

**“Only A Prayer Away”**  
**Luke 18:1-8 \* July 25, 2010**

*I. It's encouraging that Jesus knows we'll sometimes be discouraged when it comes to prayer*

*A. Why would we be tempted to give up praying?*

*B. Who in the Bible ever felt that way?*

*C. What did Joseph Scriven learn?*

*II. Ideas We Must Grasp To Have A Satisfying Prayer Life*

*A. First, we must grasp God's view of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*1. How is God's view of this different than ours?*

*2. How has our culture shaped us in this area?*

*How has this impacted our prayer life?*

*3. Is God ever late? Do we ever see Jesus ever in a hurry?*

*B. Second, we must grasp God's view of human*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*1. The Curse of being a Vikings' fan*

*2. God practices a 'hands-off' policy with us – what do we **not** mean by this?*

*3. What do we mean by this?*

*4. How does this affect our view of life?*

*5. So why should we pray to God if we're responsible?*

*C. Third, we must grasp God's view of what's \_\_\_\_\_.*

*1. What was the woman in the parable seeking?*

*John 15:7 ~ “If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

*2. What's the condition here for prayer?*

*3. What are some of the things that God considers important?*

*III. One More Thing To Remember About Prayer: While God May Not Always Give You His Presents, He Will Give You His \_\_\_\_\_.*

*A. At the end of the day, how does Jesus want us to view prayer?*

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*I. It's encouraging that Jesus knows we'll sometimes be discouraged when it comes to prayer*

*A. Why would we be tempted to give up praying?*

**When we don't see prayers answered when we like. Or when we don't see prayers answered in the way we like. In addition, the complexity of prayer makes it hard (e.g. we don't see God, can't hear him, and are unsure in even how to pray.)**

*B. Who in the Bible ever felt that way?*

**Abraham and Sarah. David in the psalms. Jesus felt “God-forsaken” at the cross.**

*C. What did Joseph Scriven learn?*

**Joseph Scriven was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1819. By the age of 25, he experienced two monumental losses. His Catholic birth family shunned him when he became a Protestant. Estranged from his family, he experienced an ever more devastating loss when on the night before his wedding day, his fiance accidentally drowned. Do you think Joseph Scriven struggled with the feeling that heaven's doors were slammed shut on him? At the age of 25, he packed up what few belongings he had and left his homeland once and for all, migrating to Canada. But he kept his faith, and gave his life to living out the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and later on it was Joseph Scriven who wrote these words:**

*What a friend we have in Jesus;*

*All our sins and griefs to bear*

*What a privilege to carry*

*Everything to God in prayer*

*Have we trials and temptations,*

*Is there trouble anywhere?*

*We should never be discouraged*

*Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*II. Ideas We Must Grasp To Have A Satisfying Prayer Life*

*A. First, we must grasp God's view of time.*

*1. How is God's view of this different than ours?*

**The watch that is on God's wrist is different than the watch that is on your wrist. Psalm 90 tells us that in God's eyes, a thousand years are like a day. Back as the year 2,000 approached, a big to-do was made about the coming of a new millennium, the closing out of a thousand-year chapter. Remember all the doom and gloom about Y2K? To God, the start of a new millennium is just another day at the office.**

*2. How has our culture shaped us in this area?*

*How has this impacted our prayer life?*

**For the average American back in 1950, there were no dishwashers - you did them by hand. No washing machines or dryers - you washed them by hand and hung them out, piece by piece on a clothes line. No TV dinners 'cuz there was no TV. No cash machines. No 24 hour grocery stores. No four-lane superhighways. No microwaves. No internet. No direct deposit. When you drove your car, you expected breakdowns and flat-tires. And there was no pay at the pump. No McDonalds or fast food of any kind. Just a few, short years ago. And while I welcome each of these innovations and inventions - it's important that we recognize what this culture has done to us. It has spoiled us rotten. It has created in us an expectation that we shouldn't need to wait for anything. And while that's well and good when you need to buy a loaf of bread or fill up your car with gas, you better not bring that attitude with you over to your prayer life or you'll be in for a real struggle.**

*3. Is God ever late? Do we ever see Jesus ever in a hurry?*

**Not once in the gospel of Luke or any of the gospels, do you ever see Jesus rushing? Or see Jesus in a hurry. He broke out the fast food once with the loaves and fishes thing, but he was not in a tizzy as he performed the miracle. He didn't rush to Lazarus' grave when he heard that he had died. Lazarus' sisters more or less insinuated that Jesus dawdled in coming, but he didn't. He got**

there at the right time, to do the right thing. The Bible says of Jesus' own coming to earth, 2,000 years ago, that it was right on schedule. Galatians 4:4 – "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son..."

*B. Second, we must grasp God's view of human responsibility.*

*1. The Curse of being a Vikings' fan*

It's easy to get fatalistic when you are a Viking's fan. Easy to believe that there are other forces at work in the universe besides talent and ability and decisions we make. But you know, despite all the athletes who flaunt their faith on TV and when they score a touchdown, point up to heaven as though God had just blocked for them, I am convinced that when it comes to anything athletic, God just backs off and says to himself, "Hands off."

*2. God practices a 'hands-off' policy with us – what do we not mean by this?*

Some people believe in what is called 'Deism.' Deism is what might be called theological atheism. It's the belief that God created the world, because the evidence for a creator is so obvious. There's no way this just happened. But after creating the world, God packed up his things that left, went away somewhere far, far away. And so like atheists, deists believe that we are functionally alone in the universe. That's not what I mean by 'hands-off'.

*3. What do we mean by this?*

Christians believe that God is always around us. He's always with us. In him, we live, move and have our being. Christian believe that everything that happens to us is "Father-filtered", it comes through the gaze of God. But God genuinely has given us freedom to express ourselves in this life. To make choices. To exercise responsibility. To face consequences. God's does not make a habit of tinkering with the pieces on the playing board of life. God did not nudge Brett Farve at that fateful moment of the championship game last January and force him to throw an interception. That was Brett being Brett.

*4. How does this affect our view of life?*

People who think that God is always tinkering with the board of life end up becoming very fatalistic and passive and irresponsible. I think of how most people in Haiti view the world. If they end up poor, well, it because God chose that destiny for them. Better not fight the universe. God's running the show. Well, yes, God is running the show in an ultimate sense. He's the director. He makes casting decisions. Creates the stage we walk on. He's decided in advance how the script will end. But along the way, he allows us to rearrange and redesign the stage if we like, write in our own lines, design our own props, create entire episodes of our own making, do some improv. Although he runs the show, he releases creative control over to us, for a time at least. Because he's made us free and responsible. He's made us kings and queens, and given to us royal authority to join him in shaping this world. And see what a difference one's view of God makes. Three years after 9-11, all signs of the wreckage of the Two Towers were gone, clean up, removed. Ten years from today, there will still be signs of wreckage strewn about Haiti, and people will still be living in tents on muddy hillsides.

*5. So why should we pray to God if we're responsible?*

We still need God's wisdom for the choices we make. We still need God's grace and favor to undergird what we do. And above every other reason we could give, God has still ordained that he will work through our prayers. Things happen when we pray that do not happen otherwise. Everything I say and do and think and plan I bring to God in prayer. Proverbs 16:3 – "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." Luke tells us earlier in his gospel how Jesus on the night before he chose his 12 apostles spent the entire night in prayer. Why would he do that? This was one of the most critical decisions that Jesus had to make in all his ministry. The men he chose were the ones who would continue the work once he was gone. Why did Jesus pray all night? He wanted God the Father's wisdom and anointing and power to be upon him when he made that choice. But Jesus in the end still made the choice. Still had the responsibility of calling and training these men. The work was his, though in an ultimate sense it was God undergirding him. Supporting him. "Commit to the Lord whatever

you do, and your plans will succeed.”

Far too many Christians have a defective view of human responsibility, and you see it and hear it in their prayer lives. “God, make me healthy,” they say, then fail to exercise and take care of their bodies, their temples. “God, help me financially,” they say, then sit back and wait for manna, or dollars, to rain on them from heaven. Meanwhile they fail to put into practice all that the Bible teaches about money and work and saving. “God, help my children believe in you,” they pray, then fail to have family devotions, don’t bring their children to Sunday School, never let their kids see them with an open Bible in their laps.

*C. Third, we must grasp God’s view of what’s important.*

*1. What was the woman in the parable seeking?*

**Justice. Something near and dear to God’s heart. (As opposed to the outcome of a football game.)**

*John 15:7 ~ “If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

*2. What’s the condition here for prayer?*

**You have to be locked into a relationship with Jesus Christ, so much so that his words, these words, are just bubbling up inside of you. You have to know Jesus’ heartbeat. Know what Jesus’ passions are. What he values. What he thinks about. What’s important to him. As these words germinate inside of you, you’ll know how to pray, and then more and more of your prayers will be answered, because you’ll be praying in a way consistent with God’s purposes.**

*3. What are some of the things that God considers important?*

**There are many Scriptures that tell us what God thinks is important. Colossians 1:9-12 contains a beautiful prayer from the apostle Paul where he explains to us in detail how he prays for other believers. The requests he makes of God are so powerful. Have you ever prayed this way for another believer? Or for your church? Have you ever asked that God would help someone:**

- 1. Be filled with the knowledge of his will.**
- 2. Be filled with all spiritual wisdom and understanding.**
- 3. Live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way.**
- 4. Bear fruit in every good work they do.**
- 5. Grow in the knowledge of God.**
- 6. Be strengthened with all power according to God’s might**
- 7. Have great endurance and patience and joy and thankfulness**

*III. One More Thing To Remember About Prayer: While God May Not Always Give You His Presents, He Will Give You His Presence.*

*A. At the end of the day, how does Jesus want us to view prayer?*

**We need to begin to see pray not as a time to get things from God, but a time to *get God*. To just be with him, in his company, loving him, learning from him, drawing from his strength and grace. To just have a holy conversation with our Lord. It is this view of prayer that caused Jesus in his busiest moments to break away from the chaos of his activities and busyness of his schedule to just be alone with the Father (e.g. Luke 5:16). For ministry can be so draining (Luke 8:46), and life can be so exhausting. If we don’t take this time for silence and solitude to just drink in deeply from God’s life and goodness, then we will wither from the inside out. It was just this type of holy conversation that I’m sure Paul was thinking of when he told us to learn how to ‘pray without ceasing’. (1 Thess.5:18)**