, showing God his humble heart. Have you ever been willing to do what it takes to get a job done? This is Daniels way of doing just that, anything that could be done to make his prayer more effective.

VS 4 Acknowledge God

This is how all of our prayers should begin, by acknowledging the greatness of God. I think to often people go to God like they are some know it all teenager and He is some oblivious parent. They think they can tell Him what they want Him to know to persuade Him into giving them what they want. This is all wrong, Just like now, Daniel realized God was not where the problem lied. He even admits it “God keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him”.

Another part of acknowledging God is to understand that He is not someone you can fool, He see’s the heart of man. So you may know all the right words to say to make your prayer sound utterly amazing but if you do not mean it, then it doesn’t hold water. But the same goes for the other way around, you may be earnest in your prayer, but not understand that just because you honestly want something to go your way means that it is the will of God. Getting these two methods to line up is a powerful combination.

VS 5-6 Acknowledge God, Admit Sin

What was the first word used in verse 5? “We”, do you think Daniel was part of the shenanigans against God that got them exile? NO, but how affective would his prayer be if Daniel was blasting everyone else for their mistakes, when he was no Jesus? I see this more and more, people making fun of others for their mistakes, people setting people out for not doing things just right. We all fall short sometimes. Things that are a struggle for me may not be an issue for you at all. That doesn’t mean that you don’t have your own stumbling block.

When was the first sin committed? Adam and Eve right? What did Adam say when he was asked about why he sinned? He said it is all her fault, Eve made me do it. What did Eve say, it was the serpent’s fault. It is true that each of them was influenced by something or someone, but ultimately we have to own our decisions and not point the blame elsewhere. This is exactly what Daniel is doing here, owning his short comings and admitting that as a people they all let down God.

Of coarse God is not blaming Daniel for the sins of the Israelites as a whole, if we are to call ourselves the body of Christ don’t you think that we should work together as a whole through good times and bad? That means if our brothers and sister stumble we do all we can to help them back up, not point and laugh like the world will.

VS 7-9 When a revival comes across Gods people, the Holy Spirit will convict us and make sure we see our sin. Lets open up that just a little. If you ever feel like you need to confess your sin, you need to understand how that maybe perceived by those around you. If you sinned in secret, lust, hatred, impure thoughts, you should confess to God in secret. If you ask publicly for prayer, then keep the details to yourself. On the other hand if your sin is public knowledge, then you should confess publicly. Both of these methods will help others not to fall into your same pitfalls. If your sin has been spiritual, lack of prayer, lovelessness, unbelief, your confession should be to the church as you have be a hinderance to the work the church is commanded to do.

VS 10-15 Daniel did not need a police report to tell him who's fault all this was, he knew that Israel was to blame. Have you ever made an excuse for your families sin, or maybe your own? We are good at figuring out how to make it sound like we didn't have a choice or it wasn't our fault that we did what we did. I like watching YouTube, there are so many videos of cops pulling people over for breaking the law. I find it hilarious when they are caught on video doing something they clearly know is wrong and then they want to try to argue with the cop. If you chose to break the law "sin" just own up to it!

God is Good.. all the time, and All the time.. God is Good. That is in His faithfulness too, God is doing exactly what He has told His people He would do. In Leviticus and Deuteronomy He promises that curses will come upon the disobedient. They may not have had the examples we do, but why do we test Him, we see that He has made good on every promise He has made so far. Why do people today think the bible doesn't apply to them?

VS 16-19 Acknowledge God, Admit Sin, Ask Boldly

Daniel is clear to what he is asking for, he is petitioning for God to look mercifully on Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. If these 70 years would just be done Daniel knows that God will do as He promises. So all he can do is pray his way through it. As Daniel is praying to God he is sure to be clear that his prayer is not for the benefit of man but to the glorification of God.

Daniel knows that Gods people need a lot of help but it can all be summed up in one phrase. They need God. Charles Spurgeon said,

"Oh, that we might learn how to pray so that God should be the subject as well as the object of our supplications! O God, thy Church needs thee above everything else! A poor, little, sick, neglected child needs fifty things; but you can put all those needs into one if you say that the child needs its mother. So, the Church, of God needs a thousand things, but you can put them all into one if you say, 'The Church of God needs her God.' "

With all this it may seem like it is wrong to pray for your own needs, but that is not wrong. In fact, Jesus tells us to ask "give us this day our daily bread", but we should be about the kings business and understand the need to glorify God above our own needs.

This also shows the *purity* in Daniel's prayer. Sometimes we pray for God to do a great work so we can be known as great workers for God. We need to pray for the sake of the LORD's cause, both in our words and heart.

Do you say "in Jesus' name" at the end of your prayer? Why do we say that, because we think that if we pray for things in Jesus' name God will be more willing to approve it. It really should be that we are

praying on the merit and righteousness of Jesus. Is what you're praying for something worth Jesus dying for?

The devil has tricked so many people in the blind trust of prayer, without believing in the shed blood of our savior. Our prayers should be a reflection of the will of God, they should bring righteousness to His name and only His name. God will not say no to a prayer that lines up with His plan for you.

Let's build a prayer by first Acknowledging God, how great He is. Secondly by admitting our sin, owning our mistakes and not blaming others. And finally, by asking God boldly and clearly to complete His promises for the choices we have made, even though sometimes they are going to hurt. Let it all be to the glory of God.