

# STOP WALKING DEAD

## DEAD PRAYER LIFE PT 2

### LEAD OFF

Last week we kicked off a new series that will take us into Easter called Stop Walking Dead.

Each week we are looking at various areas of our life where we have a tendency to act like zombies in our spiritual walk with Jesus.

We started this conversation off with one of the most important areas of our relationship with God and that is our prayer life.

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### LIFEWAY RESEARCH STUDIES

According to a recent Lifeway Research Study... church leaders across all denominations and groups believe the greatest need amongst believers and in the church is more passionate and relationship driven prayer.

- This isn't surprising... prayer is the lifeline and our personal connection with the Father
- As I said last week

### A DEAD PRAYER LIFE MATTERS, BECAUSE IT'S A SYMPTOM OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD ON LIFE SUPPORT.

To rightfully define a prayer life we must understand...

- It's not a todo list item that we mark off to appease a God who we get mad at us if we don't complete our chores.
- It's not an easy button that we push when things get uncomfortable and extend beyond our control
- It's not an escape hatch when the plane we pilot takes a nose dive
- It's not an emotional crutch to bail us out of unmet expectations and various human failures

Today we are going to dive back in to the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6 as Jesus is answered the question... how should we pray.

- This portion of Scripture gives us some core pieces that will help to revitalize our prayer lives.

### LORD'S PRAYER

Last week we started looking through the Lord's prayer and didn't get very far.

- We didn't get very far, because we often can't get past the first line.

Our Father in heaven

- We talked about how we don't know how to approach the Father, because many of us aren't confident in the relationship dynamics between us and Him.
- Often, we project the experience we had with an earthly father unto God the Father and it distorts our view of him through the lens of our experience.

Hebrews 4:16 NIV

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- Many of us struggle to approach God with confidence because we don't truly know Him.

**THE REALITY IS THAT A DEAD PRAYER LIFE IS NOT A TIME OR KNOWLEDGE ISSUE, IT'S A RELATIONSHIP ISSUE.**

So once we've established that we must perceive the Father for who HE IS and not who we've made him about to be... we can approach the throne of grace with confidence.

## HALLOWED

The next line in the prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13:

Hallowed be your name. **(LEAVE THESE UP THE WHOLE TIME I'M IN THIS SECTION)**

This line is important as every line... this means "Holy is your name."

- This is an important character trait as we understand the Father.
- He isn't a representation from Eastern religions where gods or higher authorities contain both features of good and evil, yin and yang, peace and chaos.
  - They don't seek to balance the Father where there is equal parts The Force and The Dark Side.
    - This isn't Luke Skywalker vs Darth Vader
- God is Holy... he is light and there is no darkness in him.
  - He can't even be in the presence of darkness
  - You know why Hell is so bad... God's presence and light and holiness isn't there.
  - The only reason why this world has any potential of not being a complete dumpster fire of evil is because God's presence invited by his people.
- This is important for us to know about God, because it means he's trustworthy.

Hebrews 13:8 NIV

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This means, he's not going to change how he operates or how he feels because he woke up in a bad mood.

- He's not going to all the sudden behave differently because the office switched to decaf.
- He's the same... everyday, every hour, to everyone.
- He's trustworthy. You get the same version of God everytime you access him.
- He's not going to lie to you one day and tell you the truth the next.

## OUR FATHER IS A KING

Your kingdom come,

Our Father is a king.

- He's not just a king... he's the King of Kings
- He reigns over every king and every kingdom that has ever existed.
- You're not talking to someone that can't fulfill your requests or doesn't have the resources to meet your need.
- He owns everything.

This introduces a tension... if God can answer our prayer and if he owns everything... why then are there times when he doesn't answer our prayers?

- Seems like a cruel thing to do... I'm the King of Kings... I run every kingdom and am over everything... **no soup for you!**
- He's not a prayer nazi sitting up there with an enjoyment of telling you no

## THE WORLD IS OBSESSED WITH UNANSWERED PRAYER.

- Every where we look someone is writing a song, making a show, or making a big deal out of unanswered prayer.
- Those opposed to Christ use it as leverage in their argument against the existence of God
  - Those that follow Christ try their best to ignore it or simply struggle to work their apologetics strategy against it.
    - Most Christians simply hope nobody ever asks them why it happens, because they wonder the same thing themselves.

Unanswered prayer has been considered as everything from God's greatest gift to proof he doesn't exist.

So which is it?

1 John 5:14-15 NIV

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

## UNANSWERED PRAYER DOESN'T EXIST

Here is what I would say... unanswered prayer doesn't exist.

- God answers all prayer, he just may not say yes.
- As a parent your child asks for stuff, as a good parent you always answer them
  - It may be yes
  - It may be no
  - It may be wait
- The other day Grayson (my 3-year old) asks me if I could read him a book before bed.
  - I said yes.
- He also asked me if he could eat two chocolate striped cookies right before bed.
  - I said no.
- He then asked me if he could take my car for a spin.
  - I said wait.

No's and waits just feels like God isn't listening or responding, but he is.

## YES

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Sometimes God says YES, and that's a magical thing. No need to setup camp here.

## NO

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However, sometimes God says "NO." Why?

There can be many reasons... I like to start with me first:

### 1. We treat God like a vending machine. (Am I asking with the wrong motives?)

James 4:2b-3 NIV

You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

- If my only intention on praying is so that God will spit out my next proverbial life Snickers bar, it's probably not going to work out well for us.
- Much of prayer is intended to give adoration, worship, and love to the Father
  - But many of us instead have the prayer remote in our hand, and we fast forward, fast forward, fast forward through that stuff and get to the... "How about that new car?"
- That doesn't mean we can't ask for things, in fact we are invited to, but if we ask without relationships... or without intentions on having a relationship... we are treating God like a vending machine

### 2. We have unconfessed sin.

- a. Unconfessed sin separates us from God so that he cannot hear our prayers.

Isaiah 59:1-2 NIV

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities [sins] have separated you from God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear

- Maybe there is a cog or a block in the communication system because of unconfessed sin.
- God may not answer our prayers if we aren't willing to acknowledge our sin

Psalm 66:18

If I regard wickedness in my heart, Yahweh (God) will not hear me

3. Unreconciled relationships and unforgiveness can cause hindrance to prayers, especially in terms of a married couple
  - a. We see this in 1 Peter 3, Matthew 18, and Colossians
4. Not being GeneroUS can hinder prayers

Proverbs 21:13 NIV

He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered.

5. This one doesn't deal with us – Sometimes God's greater purpose is revealed through a "NO"
  - a. Paul prayed three times God would deliver him from something he was calling a "thorn in the flesh."
    - i. We don't know what it was, it was just something bothering Paul. It was probably Peter
  - b. In 2 Corinthians God answered Paul's prayer with a "NO"
    - i. What he did was teach him a valuable lesson
      1. 2 Cor 12:9 - My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.
  - c. God's greater purpose was that Paul endure his challenge so that he could learn God's greatness and God would ultimately prove powerful through the experience.
  - d. Sure, Paul had to endure whatever it was he was enduring, but God had a greater purpose and Paul had to trust that.

Probably the most difficult no... is the no to someone that was sick and they ended up losing their life.

- That's difficult, because there is no chance for a rebound... it's over.
- But if that person knows Christ, it's not over.... their eternity has actually just begun.
- Even though it seems unfair to us that we lost someone, maybe God had a greater purpose to work out in the conclusion of their life or their entrance into Heaven.
  - I don't mean to make that sound so flippant.
  - It's very difficult, and one of the most difficult NO's that we can receive is when sick people don't get healed.

**WAIT**

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And sometimes God says WAIT...

- Oh the tragedy this creates for our impatient souls.
- Sometimes WAIT feels worse than NO, because at least NO is definitive
- But God works in his own timing
  - If he gave us everything we wanted when we wanted it, it would be a catastrophe.

- I mean, we don't hand a 9 year old the keys to our car or leave the house for date night.. on our way out handing our 4 year old the TV remote and a slip of paper with Pizza Hut's number on it.
  - Not saying that prayers are withheld because of our maturity level, but sometimes the time just isn't right... there is a greater purpose being worked out.

Don't underestimate the power of persistence. Keep praying!

- I admire people that turn in prayer cards for the same thing each week... why... they're persistent.
- They don't give up easily when they see the first sign of some sort of delay.

All in all... the catalyst to how God responds to our prayer is found in the next two lines of our text:

your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

- The purpose of prayer ultimately is not necessarily to get God to do our bidding
  - It's to align ourselves with his will
  - Basically write your plans in pencil and give God the eraser
- The prayer is asking to bring to life God's will as it's executed in heaven, execute that will here on Earth
  - God you take control, you run this machine the way you want... and I submit to that
  - It's a commitment to not fight against it and accept with contentment when our will is compromised, frustrated, or agitated by His

## OUR GOD IS GENEROUS

Give us today our daily bread.

Our God is generous and takes care of us.

- We won't go much into this, as we dedicated an entire message and really series to this to kick off the year.
- I encourage you to catch that podcast online at [nlrepublic.com](http://nlrepublic.com)

The important thing to note here is we are praying for our daily bread, not cake.

- As much as I like cake... we aren't asking for riches, delicate living, or stock piles of riches, but we are asking for daily provisions.
  - In other words, we are praying for our need, not our greed.
  - Give me neither poverty or riches, but provide for my need.

## FORGIVENESS

The next line reads:

And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- This is a reminder to confess our sins before God, and an even more stern reminder and absolutely necessity and requirement that we forgive our debtors.
- It's a prerequisite to receive forgiveness from God that we have forgiven those that have trespassed against us.
  - When preachers preach and teachers teach they tend to only explain half of the Gospel
    - They preach the part about our sins being forgiven
      - Now that's totally true.
    - But what happens when you're not the one who sinned, but was sinned against?
      - You weren't the thief, but the one that was robbed
      - You weren't the one that lied, but the one lied about
  - The truth is we've all sinned, and been sinned against.
    - Jesus said that those that have been sinned against, must forgive.
    - To fail to do so nullifies your ability to receive forgiveness

Matthew 6:14-15 ESV

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,  
 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

- Forgiveness is not an option in order to receive forgiveness, it's required.
- It's not a question if to forgive, it's when – because you must.
- There is an old hymn that reads like this:

*JESUS PAID IT ALL  
 ALL TO HIM I OWE*

Jesus gave his life as a ransom for a debt we could never repay.

- Any of you receive bills in the mail?
  - Some of those bills are bills of debt right?
  - Imagine you received a bill every month from God of all the sins you've committed.
    - A bill of the debt you owed
    - "Oh no... I didn't know he knew that I thought that at 3AM last night?"
      - "Uh yes, I did. I'm up at 3."
    - Imagine the bills kept coming and piling up and there was nothing you could do to pay any of it?
      - That's your debt. (BRING PAPERS TO REPRESENT BILLS)
      - Jesus came and paid it all for you. Every bit of it.
      - You're debt free in God's eyes.
- Now, imagine you loaned money to someone, and you sent them a notice of their debt.
  - It was nearly what yours was, but you intended to collect
  - How fair is it that you had so much debt forgiven, yet you failed to forgive one line item from someone else's record?
    - It's hypocritical to accept forgiveness from the Father and refuse to give it to others.

## PROTECTION

And finally we ask not just for forgiveness of sins of the past, but not assistance in overcoming temptation to sin in the future.

- Knowing full and well that we cannot avoid being tested, but we can ask for God's help in avoiding being consumed by our temptation.
- Deliver us from evil... temptation is one thing... evil is another.
- We underestimate the enemy that is working hard to make sure we aren't communicating with God.

## CLOSING

Here is reality:

Prayer is simple, but it's difficult. (That's the part that we don't really want to admit.)

- It's difficult because it's a sacrifice.
- But everything in life that matters is difficult.

We underestimate how difficult it is...

- Not just praying, but persisting in our prayers when they don't get answered.
- It's hard work.
- But we have to train ourselves like an athlete trains to win a game.

### Peyton Manning illustration

If you want to win the battle you're in... you must make prayer a priority.

- As a church we must make prayer a priority if we want to see fully what God can do in this place.