

**SERIES: YOUR BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE**  
**PART 6: WHY MUST I KEEP ON PRAYING PERSISTENTLY?**

I want to talk with you about a very important topic for every Christians globally. That is, why must I keep on praying persistently? If God loves us and He already knows what our needs are, and that He said, as we looked at last week, that He will only give us what helps us and what is good for us. He is not the kind of Father that would ever give us something that is hurtful or harmful for us. He will never give you a bad gift. If this is true and God wants to answer my prayers, why must I ask multiple times, and why must I ask and keep on asking, and seek and keep on seeking and knock and keep on knocking? The Bible discusses many times about being persistent in prayer. Would you read out loud with me pleased Colossians 4:2. Let's begin, "**Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.**" Please hear me, loved ones. Prayer is to be as natural to us as breathing. **Why?** Because your Heavenly Father loves you, and the Bible says it is His pleasure to give you His Kingdom. In giving His Son on the cross for you He desires to flow His love, life and liberty through you for your own sake and for the sake of others. Paul gives us three important elements that we will want to master in prayer. First he says to **devote yourself to prayer**. Devote means to be diligent, to be busily engaged in, or persist in or give constant attention to prayer. In order for you to stand in the midst of constant pressure in a fallen and unfriendly world only an attitude of absolute commitment to persevering prayer will win the day. In a practical way this is what it looks like it to take everything that comes your way and take it to the Father in prayer. That is, we pray about everything and to pray constantly. We all have hundreds of things that come our way every day. Paul says be diligent. Consistently engage in prayer. Give constant attention to prayer with whatever you see, hear and feel. Secondly, Paul says pray with an alert mind. We're to be watchful in prayer which means to stay awake and be spiritually alert. In 1 Peter 5:8 Peter uses the same term when he encourages his readers to "**Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.**" It is a known fact that lions attack sick, young or stragglng animals; they choose

victims who are alone or not alert. Peter warns us to watch out for satan when we are suffering or being persecuted, or if you are feeling alone, weak, and cut off from other believers, or if you are so focused on your troubles that you forget to watch for danger; those are the times when you are especially vulnerable to satan's attacks. This is why every one of us needs to be in a small group so you can develop close intimate relationships, so the people in your group get to know you, and they can tell when you need support and to encourage you to stay alert and watch out for satan and to devote yourselves to prayer. I want to encourage those of you that you know you are capable of facilitating a small group--and maybe you have put it off, and you have just said I am not going to do that--to hear the Holy Spirit desiring you to engage in this most important ministry. As we have been focusing on God's purpose for our church and we have been calling leadership both paid and unpaid to be focusing our ability to lead and serve people, our small groups are filling up to full capacity and some over capacity. On any given Monday night we can have 15-20 people. I love it, personally, but I also know that small group experts say if you do not keep creating new groups with new leaders the groups that are larger will by nature experience a natural attrition. I don't want to see that happen because I know the best way to experience a way of belonging, believing and becoming is to be in a small group. It might take you a while to find a group you can bond and fit with. SG are like families. There is often time a love-hate dynamic that can happen, but it is hanging in there and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in you what He desires in the key. Part of staying alert in prayer is becoming a part of a small group. One of my favorite times in our sg is when each person prays for one of the prayer requests. I just know the Father is smiling when we bring our requests to Him. C.S. Lewis writes something important about staying wide awake in prayer. **"No one in their right mind, if they have any power of ordering their own day, would reserve their chief prayers for bedtime--obviously the worst possible hour for any action which needs concentration....My own plan when hard pressed, is to seize any time, and place, however unsuitable, in preference to the last waking moment... The body ought to pray as well as the head."** The third thing Paul says in this verse is that we're to be alert and on guard and pray with a thankful heart. Max Anders writes, **"Believers**

**who pray with gratitude for God’s blessing will be less likely to be led astray by the lures and lies of the enemy.”**

Jesus tells stories that are profound about being persistent in prayer. In Luke 11:1-13 Jesus tells the story of the persistent friend, and in Luke 18 He tells the story of the persistent widow. Both of these stories are parables that demonstrate...

- **THE CONTRAST: God listens and cares even if people don’t!**
- **THE POINT: God is eager to answer your prayers!**

The point Jesus is making is that the neighbor who didn’t want to get up and wake up his family and the unjust judge who doesn’t care for the widowed woman both ultimately gave the people who were shamelessly persistent to get their needs met. Jesus said your Heavenly Father is just the opposite, but you will need to be persistent in your pursuit of Him to get your needs met.

For the remainder of our time I want to look at with you **WHAT ARE THE REASONS GOD WANTS ME—YOU—TO PRAY PERSISTENTLY?**

### **I. It keeps my attention focused on God**

When you pray about something over and over and over, where’s your attention? It’s focused on God. Now we know one of the greatest gifts you can give to anyone is your attention. For those of us who are married, especial men with Valentine’s day coming up, the greatest gift you can give your wife and daughters is your attention. The greatest gift you can give your kids is your attention. Why? Because your attention is your time, and your time is your life. You will never get your time back other than what you see it produce in your spouse, children and the people you influence. Prayer is about giving God your attention. Prayer is a form of worship, value and giving God the reverence that is due Him. When you pray you’re acknowledging that God is all powerful, all knowing and ever present, and that you are aware that He loves you and that He is attentive to your cries and call for His Mercy, forgiveness and His

intervention in your life. King David writes in Psalm 25:15 **“My eyes are always on the Lord, for He rescues me from the traps of my enemies.”** You are going to have a lot of traps in your life this next week, and your Heavenly Father is the only one who knows them in advance. Have you ever been driving up a mountain and you’re behind a truck, and they’re slow and you’d like to pass them, but you can’t see around the curve, and how great it would be if you could call in, like a helicopter, and they could say, “Yes, it’s clear around the corner,” because they could see what you can’t see. Well guess what? God can see what you can’t see. He sees the traps you’re going to have this next week, next month and this next year. Your God would say to you this morning (afternoon) **“Focus on Me continually, and I’ll show you how to be rescued from all of the traps.”** Psalm 105:4 says, **“Search for the Lord and for His strength; continually seek Him.”** So the first reason God wants us to pray persistently is it keeps my attention focused on God.

## **II. Waiting on God to answer teaches me four things I will learn no other way**

You will learn some of the most important lessons while you’re praying for an answer that you won’t learn any other way. This teaching can literally open our minds like never before, because you won’t just learn more about who God is as you learn to pray persistently and consistently, but you will learn some important things about yourself as you don’t get everything you want instantly. Some prayers are answered immediately, but some take time--weeks, months and years. Some of the prayers I have asked have taken 5, 10, 15 and some 30 years. They were the most important prayers in my life at that time. Why did it take so long? Because while I was diligent in praying to God, God was working His purpose, plan and will in my life to make me more like Jesus. There are four tests that God puts us through as we pray. Please read Zechariah 13:9 out loud with me, **“I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure. I will refine them like silver and purify them like gold. They will call on My name and I will answer them. I will say, ‘These are my people’, and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”** The context of Zechariah 13 pictures the final days of the earth as we know it. For God’s new

era on this earth to begin it must be cleansed of all evil and idols. I believe God is in the process of cleansing His people, His church and His bride. One of the ways God cleanses us is through testing us, especially in prayer. This is why our persistence and our tenacity to seek God is so important. Let's look at four tests that we go through in seeking God and waiting for Him to answer.

### **A. Praying persistently tests my desires**

This is where you and I have to get clear on this question when seeking God. What do I really want from God? As we continue to pray for breakthrough for ourselves, our CV family, our culture, California, our nation, and the globe, you're going to find that your prayers will actually change; they will evolve and grow and develop, because at points you're going to realize that's not what I really want. What I really want from You, God, is this or that. Praying persistently tests my desires concerning what I really want. Prayer is the place where my desires have the opportunity to be tested by God by fire so that, as I pray persistently, my desires become more pure and more focused on what God really wants for me and what He has for me.

One reason why prayer and reading God's Word daily is so important is that there are two sources from where our desires can come from. They can come from our own sinful selfish nature and the other source is that they can come from God through His Holy Spirit who lives in you once you surrender your life to Jesus Christ. You have godly, appropriate desires in you, and you also have inappropriate desires. There are helpful desires in your life, and there are harmful desires in your life. There are righteous desires in your life, and there are unrighteous desires in your life. There are constructive desires and destructive desires in your life.

If you ask God for something once that is not a deep desire. It's just a whim. God is not in the business of fulfilling every whim you and I come up with. God is in the business as your heavenly Father of listening to and taking care of your deepest desires. Often times God is asking us how much do you really want what you're praying for? Do you really want to get married? Do you really

want a husband or a wife? How serious are you willing to pray about it? Every day? Would you like a job? Do you really want God to make a difference in people's lives in your neighborhood, your school, your city your church? How much are you truly praying about it? Are you praying like Daniel did three times a day about your deepest desires? Hear me, CVCHURCH. I am desperate to see God do some precious, powerful, poignant things through each one of us. I am praying everyday for them. My faith is getting stronger. My prayer times are getting more intense and more desperate. As I do and as our prayer times get stronger, watch and see what God will do. You can whine, complain and get depressed or you go after God with a tenacity that you have never done before. I encourage you to come to our Worship Night tonight to do this very thing that Psalm 37:4 says. Please read out loud with me, **“Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires.”** What do you truly delight in? Prayer tests our desires. It purifies us. This is one reason I find that praying in the Spirit, or as Paul says, praying in tongues--where the Holy Spirit prays God's mind and purposes through us according to Romans 8:26-27--is very purifying. When you allow the Holy Spirit to pray through you it helps you to get clearer on what God really wants for you. Why is that so important? Because as you and I learn to delight in Him more it purifies our hearts' desires and longings, then He can give us what we desire because they are His desires for us. Prayer helps us to become in harmony with God's desires. If you would like prayer to be released in your own spiritual prayer language, please see me or one of our pastors on staff and they would be more than willing to pray with you.

## **B. Praying persistently tests my priorities**

This is the question that we ask of ourselves: **“What's most important to me?”** When I pray for something more than once, it demonstrates to God what is really important to me. When you pray about something more than once then it helps you gain perspective, and it gives you greater clarity concerning what is really your top priorities. If you have a hard time knowing what is really important to you, check yourself and see what it is you're worrying about the most. If you're not worry about things you're probably not very concerned about

them. Here is my point. If something is worth worrying about than it is worth praying about. Every time I worry or I'm fearful about something, I'm acting like an atheist. Worry has been called practical atheism. I am acting like I don't have an heavenly Father. The Bible tells us in Philippians 4 not to worry about anything but pray about everything. I want to encourage you every time you start to worry or get angry or anxious or agitated or annoyed or aggravated take that as the cue to start praying about the issue or situation or person. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:31-33, **“So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”** This is very powerful, church. Jesus says when your priorities are right and you seek God in prayer He will give you everything you need.” Psalm 84:11b says, **“The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.”** This leads me to ask myself, **“What is out of order in my life at this moment? Are my priorities out of whack? Is there something other than God's Kingdom taking first place in my life? Is it sex? Food? Pleasure? Pride? Possessions? Prestige? Power? Fame? Hear God say to you this morning (afternoon): “I will withhold no good thing from you when you do what is right.”**

### **C. Praying persistently tests my maturity**

This asks the questions, “Just how selfish am I?”, and, “How well do I wait when I don't get my way?” This is one of God's biggest tests in our lives concerning prayer. When God doesn't give something to you immediately, He is testing your maturity. He is testing your character. He's testing your responsibility. He's testing whether you're grown up or not in those areas. It's a spirit check. Persistent prayer, shameless bold prayer where you keep asking, seeking and knocking concerning what you need God to do in your life actually shows maturity rather than immaturity. You might say, “Scott, what do you mean by that?” If you tell a toddler, “You can have it in a little while,” do they get that? No. if you tell a toddler, “Not yet. You can have that in an hour,” they

typically will throw a temper tantrum. Why? That's called immaturity. Why? Because toddlers don't know how to wait. Immature humans don't know how to wait. Immaturity says "I want it now." It can look like this. I can't afford it so I'll just put it on my credit card and I'll buy things I don't need with money I don't have. Then I'll be in debt and I'll be in debt for a long time. Why? The number one cause of most of our problems in life is the inability to delay gratification. We just don't know how to wait. Praying persistently, church, tests my maturity. When God doesn't give you the answer to your prayer instantly, do you just grab your blanket or your ball and go to your corner? Hear me, loved ones: Patience is a mark of maturity. When it comes to prayer, if God doesn't give it to you immediately, do you just give up and say, "Well, I'm not going to pray to God about that anymore because He didn't give it to me in a month or year or whatever." Maturity means that you know the difference between a delay and a denial. A delay is not a denial. A delay simply means God says, "It isn't the right time yet, but it will be the right time one day. Keep trusting and believing Me and My love and care for you." Another point of maturity in prayer is—"Am I willing to let God change me instead of changing the circumstance?" This is what is called surrender. The point of surrender happens in every breakthrough prayer before the breakthrough happens. If you don't get through this point, you're not going to get through the breakthrough. Am I willing to let God change me and my attitude and my heart and my character and grow me up and change me and make me more and more like Jesus? 2 Chronicles 32:31 says, "**However, when ambassadors arrived from Babylon to ask about the remarkable events that had taken place in the land, God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart.**" Sometimes when you don't sense God's presence it simply means He is testing you so you can see what is really in your heart.

#### **D. Praying persistently tests my faith**

The question I ask myself here is "**Do I trust my feelings or my Father?**" The Bible says that your faith in Jesus is the most precious thing you have other than God's love, grace and forgiveness. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says that your faith is far more precious than gold. "**So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead,**



**even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is far more precious than mere gold."**

Our hope is built as our faith is tested. You don't have to hope for something unless it has been promised to you and you don't have it yet. Peter says there is wonderful joy ahead but also know you will have to endure many trials for a while. That means while you're here on earth anywhere from 70 to 100 plus years. A little while compared to spending eternity with Father God, Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit and His family. While we're waiting and we keep asking, seeking and knocking boldly will I choose to trust my Father or my feelings? Can I tell you a little secret, church? It is a profound mistake to believe your feelings. Last week we looked at what Jesus says about the character of our Father. He will only give you what is good. God made you, and He knows you better than you know you. Jeremiah 29:11 says, **"For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."** But here is the key about God's future for you just like it was true for the Israelites in this passage. God says, "I have plans for you and they are good and not for evil, plans to give you a future and a hope." Are you going to trust your feelings or trust your Father--especially if you don't like how things are looking in your life **Spiritually, Emotionally, Relationally, Financially, Vocationally, Intellectually or Physically.** God says, "You must believe in My timing and trust My timing, because I am never wrong. I am not playing you along; it isn't time yet for what you're praying, but keep your focused attention upon Me as you keep praying for what you need. And know that your desires, priorities, maturity and faith are being tested." Galatians 6:9 says, **"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."** Precious friends, God wants you to keep praying--not because you're trying to wear Him down--because you don't have to convince God of your desires. He has already said if you will delight yourself in Him He will give you the desires of your heart. In your persistence God is purifying your desires and testing your character, helping you gain clarity in your priorities and building your life. I want to end our time together today

before our valentine celebrations begin with FOUR WAYS GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. These are self-explanatory so I won't take a long time explaining them.

**1) When my motives are not right, God says no**

He says I have more work to do in my character growth so I can handle the benefits that He wants to give me.

**2) When I'm not ready, God says grow**

**3) When the timing isn't right, God says slow**

**4) When my request, timing and character are all lined up, God says go**

These are four ways that God always answers prayer. No, sometimes. Grow, sometimes. Slow, sometimes; and then He says go.

**Ephesians 6:18 "Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere."**

Pray.