

'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' - Knowing Jesus More! September 27th, 2020

Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team, and whole Church Family,

*"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful!"
Colossians 4:2 (NIV)*

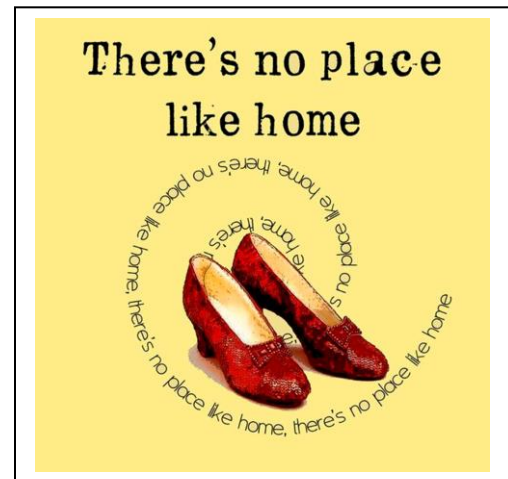
*"[God] hears us whenever we ask Him; and since we know this is true, we know also that He gives us what we ask from Him."
1 John 5:15 (GNT)*

Does prayer really work? Why do we doubt it? I'm calling everyone back to prayer. If you haven't come back to church, do know we are making it our goal to have everyone return by Thanksgiving! We also want you to know that the family needs communion, so we are having a communion and hymn sing next Sunday October 4th. Make yourselves ready to return!

Why is it so hard to live for Jesus in and around our families? What do you pray for? The more specific you are in prayer, the more specific the answer will be. What relationship do you need to give to God in prayer today? Remember the old saying: "There is no place like home?" It is true! But what makes it greater is "There is no place like home when we pray most for our homes!" Here are four prayer encouragements and tips that I hope will help us to seriously begin praying on a daily basis for our families and homes. Praying is one of the most important things we can do for our families. Let's be real. No family is perfect. But, you know one thing I can guarantee 100%? Prayer WILL help.

1. Relationships are at the heart of ministry. When relationships are broken, it can make ministry miserable. When relationships are broken it can make your family life miserable. What we tend to do is to find blame or justification for where we are and what we do in our homes and families. Let's just start at the place where we understand that we will never have a perfect family.

If this is your experience, I encourage you to pray for God to heal those relationships. Think of all the ways Covid-19 has changed and affected families this year. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is impacting everyone, some more drastically than others. For a number of families, it could mean making big changes in everyday routines due to financial hardships. We've been cooped up in our homes since March. Parents and family members have had to adapt to working from the house, while the children are all home. Some



family members lost jobs. And the hardships to pay bills and to keep things afloat financially have strained relationships. Some parents had trouble finding time to home school their children and make ends meet. So families which were not used to being together are now kept together. While it is joyous that families now need to eat together and spend time doing activities together, the issues of online pornography and illicit behavior have suddenly surged. Christian counselors reported that the issues of divorce, marriage breakup, and counseling for addictions to social media have increased 45% more through the months of March and April of this year. Suicide has increased and depression has increased 57%. Also family and domestic abuse has risen 30% from April through August. Since some schools haven't reopened in September it could mean the increase of anxiety in children, tension in parenting relationships or general fear. The family needs our specific prayers now more than ever.

2. Prayer works because God is in control. In all the years of broken and dysfunction that you may have experienced as a family, it has ever never happened that you are forgotten by our Lord (Heb. 13:5-6).

In fact, His sovereignty is the basis of all miracles, so we can trust His wisdom and His goodness. Ephesians 3:20 says, "God . . . is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—infininitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes" (TLB). Twenty times in the New Testament it says, "Ask." So why are we not asking? Prayer is the most important and most powerful spiritual weapon which God has allotted to the church and believers. Prayer isn't positive thinking. It works because God promises that it works. "[God] hears us whenever we ask Him; and since we know this is true, we know also that He gives us what we ask from Him" (1 John 5:15 GNT). John wrote to give us confidence in our prayers. It's harder to pray for those at home because this is where people see our inconsistencies. We can show up at church and look right, act right, talk right, and give right. But our home might be a war zone. The home that isn't praying turns into just a house or worse. But when we trust God to work in all our situations and homes, we see the grace of God begin to fill us and our loved ones. Followers of Christ know that real faith brings real change in the relationships of those who are closest to us... our family members.

At the annual family-reunion picnic, a young bride led her husband over to an old woman busily crocheting in a rocker. "Granny," she said, touching the old woman's hand affectionately, "this is my new husband." The woman eyed him critically for a long moment, then asked abruptly, "Do you desire children?" Startled by her bluntness, the young man blushed and stammered, "Well-uh-yes, I do very much." "Well," she said, looking scornfully at the large tribe gathered around the six picnic tables, "try to control it!" We know how hard it is to control the relationships in our families, that is why God must be in control. Don't forget it! Prayer works because God is working.

3. Prayer can do whatever God can do. His resources are available to us. This isn't to be taken as a lucky rabbit's foot so we can get people in our families to do the things we want, or make us happy. This reminder should encourage us to not give up, but to give ourselves over to God's work in our loved ones lives and in our families. Not just our physical families, but also our church families. Are you praying daily for your church family? Or do you forget their struggles and needs until you walk into that door each Sunday? The active power of prayer is, however, a reminder that we need to pray for God to keep intervening. We know we can't make people change, so let's commit them to the Lord and work on ourselves.



When Paul brought up the family issues in Colossians 3:18-4:1, he hit all of the important weaknesses that we have trouble working on for ourselves. Paul took the "hardest" areas that our families need, yet are the hardest issues for us to be obedient in, and he asked us to work on this in our lives. He didn't tell us to focus on the issues our family members do wrong, but focus on what we ourselves do wrong.

Wives are to work on submissive attitudes and willingness as fitting to how they would submit and respect Jesus in their lives. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ Himself loves. They are never to treat their wives harshly. Children are to be obedient to please their parents. Fathers and mothers are not to aggravate and discourage their children. Slaves, or better for our culture, employees, are to work with all their hearts as if the Lord was standing there; not to work with only pleasing others to get ahead or a promoted. And masters, or bosses, are not to treat their workers unfairly. All those family and workplace relationships are to be focused on so God can do a work of change in our hearts. We are only responsible for our hearts, never for those who we may want to change. So pray, and remember to ask God to change ourselves.

Then after talking about those things, Paul reminded us in 4:2 to pray with grateful attitudes and thankful spirits. "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful" Colossians 4:2 (NIV). Have you ever thought about why thankfulness is such a key ingredient in a Christian home, life, and family? Because it is the most godly way to spread Christ's love. Let's take time to speak our thankfulness for everyone in our homes. We need to pray, "Jesus, thank you for my ... husband, or wife, or step-son." We should thank God for those people even if the relationships are strained, broken, and fraying. When we bring our families, fellow employees and church family to prayer, and thank God for them and their issues which we constantly clash over, we are in essence saying: "Lord, I thank You for the problem, and I am releasing this issue to You. I trust You to work in their hearts. I know and I am confident that You will!" It's encouraging to know that things out of our control are not

out of God's control. Be thankful in your prayers. Pray and give appreciation. When family members give one another compliments and sincere demonstrations of approval, in turn they try to make the others feel appreciated and good about themselves. Thankfulness spreads like Covid-19 but in a positive sense.

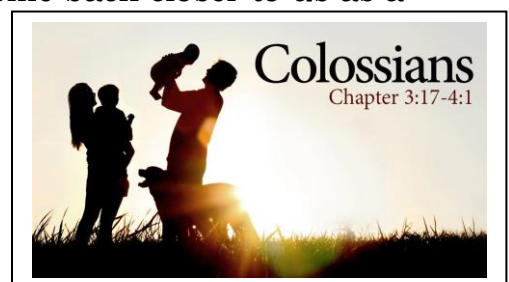
4. Pray that God makes you a Spirit-filled family! You may not be able to change a situation, but God can change it. In Philippians 1:9-11, Paul spelled out exactly what he's praying for people: "This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God" (NIV). That includes changing a relationship from bad to good, and the quickest way to see that change is to start thanking God for people you are having difficulty getting along with.

This is the thing we must remember most and is hardest for us to learn, "We are not the Holy Spirit for our family!" We can't change them, no matter how hard we try. We can only work on changing our own issues, and doing so with trust and grace. We need the Lord to change us. Do we even remember that our loved one, whom we are struggling in our relationship with, may at this very moment be praying about us to God? How short-sighted we are. Praying for our loved ones will change our attitude—and it will change them. Positive praying is much more powerful than positive thinking. People may resist our help, spurn our appeals, and reject our suggestions, but they are powerless against our prayers.

What do you pray for? The more specific you are in prayer, the more specific the answer will be. What relationship do you need to give to God in prayer today? Let's make it our commitment to pray for love to retouch our hearts and homes and families. We should also pray that people, who still have been hanging on the "fringes" of our church community, come back closer to us as a church family. Let's make it our heart's goal to pray our family home. We are living on this earth, and moving toward heaven and prayer is the wind in the sails of our lives to keep us going!

This is how Paul summed up his whole approach to life, to being a citizen of heaven on earth: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Only someone who says, "To live is Christ" can say, "To die is gain." Just try to recast that sentence according to whatever your life motto happens to be. "To live is money, and to die is to leave it all behind," right? You can't take it with you. Or "To live is notoriety, and to die is to be forgotten." But if you can say, "For me to live is Jesus Christ," then you can say, "To die is gain."

You need to be ready to die, but you also need to be ready to live until you die.



We all live in-between two worlds, so keep the eternal in mind as you move through the temporal. That was Paul's way of living, and it can be yours, too. Let's remember that we keep living on earth and moving toward heaven!

Pray with me,

“Father God, We thank You for endless love and wonder and joy that comes through a relationship with You through our Savior, Jesus. We also thank You that you bring meaning and love and togetherness in families. We pray for You to touch our homes. Thank You for the laughter, the learning, the tears, and the triumphs that fill our homes. It is our desire that all our loved ones, no matter where they are in life right now, would seek you, Lord. Jesus, we invite You into center of our families. Teach us. Root us in Your word. We belong to You, Holy God. May we honor You with our actions. May we build each other up according to Your principles. May we extend forgiveness when there is hurt. May we glorify You in our victories! Holy Father, please go after our prodigal family members. Heal the broken-hearted and set the captives free. We were not meant to do life alone. Regardless of our current family situations, as we pray for those closest to us, may we see Your Spirit-power return to our homes and families. Where there was once bickering and backstabbing, hurt and hate, may You touch with true love and forgiveness. Where there was once resentment and anger, may there be forgiveness. Where there was once violence and corruption, may there be honesty and righteousness. Guide our way, Lord, as we go on with our lives each day. Be our shield not just in the four walls of our house, but even here in our church family. May You always preserve the bond that we have as a family, and may we look forward to seeing each other once again as we journey to our heavenly home. For those who don't attend our church, guard our friends and loved ones' homes as well, God, that no harm will fall on them. We also pray for those who've just lost family members and have sorrow because of walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Holy Spirit, please help the hurting hearts here today. Continue to protect us, Lord. Allow no intruders or calamities to disturb our homes. We trust in Your mighty power to keep us and our families safe in You. Give us more and more of You, dear Lord. We ask all these things, in Jesus' mighty name, and so we believe! Amen.”

Praying,

Pastor Corvin <><

Quote: “A palace without affection is a poor hovel, and the shabiest hut with love in it is a palace for the soul.” ... Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899)

Quote: “If your home is unbearable, maybe you're the bear.” ... Russian Proverb