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Rediscovering the Power of Prayer for Local Church Ministry

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Rediscovering the Power of Prayer for Local Church Ministry Clark Graham Thu, 01/18/2024 - 09:00 Throughout the New Testament, we see that crisis prayers are often ineffectual without being preceded by communion prayers. Ministry is filled with unexpected moments of crisis. In these times, we find ourselves praying for God's miraculous intervention. Throughout the New Testament, however, we see that crisis prayers are often ineffectual without being preceded by communion prayers. For instance, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus engaged in a season of unimaginable, agonizing prayer (Matthew 26:36–44). However, John 17 records that Jesus had prayed in the upper room just before Gethsemane. These two prayers—Gethsemane and the upper room—are profoundly different. While the garden prayer was about imminent crisis, the upper room prayer was about intimate communion. In June of 2017, twenty-one-year old Alex Honnold climbed the world's most famous climbing rock: El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. He ascended the three thousand-foot face in just three hours and fifty-six minutes. But his real achievement was not just in what he did, but in how he did it. Honnold specializes in a climbing technique known as free solo climbing, meaning he does not use any ropes or equipment. His climb was celebrated as one of the greatest athletic feats of any kind because it would either be a perfect climb or death. But Alex Honnold didn't just wake up one day and decide to scale El Capitan without a rope. He went through a two-year preparation process. On the day of his climb, every hand hold, foot placement, and body movement had been carefully choreographed in precise detail. Alex's preparation had determined his performance. In Mark 9, while Peter, James, and John are on the mountain with Jesus witnessing His transfiguration, the remaining disciples find themselves in a situation for which they are wholly unprepared (Mark 9:14–29). A man whose son has been suffering day and night because of demon possession approaches the disciples begging for help. Despite all their efforts, they are powerless to cast out the evil spirit. Jesus arrives on the scene and miraculously heals the boy, ministering to the once-hopeless father in the process. After the ordeal is over, the disciples ask Jesus privately why they were not able to cast out the demon. Jesus' answer is simple but soul-shaking: “This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29). The disciples were certainly praying men, but they lost, or perhaps had not yet discovered, power in their praying. When we find ourselves in such a place—serving and yet unequipped and powerless in ministry—how do we rediscover the power of prayer? Here are three ways: Regain the Focus of Our Imperative Mission The church's mission was defined by Jesus in Matthew 28:18–20. At the very core of this mission, two actions are essential: to represent the Savior and recover sinners. In Mark 9, the father of the demon possessed boy came to the disciples because he had heard of Jesus. In Jesus' absence, the man naturally looked to His disciples who were ministering in His name. Sadly, the disciples did not represent the Savior well nor were they able to recover sinners from the grip of Satan. “And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not” (Mark 9:18). Paul explained that God has given all believers the “ministry of reconciliation.” We are able to carry out this mission as we remember that we represent the Savior. We “are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20). Remember the Futility of Impotent Ministry Before this father begged the disciples for help, the disciples had already been sent out to preach the gospel and were given authority to cast out devils and heal the sick (Luke 9:1–2). Why then were they not able to minister to this family when they had been given the authority to do so? Jesus had given authority to His disciples, but that authority was only effective when exercised by faith. Christ has given His church the authority to minister for Him, but our authority will be ineffective and lack power when we operate faithlessly: “He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me” (Mark 9:19). Jesus warned against trying to produce results on our own: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Renew Our Faith in an Impeccable Master Faith unlocks the invisible and completes the impossible. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Jesus affirmed this to the desperate father in Mark 9: “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we can ascribe limitless possibility to God by completely trusting Him. If we are to truly live by faith day by day, we will need to, like the desperate father, acknowledge that we are a limited people: “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). Some of the greatest prayers in the Bible were motivated by an acknowledgment of one's human limitations. Moses prayed for mercy (Numbers 14:11–20). David prayed for cleansing (Psalm 51:2–12). Solomon prayed for wisdom (1 Kings 3:5–12). The apostles prayed for courage (Acts 4:23–31). These men, and countless others, could have full assurance and confidence in their crisis prayers because they regularly had communion prayers. That power is for us, too. When we regain focus, remember the futility of ministering in our own power, and daily renew our faith in our impeccable Master while we commune with the Lord in prayer, we will discover or rediscover the free-flowing power of God upon our lives, ministries, and churches. Category Christian Living Tags Prayer Local Church

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