

**SERIES: YOUR BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE
PART 2: HOW TO PRAY IN A CRISIS**

I want us to look at the book of Daniel and learn from him how to pray the kind of prayer that God answers when you're in a crisis. I think we will all pray more as we learn to pray the kind of prayers that get the kind of response from God that extends His purposes and plans in our lives. Have you prayed a lot of prayers that you feel God didn't answer or if He did you missed His response? I want us as a church family and as individuals and families to learn how to pray when we face a crisis personally, when our culture and cities experience a crisis and when our nation experiences a crisis. I perceive that as a culture we're in a crisis mode. There are terrible things happening at breakneck speed. I encourage everyone to take notes, because if you personally are not in a crisis there is a good chance you will be sooner than later. I want to encourage us all to be praying for the Presidential inauguration. Loved ones, whether you like the results of the election or you loathe the results of the election we must continue to pray that God will lead and guide our leaders from the federal to the state and to the local leaders. I prayed often for President Obama because the Bible tells us to in 1 Timothy 2:1-5 **"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. 5 For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity--the man Christ Jesus."** It is always curious to me when I hear people who call themselves Christians say the church is not to be involved in politics. That is not what the Bible says. We are called by God to be very concerned about the kinds of policies that those who in legislative leadership are making because they do impact our daily lives, and we have seen a great encroachment on our religious liberties over the last 10 years because of certain policies. This has happened on our watch. In 2011 this administration under the leadership of our State department launched what was called the Global Equality fund that has advanced and demanded that other nations

embrace the distorted views that have surfaced concerning gender, marriage and sexuality. Our government has spent over 33 million dollars to persuade other countries to embrace our abortion policies and gender issues. I have been in meetings where I have heard political representatives from other countries as they wept when they said their funding from America was being threatened if they did enact our abortion policies and marriage equality policies. Loved ones, other countries are not excited about what we are importing in these issues. The big issue for me as a nation which I believe has caused the present crisis in America is the fact that we are killing millions of babies in the womb, and we are creating havoc for people and how God has created them for His specific purpose concerning their gender. As a church, we cannot just remain silent on this issue and say it's not of the church's business, because it is. As Christ's bride, as Christ's body, He looks to us in our personal lives and in our policies as a nation to honor Him and surrender our lives to Him. Daniel realized, as we will see, that Israel and Judah had not, and they were living their lives like the godless countries around them. They had embraced their spiritual, emotional and sexual values, and God had placed them in judgment and had removed His blessings from them. I believe there is great hope for America and for our church and the church worldwide as we take seriously God's call to learn **HOW TO PRAY IN A CRISIS.**

I. LET GOD SPEAK TO ME BEFORE I SPEAK TO HIM.

This is what I call the listening step. God's people must learn how to hear the voice of God when He speaks to them. How do you do that? It is important to understand that God always makes the first move in your life, you don't. God is always the initiator of everything in your life, and you are the responder. God never expects you to make the first move. Our loving Father always makes the first move. 1 John 4:10 tells us **“This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.”** The Bible says we get to serve God because He first served us. He knew we had a problem and He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us long before we even knew we had a problem. The Bible says we give to God because He first gave to us. Everything you have in your life is a gift of God. God will never

ask you to do something He hasn't already done for you. The Bible says that prayer begins with listening, not us talking. You listen to God. One of the ways you do that is to read the Bible every day. This is why we provide these Bible bookmarks so you can read through the entire Bible with us, and together every one of us will go through the entire Bible once and the N.T. twice. Nothing will develop your ability to hear God and to learn how He communicates to you better than you reading your Bible every day. As we study Daniel's prayer life you can learn how to pray, what to pray, where to pray and when to pray. In chapter 9 Daniel is 85 years old. He has gone through multiple changes in his life and ministry test after test. Daniel kept getting promoted higher in authority and higher in power, and--notice this, church--in the government of Babylon. Why? Because God used Daniel to change policies in Babylon that were wreaking havoc on God's people. Daniel by this time has served 3 different kings. He served under the Babylonians and then the Assyrians and then the Persians, and now Daniel has a new boss. At 85 years of age Daniel wants to go back to Israel. So he knows that God has said in the book of Jeremiah that Israel will be in Babylon for 70 years, and then He would bring His people back to Israel. He knows the time of captivity is about over, but Israel has shown no signs whatsoever of repenting and turning their lives back to God. The crisis for Daniel is he knows that the 70 years is almost over and they are no closer to God, and he is fearful that God won't bring Israel back to their land. This is his crisis, and here's how it starts. Please read Daniel 9:1-2 with me out loud, **"It was the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, who became king of the Babylonians. 2 During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, learned from reading the word of the Lord, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years."** Please circle in your notes the words **"learned from reading the word of the Lord."** The first step to learning to pray effectively and have your prayers answered--whether you're in crisis or not--is to study the Scriptures daily and learn from God's word every single day. The more you know what God says in His Word the more you will have answers to your prayers. Please hear me, loved friends and family. It is our ignorance of God's Word that is the #1 reason why more of us don't have our prayers answered. Jesus says in John 15:7 **"But if you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you may ask for anything you**

want, and it will be granted.” Notice Jesus gives us two conditions. I must remain in Him, and I do that by knowing and obeying the principles in this book. Daniel is 22 years younger than Jeremiah. Daniel reads Jeremiah 29:10-12 that goes like this **“This is what the Lord says; ‘You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. 11 For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. 12 In those days when you pray, I will listen.’”** Please hear me, church. This is a very well known and favorite verse for Christians worldwide, and there is some great instruction here. God says, “I have made each one of you for a purpose. I have a plan for your life, but it’s not automatic. You can miss it. You can miss My plan and purpose for your life.” In fact, the majority of people miss God’s plan and purpose for their lives. God said there are two important elements here to this promise. God said to Israel then and to us today, “I promised you that I will rescue and save,” and there are two key factors in God responding to our prayers. Please write these down in your notes. **God’s timing and my praying.** God’s timing has to do with what we call His sovereignty. Things will only happen in His chosen timing. He told Jeremiah, “I will deliver My people in 70 years.” Not one day early or one day late. This is God’s prerogative and His responsibility. But notice God has His responsibility and we have ours. Vs. 12 “In those days when you pray,” that is our responsibility, and notice His: “I will listen.” The first action step in how to pray in a crisis is that you are reading God’s Word daily and you are listening to Him. As I read my Bible in the morning I listen to His Word and His Word shapes my ability to pray. On Wednesday the 11th as I was finishing this teaching, part of our Bible reading that day was Psalm 4. Vv. 1a & 6-8 say, **“Answer me when I call to You.... 6 Many people say, ‘Who will show us better times?’ Let Your face smile on us, Lord. 7 You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine. 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.”** Here is how I prayed these truths back to God. **“I thank You, Jesus Christ, this morning that You hear and will respond to me as I call out to You this morning. Many people are complaining in our culture and seeking pleasurable and feeling good experiences, but I thank You for Your face that smiles on me**

this morning. I love Your smile. Your smile helps me to feel loved, accepted, cared for and I sense that I am valuable to You. Your smile gives me hope. I confess that You have given me greater joy than any pleasant experience I could enjoy. I claim and confess that every night when I go to bed that I lay down and sleep through the night in peace, because it is You alone, O Lord, who keeps me safe. I thank You for Your presence, purpose and plans in my life. In Jesus' name I pray." Listen to God speak to you as you read the Bible every day and then know as you pray, God's timing is incredibly important, so when you're in a crisis, and you don't always get the answers you want or as prompt as you think they should be, remember that God is God and our Father truly does know what's best for us.

II. FOCUS MY ATTENTION ON GOD

Look at Daniel 9:3a. I'm reading from the ESV translation. **"Then I turned my face to the Lord God."** In the NAS it says, **"So I gave my attention to the Lord to seek Him."** After 39 years of marriage I have learned this important lesson. When Kathe is talking to me, I turn my face to her, and I listen to her. I'm not reading or watching TV or looking at my texts, but I am looking intently at her. Why? Because she wants, needs and deserves my undivided attention. This is how we're to pray to our Heavenly Father. We are to be focused, alert and pay attention to our Father. When you talk to God there are many different positions you can take. You can pray with your eyes open or closed. They did this in the Bible. You can bow your head, or, as many did in the Bible, they looked toward heaven when they prayed. Amos 5:4 in the NIV says, **"Seek Me and live."** In the NLT it says, **"Come back to Me and live!"** In other words, quit focusing on all of the other options (idols) you can focus on and truly seek Me, come after Me, and you will truly have a life that is meaningful, full of value and significance. Proverbs 8:17 says, **"I love all who love Me. Those who search will surely find Me."** Hebrews 11:6 says this, **"It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him."** What areas in your life do you want God's rewards and blessings? God will bless and reward you spiritually, emotionally, relationally, financially, vocationally, intellectually,

and physically as you focus your attention fully on Him. Block everything out and choose to turn to Him in everything that happens in your day. It was precious last week--a friend of mine who has come to Jesus within the last 14 months said, "Scott, my life has changed so much." He said as he was sharing his faith life with one of his relatives, he said "I just turn to God and ask Him questions about what I should do and what decisions I should make in the moment." Church, this is focusing your attention on God. Especially when you're in a crisis, the only thing you can afford to do is let God speak to you, and then you focus your full attention upon Him. Luke 12:31, Jesus gives us the antidote to worry. **"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and He will give you everything you need."**

III. EXPRESS MY DESIRES WITH EMOTION

Daniel says he turned his face to the Lord. How did he do this? Look at Daniel 9:3b and 4a, **"...seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy. I poured out my heart, baring my soul to God."** Daniel teaches us that when you have something you need from God that is when you passionately express your desires and needs to God. Whether it's a spiritual or emotional or relational or financial or vocational or intellectual or physical need, God says He wants you to express your desire with emotion. God wants you to express your needs and desires with passion to Him. Have you learned that you can say the right words in the wrong emotion and your spouse or child or friend doesn't get it? You can say all the right things, but you didn't... Have you ever had your wife or husband or friend say to you, what do you mean by that? Because it was the tone of your voice that threw them off. God is an emotional God. The only reason you have emotions is because you're made in God's image. The Bible says God gets happy, He gets sad. Notice Daniel sought God in prayer with pleas for His mercy. Please circle in your notes the words **"prayer and pleas for mercy."** The Hebrew word for plead is baqash. It means to present an emotional request. It is a serious form of seeking God with all your heart. It is an intense focus on asking and seeking God to answer your prayer to meet the needs your desperate for. I recently heard a story about a young boy who desperately wanted a Star Wars watch for Christmas. Rogue One is a new sage in the Star

Wars series, so all of the memorabilia were selling like hot cakes. This watch was the favorite of the kids this year. It had Yoda on it, and he just kept bugging his parents to please get him this watch. “Mom, I want this Star Wars watch for Christmas. Dad, I want this Star Wars watch for Christmas.” He keeps on and on and on about this watch. Finally, his dad goes, “Tommy, we got it. If you mention this one more time you’re not going to get the watch.” Smart kids, back off. So, he stopped hounding and harassing his parents about the watch he wanted so badly. About a week later, the whole family is sitting at the dinner and the dad says, “Hey you know what, it’s good for us to talk about the Bible. I would like each one of us to share their favorite Bible verse with the family.” One of the kids broke out with John 3:16, which most people know, **“For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”** Dad and mom sat there, looked at each other, and you could see the pleasure on their faces with their child’s response. The teenager said “John 11:35, **‘Jesus wept.’**” Shortest verse in the Bible. Then Tommy says, “Well my favorite verse is Mark 13:37 where Jesus said, **“I told you once and I say it again, watch.”** Smart kid, huh. Daniel 9:4, Daniel says **“I poured out my heart, baring my soul to God.”** Have you ever done that? Have you ever bared your soul to God? This is not wimpy weak praying. This is gut wrenching prayer. Dear God, I must have Your help in my marriage, in my parenting, in my business, in my emotions in my mental health, I feel like I am losing my mind. When is the last time you poured out your soul to God emotionally? I can tell you. The last time you prayed like that is when you were in deep, deep pain. Because we usually don’t pour out our hearts to God when things are going great. No, we pour out our hearts to God when you are in despair. When you are at your wits end and you don’t know what to do. You would be wise to do a study in the Bible of the phrase “cry out.” There are many primroses in the Bible about crying out to God. Some of us need to cry out to God for our own spiritual, emotional and relational areas of our lives because they are so out of whack. Some of us need to pray for our family. I can guarantee you, Kathe and I are praying and crying out for Whitney’s health like we never have. We are praying every day multiple times, I will stop and just start crying out to God and say, “Father, in Jesus’ name, I thank You for healing and delivering Whitney from this systemic pain.” Kathe and I have joined her in a

very strict diet. She is detoxing, and it is amazing the different painful symptoms that are coming up every day for her. I look at her and say, "This just shows it's working." It is so painful to see her go through this, but we sense God's presence and purpose in all of this, and we're participating in every way we can. We have a health crisis in the Wood family, and if one person is going through it, we will all cry out to God for His healing and deliverance. What are you going through or have been suffering with for years? It is time that we cry out for our own crisis and the crisis of others. (If appropriate Scott pray for Jeannette Buss.)

IV. THANK GOD FOR HIS LOVE AND PROMISES

The Bible tells us that when we ask God for His intervention and power and healing we're to ask with praise and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is not a holiday when you're a believer; it's an attitude of our entire lives. You are to live with the attitude of gratitude. The fourth thing Daniel did in his prayer is he confesses how good God is, how gracious God is, and how grateful he is to God. Daniel 9:4 and 9:9 say, please read out loud with me, **"I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: 'O Lord, You are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill Your covenant and keep Your promises of unfailing love to those who love You and obey Your commands.'" vs. 9 "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving even though we have rebelled against Him."** This is where you take time to rehearse with God how faithful He is. How reliable He is. How dependable He is. How forgiving He is. How powerful and ever present He is, and how much you're grateful for His eternal and unfailing love. You thank God for His faithfulness, His love and His promises.

V. HUMBLY CONFESS MY SINS

God won't listen to prideful complaining, but He does listen to humble confession. God always responds to humility. 1 Peter 5:5-7 says **"God opposes the proud but favors the humble. 6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time He will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you."** I get grounded in the love and forgiveness of God when I admit my own arrogance and sin and

ask God for His ongoing forgiveness. How does God respond to us when I humbly admit that I have sinned? That I have missed the mark. That I said or did something that I shouldn't have done. The Bible says in 1 John 1:9 **"But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."** The word to confess is the Greek word Homologeō which means to speak the same as God does about my sin. God hates sin because it breaks off our relationship with Him. We lose a sense of His presence, purpose, power, and plan for our lives when we live in our own sin without confessing it to Him and receiving His forgiveness and cleansing. John projects a situation in which we acknowledge our sins in an ongoing way, and he portrays authentic Christian living as involving honest and ongoing acknowledgement of one's sins. Instead of ignoring our thoughts, words and negative behavior we're to walk in a conscious acknowledgement of God's presence and Lordship in our lives, and when we know we have veered from His heart, His Word and His ways we're to immediately acknowledge our sin, whether it be a bad attitude, hurtful words that I have spoken or inappropriate behavior. What is interesting is that most scholars argue that John was promoting public confession in their house fellowships and gathering. Notice what Daniel says in 9:5-6 and vs. 18. **"But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against You and scorned Your command and regulations. 6 We have refused to listen to Your servants the prophets, who spoke on Your authority to our kings, and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land.... O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open Your eyes and see our despair. See how your city--the city that bears Your name--lies in ruins. We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of Your mercy."** Daniel confesses his and God's people's spiritual adultery. We have given our love to someone else when we were supposed to give our love to You. We've been unfaithful to You. Daniel knew that they did not, and we do not, deserve God's blessings, but we are to cast ourselves on God's mercy and grace. Loved ones, as we begin this new year, 2017: THE YEAR OF HOPE, the Holy Spirit is leading us to live a lifestyle of humility and prayerfulness so that He will hear our prayer, forgive us and pour out His blessings upon us as we pursue His purposes and plans for our culture and the world.

Let's pray. "Father God, we confess today that as individuals and as a CVCHURCH FAMILY, we want to learn to seek You in a crisis and outside of a crisis. Our country is in a lot of turmoil, anxiety, anger, and is divided. We pray for Your blessing on our country and on our state. Help us to see that Your plan for our lives involves Your timing and our praying and that many times we don't have what You have planned for us because we have failed to seek You and to focus our attention on You. Teach us how to focus our attention on You. Father, it's so easy to get distracted in this world. We choose to turn our faces to You. Lord, teach us how to talk to You with emotion, to be authentic and real, not phony and fake. Help us to realize that our tone and our heart are more important than the words. Thank You that our prayers don't have to be beautiful and sound great. Our prayers just have to be honest and real. Lord, break our hearts over the things that break Your heart. Teach us to pour out our hearts to You, and, yes, even if tears come, so be it. God, we've wandered away, and we're not as close to You as we've been in the past. We want to start our way back home to You again today. Thank You for loving us, God. Thank You that You are a God that keeps His promises with us. Thank You that You are faithful when we're unfaithful. You're consistent when we're inconsistent. Thank You that when we come and humble ourselves to You and admit our sins, our wrongs, and we admit our rebellion that You don't punish us, but You forgive us and You wrap us up in Your warm embrace. Father, we ask You to work in our hearts and lives." If you've never invited Jesus into your life you can simply pray right now to Him and say, "Jesus, I surrender my life to You. I confess Your Lordship over my life. Make Yourself real to me. I want to learn to trust You, and I want You to be the Lord and leader of my life, dear Jesus. I humbly pray this in Your name."