

PRAYER: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL

Tonight we sit in a position unlike any of us have ever known. We are taking necessary precautions against a pandemic illness that has gripped people with fear, chaos, and confusion. The world has been brought to its knees by a microbe, and we are witnessing with stark reality the fragility of life, the fragility of health, and the fragility of economic certainty. If anything, we are watching the realization that man, with all of his wisdom and advancements, is really not in charge or the captain of his own ship. We are a dependent people.

Horizontally we depend upon each other. That is why I am thankful for the scientist, medical personnel, the government officials, and everyone else working around the clock to bring an end to this pandemic. Common grace allows mankind the ability to learn and achieve all that we have at our disposal, yet in all of our accomplishments we are dependent upon a global involvement that works together for the good of the whole.

We are vertically dependent as well. We are dependent upon a Christ for our salvation and righteousness. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds so that we can understand the things of God. And, in times like these, we are reminded that we are dependent upon a good, sovereign, all-wise God who is always in control.

The tension comes when we try to understand the balance between the horizontal and the vertical. And yet, even there we have an example set before us as we see Christ our Lord in prayer. Prayer shows our dependence upon God while we live out our daily lives. And while He was upon this earth, we see Jesus in regular sessions of prayer.

- >He prayed at His baptism. (Lk 3:21)
- >He prayed after healing the multitude of people in Mark 1:35.
- >He prayed all night before choosing His disciples. (Lk 6:12)
- >After feeding the 5,000, He spent time alone in prayer. (Mt 14:23)
- >Before the raising of Lazarus, Jesus prayed. (Jn 11:41-42)
- >And before Peter was ever sifted, the Lord prayed for His own. (Lk 22:31-32; Jn 17)

I could go on and on, but the point is made that while Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, was on this earth, He made it a point to pray. In many ways, prayer is the bridge that balances the horizontal and vertical, because prayer shows our dependence upon God our Father.

This year, our theme is “Learning to be like the Lord,” and in His divine providence, our world finds itself in a position unlike any other. Scientists have no answers. Medical teams scramble to help the infirmed. Countless millions have stockpiled supplies and are now hunkered down in their homes. It is controlled chaos. So what are we, the Lord’s people to do? We are to pray.

As we learn to be like the Lord, let us pray in these specific ways:

1. Let us pray for mercy

- >Only God knows the answer to the cure of Covid-19. We should beseech the Lord’s mercy to reveal the antidote.

2. We should pray for God’s glory

- >When (if) a remedy comes, many will simply refuse to see God’s gift of mercy to us. But we should pray for the Lord to answer our prayers in such a way that even scientist are astonished.

3. We should pray for those affected

- >Our Lord regularly prayed for those in need, and we should too. Here are 2 groups in need:
 - A. Many lives have already been ushered into eternity. Many more are on the verge.
 - <>We should beseech the throne of grace to remember that we are dust, and as He wills, He would preserve life.
 - B. Just like many have lost their life, many more are now under economic pressure and strain.
 - <>It may be months before our economy recovers, so we should pray for the Lord to intervene in this area as well.

4. Let us pray for gospel opportunities

>Right now, people are confused, scared, and waiting for the worst to happen.

<>If and when it comes, many will be in search of answers.

><We should ask the Lord to direct our steps to such people.

><We should ask the Lord to soften their heart.

><We should ask the Lord to give us clarity of mind and voice in the hour.

><And we should ask the Lord to open their eyes to their need for eternal life through Christ.

In the end, many will view this crisis like they view all of life—through the secular lens of humanistic thought that refuses to see a need for God. However, as children of God, we know that all of life is kept and sustained by an all-powerful, all-wise, good God (Col 1:16-17). Therefore, let us take time to pray for people: vertically depending upon the Lord to work out our path horizontally.