

Title: Pray Great Prayers

Text: Exodus 33:17-19

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Place: DCOG

Theme: Good to Great

I have taught the New Believers/Welcome to the Church of God class a number of times. I have led small groups in churches around the United States. One of the things in common is a lesson on prayer.

I have been learning about prayer since I was four years old. I have heard the messages from the great evangelists and read the books by great prayer warriors like E.M. Bounds and Charles Allen.

In its simplest form prayer is simply talking with God. We meet with him to get to know Him better. It is not so complicated. At meal time or at night we often have those brief encounter where we acknowledge God's greatness and ask for His blessing and protection.

The question is should there be more.

I was in Honduras with people from five or six congregations from the United States. We completed some work projects and worshiped with some of the local people.

One night at our evening devotional and wrap up session I was asked to pray. That night, o that precious night, I had an encounter with God.

As I began to pray, God opened up in my mind and heart concerns and thoughts that I began to lift to him, I laughed and I wept as I poured out my heart to him. We talked for the longest time.

Later, another pastor who was there wrote in his newsletter, "it was a long prayer, but it was a good one."

I'm not talking about the prayer. I believe that we met with the Lord that night. He spoke in and through me. It was a moving time.

It was in that moment a great prayer. But I don't believe that it has to be an isolated incident.

Think about it. Are you a great prayer? You mustn't raise your hand. This isn't about the praise or recognition of others. This is between you and God.

Have you ever prayed a great prayer?

Notice Moses' experience...

Exodus 33:17-19

And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

[18] Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

[19] And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

This prayer experience allowed Moses to stand in the very presence of God.

To understand what is taking place here we need to know the context, the story

1. Moses days were drawing to a close.
2. God is going to give them a new leader.
3. The people were distressed. (After all Moses had led the people for 40 years/it was to Moses that God spoke.
4. Moses goes to the tent of meeting

- a. Moses used to pitch a tent outside and away from the camp.
- b. This is where people would come to inquire of the Lord.
- c. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance.
- d. Whenever the people saw the cloud, they would stand and worship.
- e. There the Lord would speak intimately with Moses.

*Great prayers find their tent of meeting and spend time intimately with the Lord.

- f. When Moses would return to the camp, his young aide, Joshua would not leave the tent.

*Does it surprise you that God chose Joshua to be Moses successor?

*Do you remember what happened when God first spoke to Moses at the burning bush? At that point Moses was afraid to look at God and he inquired about God's name. Now he has come to seek the glory of God.

What we are seeing is a faith journey that allowed Moses to become a great prayer.

Psalm 27:8

My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

1. Great prayers are deeply personal.

Now hear me, that doesn't mean that great prayers are always about lifting personal needs. Far from it! But the passion we lift to God elevates our desire for reaching His throne.

*In the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy, Frodo volunteers for the task of taking a powerful, but evil, ring to the only place where it could be destroyed.

It is a journey fraught with danger, death, and destruction. Others, seek to steal or relieve him of his burden but he knows that it is his to bear. He must carry to the end.

Are our burdens, so personal, that we are willing to face whatever comes, to get them to God?

2. Great prayers are birthed in brokenness.

*On a previous trip to Honduras, the indigenous leader of “Heart to Honduras, Miguel Pinnell, asked us a group of pastors, “Have you ever experienced brokenness?” At that time, many of us did not really understand what he was asking.

As Chip Ingram wrote, “Have you ever gone to God with a sense of bankruptcy?”

Prayers that are lifted out of our inability, lack of resources, and total need for God demonstrate our admission that we are broken and in need of a great savior.

3. Great prayers champion God’s agenda.

Many who pray care nothing for God’s agenda. They are praying their our own agenda.

*In the first Captain America film, there is a scene near the beginning where the puny Steve Rogers is being screened, tested and trained.

To prove a point a fake grenade is thrown into the- midst of the soldiers. All of the more powerful, the seemingly better soldiers dive for cover. For Steve in is altogether a different situation. Fearing for the safety of others, Steve immediately throws his body on the grenade, not knowing that it is a dud.

When we are willing to deeply offer all that we are to God, then we are open to God's agenda.

4. Great prayers take God seriously.

You all have heard, or maybe done it yourselves, someone prays at mealtime with a prayer like, "Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub. Yeah, God!"

Are our prayers lame? It is like the way most people recite the "Pledge of Allegiance" or the "Lord's Prayer". It just memorized words.

*I was recently reading a John Grisham novel. In the story a lawyer tries to work a judge, to manipulate and disrespect. The judge is not intimidated, "I find you in contempt."

Ingram wrote in his book...

People proclaim: "We aren't going to have enough to support ourselves."

***Philip. 4:19**...And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

People proclaim: "I'm so overwhelmed with all that's happening; I'm not sure how long I can hang on." –

***2 Cor. 12:9** ... But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

People proclaim: "I know that's what God wants me to do, but I just can't. It's too hard."

***Philip. 4:13**...I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Do we take God seriously or will he find us in contempt?

5. Great prayers demand great courage.

I have heard people pray and ask for great requests but they appear to be asking their fairy godmother for a granted wish list. Or maybe they are rubbing the lamp hoping for a Genie that will appear.

Remember, what I said about Moses at the burning bush? He was in fear before a powerful, mighty, magnificent God.

It takes great courage to acknowledge that kind of God and then lay our hearts open before Him.

- Abraham interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah
- Esther confronting her king on behalf of the Jewish people

6. Great prayers always go back to Jesus.

- George Mueller started a number of orphanages that were dependent upon prayer.
- Missionaries like Sidney Johnson who started “Children of Promise”
- Evangelists like Billy Graham
- People like you and me

We won't pray great prayers until we become great pray-ers in dialogue with Jesus.

*What's in your wallet?