



BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Prayer

1 INTRODUCTION

Any good coach knows how important the fundamentals are to their sport. For example, a good football coach will spend a lot of time on tackling. They know that a team cannot be successful if they can't tackle with effectiveness. The fundamentals are vital.

Without question, one of the key fundamentals of the Christian life is prayer. From the first few pages of the Bible to the last, we see God's people calling on Him. Learning to pray with effectiveness will be one of the most important disciplines you develop in your Christian walk.

The Bible has so much to say about this topic. Let's begin by focusing on this invitation we have from God to call on Him.

READ Jeremiah 33:1-3.

- ① What is God asking us to do?

- ① What will He do as a result?

- ① If you really believed that, how would that change your prayer life?

2 UNDERSTANDING WHO GOD IS

Let's take this passage apart and gather 5 lessons on prayer.

READ Jeremiah 33:2.

Before the Lord gives Jeremiah the command, the plea to pray, He starts by reminding Jeremiah about who He is.

🔗 Why do you believe God did this?

The foundation for an effective prayer life is proper theology.

🔗 Who do I really believe God is? Not just in my head but functionally.

🔗 As you live life, what do you really believe about God and what do you believe God will do?

To help Jeremiah with this, God establishes some important theological truths about who He is.

A. GOD IS YAHWEH

Take a look at verse 2 again.

🔗 What does God call Himself in this verse?

The term God uses here is “The LORD.” It’s used three times in this text. “Thus says the LORD, the LORD who formed it...the LORD is His name!”

Whenever you see L-O-R-D capitalized in the Old Testament, it’s really the Hebrew word Yahweh. The important thing to note is, this is His Name. It is the personal name of God.

This name for God is used 6,283 times in the Old Testament.

One of the most significant times it’s used was when God was sending Moses to free His people from Pharaoh. Moses asked, “Who shall I say sent me?” and God says in Exodus 3:14 “God said to Moses, “I AM who I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Here is what God is saying in this:

- I AM...no one made me.
- I AM...before the beginning of all things.
- I AM...there is no one else who can say this about themselves.

All of us come from some place, except God. He is the I AM. He was and is and is to come.

This speaks of His power. He is self-existent.

This speaks of His authority. He existed before all things! He is the I AM, and that is the meaning behind “the LORD” in Jeremiah 33.

🗒 Why would this be important to establish for Jeremiah?

🗒 How do these truths about God impact your life?

B. GOD IS CREATOR

God created everything and He did it, “Out of nothing.” He needed nothing else outside of Himself to create all things!

So, think about the problems you face on earth.

- 🔍 How does the fact that He created everything change the way you view your problems?

What an amazing reassurance God’s gives us here. He is saying there is no problem too great for Him. There is nothing beyond His ability. He can do all things that He wills. So, call on Him.

This concept is worth repeating. The foundation for an effective prayer life is proper theology.

Here’s an important truth:

The assurance of the invitation to help is directly linked to the one offering help.

If your car broke down and your neighbor, who is a baker and knows very little about cars, offers to help, there is not a lot of assurance that he can actually do any good in this situation. But, if he is a professional mechanic, the offer gives much more assurance.

Look at Who is offering to help! The self-existent, all-powerful Creator of the universe!

- 🔍 What does your prayer life indicate about what you believe about God?

- 🔍 Do you really believe that He is able and powerful enough?

A.W. Tozer has said,

“What you believe about God in your heart is the most important thing about you.”

Your prayer life is a thermometer indicating your actual, functional theology.

3 GOD'S COMMAND: CALL ON HIM

So after establishing who He is, notice what God does next.

READ Jeremiah 33:3.

There is an amazing invitation in this verse.

This is not us coming to God and asking Him if it's OK if we call on Him from time to time. This is not God begrudgingly offering His services out of duty or obligation. This isn't even just a nice offer that God throws out because He's kind.

Look at this invitation. It's a command. It's worded forcefully. "Call on me!"

🔪 What does this command tell us?

God wants you to call on Him. He's not bothered when you pray. He's not frustrated when you ask Him for things. He wants you to ask Him for things.

He'll never say, "Well, you made your problem, now you can fix it!" That's not who our God is.

Be amazed by this: God, the all powerful Creator of all things wants you to call on Him!

READ 1 Peter 5:7.

🔪 How often do you call upon God for help in any given week?

🔪 Are there times you doubt He is actually willing to help?

🔪 Have you ever found yourself thinking, "God is too busy to hear my prayer?" What's the truth about this statement?

The invitation is to call on Him.

Now, to understand this invitation, it helps to get some background. So let's go back to vs. 1.

READ Jeremiah 33:1.

Jeremiah is shut up in the temple. At this time, there is a close relationship between the "state" and the "church" and the temple had guards and a prison. Jeremiah was preaching truth, but it was truth the government and the religious leadership didn't like, so he was put in prison.

He was in a moment of real desperation. He was not able to save himself. He was desperate and God is saying, in moments of desperation, "I want you to call on me."

The word can literally mean, shout, or proclaim.

🕒 What does it sound like to call out when you are desperate for help?

Prayer can be simple, quiet, and subdued. But a real element to prayer is a desperate cry to God!

God has asked us to call on Him. It's a passionate crying out to Him.

🕒 How's that going for you? What does your prayer life look like?

🕒 Have you ever lifted up your voice and called on God OUT LOUD?

🕒 When have you been the most desperate for God?

🔪 How did that desperation impact your prayer life?

4 GOD'S PROMISE: HE WILL ANSWER

Look at this next part. This may be, for some, hard to believe.

READ Jeremiah 33:3.

When we believe the right things about God and we cry out to Him, what will God do? He will answer.

He said He will, so He must because He is unable to lie.

There are three ways God answers our prayers.

1. YES - This is, by far, the most common way God answer prayers.

However, sometimes we miss this because we don't keep a record! One of the most important parts of an effective prayer life is keeping a prayer journal where you can record all of God's answers! If you do, you will see, He most often says, "Yes" to our requests.

2. NO - very uncommon.

If most of my prayer requests are answered with yes, then the least common answer is "No." And sometimes we don't know why it's a no.

What do you do when God chooses not to heal someone you love from cancer? In those moments, you need to engage your theology. What do you know about God. He's good. And loving. He did not spare His own Son. There is a reason for the no, so I have to trust Him!

3. WAIT - The second most common answer to prayer is wait.

It's a not a yes, but it's not a no. We are praying, but we don't know for sure how He will answer. Therefore, we keep praying. We put our trust and our hope in our God.

This concept is found all over the Bible.

READ Psalm 27:14.

- ① List some of your prayers God has answered “yes” to?

- ① List some that He has said “No” to.

- ① Are there some prayers that you are still waiting on?

- ① What should your attitude be in those times?

Not only will God answer our prayers, but He will answer them abundantly.

READ Jeremiah 33:3 again.

Though this specific promise is given to Jeremiah, here’s the same promise to the church.

READ Ephesians 3:20-21.

We ask and God can do what we ask. But not just that. He can do “far more abundantly than all we ask or THINK!”

- ① Have you ever prayed for something and God answered in a way that was far more abundantly than what you asked for?

THAT is our God and what He does through our prayers!

5 HOW TO PRAY

Create a Prayer Journal.

A. List out Requests

It may help to keep a list of all the requests that are burdening your heart. If there are a lot of items, you can break them down into the days of the week.

B. List out Answers

Once God answers your prayer, you can write them down as well. It will be a source of encouragement when you look back through your journal.

LIFECCHANGE

-Memorize Philippians 4:6-7

-Create a prayer journal in which you list your requests and His answers.

DIGGING DEEPER:

-“Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire” by Jim Cymbala

-“Prayer” by E.M. Bounds