

"Touching Heaven Prayer Series"
Part 4 –The Power of Persistent Prayer
Sunday, January 8th, 2012 – Eastgate Community Church
Pastor Dale Campfield

Intro:

Today, we will continue our sermon series entitled, "Touching Heaven" that follows our 40 day fast. Corporately we are Giving, Fasting and Praying during these 40 days!

So: What is intercession? Intercession is to stand in the gap.

“WARNING: Intercessors tend to be a bit more radical and emotional than the rest of us. After all many of them are on the cutting edge of what the Lord is saying and doing in the earth today!” Eddie Smith Book: *Intercessors*

The organ in a large church broke down one Sunday morning just before services were to begin. A member of the congregation happened to be a organ repairman and he immediately went to work on the instrument – finding it was a simple electrical problem. When he finally got it fixed it was just about the middle of the sermon. He quietly passed a note to the organist which read: "After prayer - the power will be on."

Illus: lady and electricity

There's a supposedly true story of a Welsh woman who lived in a remote valley in Wales. She went to a great deal of trouble and expense to have electrical power installed in her home. However, after a couple of months, the electric company noticed she didn't seem to use very much electricity at all. Thinking there might be a problem with the hookup, they sent a meter reader out to check on the matter. The man came to the door and said, "We've just checked your meter and it doesn't seem that you're using much electricity. Is there a problem?" "Oh no" she said. "We're quite satisfied. We turn on the electric lights every night to see how to light our lamps and then we switch them off again."

Now, why didn't this woman make more use of her electricity?

She believed in electricity

She believed the promises of the electric company when they told her about it

She went to a great deal of trouble and expense to have her house wired for it

BUT - she didn't understand the potential of electricity in her home.

AND SO, she used its power sparingly

I suspect there are people who use prayer very much the same way.

They believe in prayer

They know of the promises God has made

They've even read and heard stories about answered prayers

BUT they use prayer's power sparingly...

We're in the second week of our fasting and prayer as a corporate body right now, but how many of us are truly using the power of prayer to its fullest potential? I believe that the reason that happens (at least for some Christians) is that many don't understand how prayer works.

AND many people believe it doesn't really matter whether they pray or not

They either believe:

* God's gonna do, what God's gonna do anyway – so why bother!?

* OR – they regard prayer as a last resort after all of their other efforts have failed. Sort of like “Hail Mary” pass in football. They throw it up in the air and hope it reaches the desired destination. They'll pray a little bit. They'll throw up occasional appeals... But in their heart of hearts, they don't view prayer as making that big an impact on the decisions they make every day.

TEXT: Daniel 10:1-14

But Daniel didn't pray that way

- Daniel prayed 3 times every day
- He prayed in his room
- He prayed in the lions' den
- He prayed for wisdom
- He prayed for guidance
- He prayed that God would forgive the sins of His people Israel and return them to their home.

AND NOW, we find Daniel struggling in prayer for 21 days because he's troubled by a dream he's had. Many Christians would have trouble praying for 21 days for anything, and here we are now in a 40 day fast!

However, Luke writes: Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

"For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?"

Luke 18:1-7

Jesus taught us - we should always pray and not give up

Illus: 3 year old boy

We should be like the 3-year-old boy (that Paul Harvey told about) who went to the grocery store with his mother. Before they entered the grocery store she said to him, "Now you're not going to get any chocolate chip cookies, so don't even ask." She put him up in the cart & he sat in the little child's seat while she wheeled down the aisles. He was doing just fine until they came to the cookie section. He saw the chocolate chip cookies & he stood up in the seat & said, "Mom, can I have some chocolate chip cookies?" She said, "I told you not even to ask. You're not going to get any at all." So he sat back down.

They continued down the aisles, but in their search for certain items they ended up back in the cookie aisle. "Mom, can I please have some chocolate chip cookies?" She said, "I told you that you can't have any. Now sit down & be quiet."

Finally, they were approaching the checkout lane. The little boy sensed that this may be his last chance. So just before they got to the line, he stood up on the seat of the cart & shouted in his loudest voice, "In the name of Jesus, may I have some chocolate chip cookies?"

And everybody round about just laughed. Some even applauded. And, due to the generosity of the other shoppers, the little boy & his mother left with 23 boxes of chocolate chip cookies.

We ought always to pray and not give up...

But why? WHY should we always pray and not give up?

I mean is God deaf? Is it hard to get His attention? Do we have to keep bothering Him until He throws up His hands in disgust and says "If I don't grant their request I'll never get any rest?"

No, I don't think that's the issue at all. In fact, our text this morning seems to be saying something else entirely.

Look at **Daniel 10:10-12**. NOTICE it says "SINCE THE FIRST DAY that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, YOUR WORDS WERE HEARD, and I have come in response to them." (vs. 12)

This isn't the 1st time an angel has told Daniel this: AS SOON AS YOU BEGAN TO PRAY, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision (**Daniel 9:23**)

In other words, **every time you and I pray not only does God gladly hear our prayers... an angel is immediately sent from the throne of God to answer our prayers.**

But that still doesn't answer question: why should we always pray & not give up?

The story of Daniel's prayer (here in chap. 10) gives us at least one reason why that should be true.

Daniel 10:12-13

Now consider what this says:

From the very 1st day Daniel prayed his prayers were heard and an angel was sent. BUT this is one of those rare times God pulls back the curtain and lets us see what's happening behind the scenes.

Illus: Behind the Curtain

It's kind of like when you're at a theatrical play and the curtain is closed. You don't usually see what takes place behind the curtain. If you didn't know better, you might never realize that while the curtain is closed the props are brought out, the scenery is changed and the actors take their positions. But every once in a while somebody slips up and the curtain is accidentally drawn back and you see what is taking place behind the scenes. That's (in essence) what God is doing here - He's drawing back the curtain so you see what ordinarily would be hidden from your eyes.

When Daniel prayed demonic forces rose up (the prince of Persia) and angelic warfare was broke out. You know what that means?

... that means – that when you pray – you turn loose the very powers of heaven

... that means – that when you pray – you have the power to battle the very forces of darkness

... that means – that when you pray – angels are willing to fight = to answer your prayers

As **Hebrews 1:14** tells us

“angels (are) ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation”

WHEN YOU PRAY angels are at your beck & call

Now, here's an interesting question...

Daniel prayed 21 days. The angel was sent the 1st day he prayed... but didn't arrive until the 21st day. Now here's the question: What might have happened had Daniel GIVEN UP in his prayers? What if he had quit on the 14th day, or the 15th, or the 16th? Would the angel have arrived with his answer?

The Bible doesn't say, but the implication is – MAYBE NOT!!!

Jesus taught that we should “always pray and not give up”

- Not because God is hard of hearing
- Not because God needs to be pestered into answering our requests
- Not because God doesn't want to answer us

NO... Jesus taught us always pray and not give up because, when we pray, our prayers carry weight. EVERY TIME you and I pray we unleash more and more power from the throne of God

- Are you praying for someone in your family to become a Christian?
Every prayer you pray puts more and more pressure on that person to listen to God...
- Do you pray for your friends in their daily struggles
Every prayer you pray imparts to them more and more power from God
- Do you have difficulties with someone at work
Every prayer you lift up to God's throne brings God's power to bear on difficult people and situations.

Prayer is not a passive act on our part. Prayer is AN AGGRESSIVE, ACTIVE MINISTRY. You are putting your shoulder to the wheel and moving the forces of heaven.

Illus: P.U.S.H.

One man describing his prayers said "When I pray – I PUSH
When everything seems to go wrong, I just Push!
When the job gets me down, I just Push!
When people don't react the way I think they should, I just Push!
When my money looks funny and the bills are due, I just Push!
When I want to curse people out for whatever the reason, I just Push!
When people just don't understand me, I just Push!
PUSH stands for
P-ray!!!
U-ntil!!!
S-omething!!!
H-appens!!!

Let me encourage you during these 40 days of 2012:

As you give, fast and pray...

Raise the Roof

On your level of expectation for God to move

As you give, pray and fast, expect God to move in the areas of your life that you believe for. Expect more. Raise the roof! Blow the lid off of your expectations.

On your level of participation

Possibly what you are currently doing in your giving, fasting and praying isn't enough. Maybe it's too easy. Quite possibly you need to step it up and challenge yourself even more.

On your level of passion

May there be a great increase in your passion for God to move; for you to give, pray and fast. Passion; not a fancy free “laxidazical” lifestyle about it, but one of passion.

Lower the Boom

On the enemy of your flesh

One of the biggest battles you’ll have during these 40 days is your flesh. Lower the boom, go to battle, fight against your flesh. You’ve got to stay focused and kill the fleshly desire to give in as you give, fast and pray.

On the enemy of your battle

Remember, your battle is not against man, but the devil and his evil ways. You’ve only got one enemy and it’s not man – never will be. It’s the devil. For the particular fight you are in, as you give, fast and pray, lower the boom on your enemies in the supernatural. Give the enemy the full onslaught of the forces you’ve got. Use the Word, Worship and Give like crazy.

On the failures of yesterday

We’ve all failed in the past; and that may have been 10 minutes ago! We’ll more than likely blow it in some way during these 40 days. If you do, you forgive yourself and move on. You move past the failures of yesterday and move on to today and tomorrow. Don’t allow the failures of yesterday keep you from moving forward to your destiny as you give, fast and pray!

Crack the Whip

Be diligent

Be diligent in your giving, fasting and praying. Don’t be wishy washy about it. Don’t fudge around it, just walk in obedience and do it. You can’t just do this part time, it’s a full time quest.

Be decisive

Know what you’re going to do and do it. Make up your mind now and stick with it!

Be deliberate

Every move you make during these 40 days of battle for 2012, be deliberate. Don’t leave anything to chance. Don’t assume anything. The enemy is going to fight against you, so you’ve got to be deliberate as you can.

Conclusion:

I trust that you are following along in your prayer and scripture journals with us along these 40 days. You can download the journal at our website:
eastgatecommunitychurch.com

As you use your Prayer Journals – don't just pray on something once or twice. Pray your prayers again and again and again

- PUSH your prayers
- Empower the angels of God
- Unleash the power of heaven

George Mueller was known for his powerful prayer. In the course of his ministry to the orphans of England, he never asked for financial assistance from men - only God... and he constantly received what was needed to the penny. Once while on his way to speak in Quebec for an engagement. On the deck of the ship that was to carry him to his destination, he informed the captain that he needed to be in Quebec by Saturday afternoon. As the captain related the story, he said "'It is impossible,' I said. 'Do you know how dense this fog is?'"

"'No,' he replied, 'my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of life. I have never broken an engagement in 57 years; let us go down into the chart room and pray.' He knelt down and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. When he had finished I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to pray. 'As you do not believe He will answer, and as I believe He has, there is no need for you whatever for you to pray about it.'

"I looked at him and George Mueller said, 'Captain, I have known my Lord for 57 yrs. and there has never been a single day when I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, and open the door and you will find that the fog has gone.' "I got up and the fog indeed was gone, and on that Saturday afternoon George Mueller kept his promised engagement."

As we continue this journey to "Touch Heaven", let me encourage you to stay focused, stay on track and don't give up. 40 days is a long time to fast and pray; don't stop now. Keep moving forward. It'll be worth it.

You watch... you wait... you'll see!