

**Intro:** This week I met someone, shook his hand, after I asked: "What do you do for a living? Mason? Steel? Elevator? The reason I asked was very simple. Those three careers all have a very distinguishing mark: HANDSHAKE! KNOW IT!

This morning we continue our messages on "Marks of Victory", where we are talking about the Marks in a disciples life that give evidence you are a committed follow of Jesus. Last week Pastor Orin talked about the Mark of Worship: Today I want to add to that the Mark of Prayer! If you are going to be a committed, effective, impactful follower of Jesus, your life will be Marked by Prayer! In fact, there is a very early church tradition about the author of James, (James the Just, half-brother of Jesus) "Old Camel Knees! Spent so much time in prayer, knees rough like camel!

Prayer is one of those things that we often talk about a lot, but don't really engage in as we should. In his book on Prayer, Richard Foster says this: Pg 1, 2 QUOTE  
Rather than dealing with the MECHANICS of Prayer....the how to...I am going to focus today on MOTIVATION: WHY!!! I'm doing that because the biggest issue I hear about Prayer is" "Why should I pray...God is going to do what He wants to do anyway...and I'm ok with that...so WHY should I pray?

8 Reasons Every Follower of Jesus Should Pray:  
Psalm 116: YOU should pray because:

**1. Because God Hears You When You Pray!** Vs 1 Heard: Lit = *to hear intelligently, to pay attention to; to discern: Listen*

Our word for it today is ACTIVE listening! DEF: *Listening is the most fundamental component of interpersonal communication skills. Listening is not something that just happens (that is hearing), listening is an active process in which a conscious decision is made to listen to and understand the messages of the speaker. Active listening involves listening with all senses. As well as giving full attention to the speaker!*

When you pray, God hears you, understands you, knows the desires of your heart! When you pray you are building your relationship with Him! More you pray, better, stronger, closer your relationship becomes. When you pray, God is ACTIVELY listening...UNDERSTANDING...You have His FULL ATTENTION: God of UNIVERSE: YOU!

**2. Because God Leans Down To Hear Your Prayers:** Vs 2 "Turned His Ear" Better: *"Leaned down to hear my voice!"*

I told you before of my experience in student teaching, in 1-2 grade, teacher pulled me aside, taught me a very important lesson...Get down on their level. Look them in the eye...Pay attention to what they are saying! Listen to me...that is what God does when you pray! Whenever you get on your knees to pray, or bow your head...

- He comes down on your level: Bends down from Heaven...like a mother or father with their child  
He Pays attention to what you have to say! He does that because He Cares for you!  
He gives you His undivided attention..."Looks at YOU!"

James 4:8 *"Come near to God and he will come near to you."* Do you want more of God's presence? PRAY!  
COME NEAR to Him in prayer...and God will come near to YOU! When you pray...Heaven comes down!

**3. Because He Has Compassion For Your Needs:** Vs 3-5 God Actually CARES about what is going on in your life!

He cares what is happening...How you feel...What you are going through...the Struggle you may be dealing with. As Jesus said, *"He mourns with those who mourn and rejoices with those who rejoice!"* We pray because He CARES!

Mt 9:35-36 *"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."*

When you pray the heart of God is moved with compassion for what is happening in your life! Why would you neglect having His love and compassion in your life? Why would you NOT want Him to see your heart...and respond to what is going on in your life? When we pray we put ourselves in the very best place to receive His love and mercy and grace

**4. Because He Protects Us:** Vs 6 Protects Lit = *To guard; To protect; To attend to; To build a hedge about!*

When we pray God builds a hedge of protection around us! It brings to mind Elisha the Prophet, King of Syria

2 Kings 6:14-17 *Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

When we pray God protects us! Just like the servant, we don't see God's protection, we don't know it is there. All we can see are our enemies, their strength, their animosity. But when we PRAY...When we ask God to intervene...When we ask God to open our eyes, THEN we can see His hand mighty on our behalf: Then all of a sudden, what Paul said in Romans is real: " IF God is for us...who against?" What changed? WE DID...Because we PRAYED! Just like servant!

**5. Because He Gives Us Rest! Vs 7 Rest: Lit = Quiet; Settled Ness; Peace; Tranquility of Home**

When we pray our heart finds its home in the presence of God. And when we are near to HIM, nothing can disturb that rest and that peace. It is the promise of Psm 23! Rest, Peace, Still Waters, Place of Bounty w enemies, As St Augustine said, our hearts will never find rest until they find their rest in God! Foster: "*Finding the Hearts True Home*"

*Illus: There was an old Hymn: Near To The Heart of God! Written by pastor lost two nieces to diptheria: "There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God. A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God!*

*When we pray...we find that place! Place of still waters...place of peace...regardless of what is going on around us!*

*Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

**6. Because God Delivers Us: Vs 8 Look at these three amazing promises of God Deliverance in our lives:**

**Lit: Deliver = To pull off; To Take Away; To set free from!**

- **Soul From Death:** The door to heaven is opened through Prayer! Delivers us When we Confess, Repent
- **Eyes From Tears:** When we pray we find freedom from Grief. Not always immediately...Like 1 Thes 4
- **Feet from Stumbling:** When we pray God directs our paths! Prov 3:5-6 "Trust in Lord all heart..."

When we pray we open ourselves up to God's best..God's blessing, God's direction and guidance in our life. Why WOULDN'T we pray given all of that: Why would we ever want to stay in death, eyes full of tears, not knowing path!

**7. We Pray Because Jesus Told Us To!: Simple Obedience:**

Luke 11:1-2 Jesus prayed, Disciples saw, Asked, "Teach us to pray" Jesus replied: WHEN YOU PRAY: NOT IF! Prayer is one of the things Jesus told us to do...and it was one of the Spiritual Habits in His Life!

Luke 22:39: "*Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.*"

Not only did Jesus TELL us to pray...He MODELED it as a SPIRITUAL HABIT: If Jesus prayed as a habit...His followers!

**CONCL:** Prayer is a distinctive mark of a disciple of Christ. I want to challenge you this morning, if your prayer isn't what it should be:

- **Tent:** Set aside time for Prayer every day                      Join one of our prayer groups
- **Book** Find an accountability partner...                      Start a Prayer list

There is no better time to start than right now...at the beginning of the year. There is SO much we miss when we don't pray...don't shortchange yourself from the blessing and the benefits of God. He wants to bless you...He is waiting for you to ask Him in prayer.

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