

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 22nd, 2023

Sermon Series: Pray First

Sermon: Build a Life on Prayer

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God..." The desire of God for every one of us is that He would be first in every category of our lives! What did you think about FIRST this morning?

Discussion Questions

Introduction

In the beginning, God... (Genesis 1:1)

- Where is God not first in your life?
- How are you doing with finding a spot, slot and a strategy? Is it working out for you? Are you being intentional about it?
- During this fasting season, in what ways has God been speaking or answering your prayers?
- What has fasting showed you that you're strong enough to do? What do you now know that you have the power to drop or change?

Keep a Right Heart about Prayer

- What is your attitude about prayer currently?
- Does your view of your earthly father affect your view of your Heavenly Father? Are there requirements that you've put on God that's hindering your relationship with Him? Why or why not?
- Have you implemented the Lord's Prayer model? If so, how has it changed your prayer life?
- How do you use the Bible to guide your prayers?

- Once you pray, do you allow time to listen to what God has to say to you? If not, how do you know that you're hearing from Him?
- It is imperative for a relationship between two people to grow close, that you spend time with each other! Talk, listen, sit together, look at each other, get to hear from one another, share your heart and your passions. How can you do this with God, in order to build your relationship with Him?
- If all you know to do in prayer is to ask God for things, then He's an employee. If we only ask from God, He's a servant of ours. Are you just asking for things from God, like a servant? How can you pray to God in a way that would let Him know that you want to build a relationship with Jesus?
- We often focus our prayer on ourselves and what is happening with us in our lives. What if you started your prayer asking God, "What is heavy on your heart Lord?"
- Think of a time in your life where you had someone in your life that only talked to you when they needed something? How did that make you feel? Is this how you treat God? What do you need to change to improve your relationship with God?

Prayer Changes Us

Prayer is seeing Jesus in relationship before seeing Jesus as resource.

Prayer is more about our formation than a certain formula.

Prayer is about our transformation before a transaction.

- Spiritual Disciplines are disciplines that SHAPE US! Studying the Bible, Giving, Fasting, Studying your Bible will cause you to be MORE LIKE JESUS! What would change in your life today, if you started practicing these disciplines?
- Hebrews 4:16 tells us that we have a key to the house of The Lord through our prayer! Do you swing the door wide, walk in like you live there, and come boldly to God with your prayer? Or, do you ring the doorbell timidly, wait for someone to answer, and apologize for bothering Him? Or do you feel like there's a "No Solicitors" sign? Why?

- Pastor Mike asked, “If Jesus walked into this room right now, would you run up to Him with your list first? Or would you just want to get around Him and hang with Him?” What would you do?
- Pastor Mike said, “You will become like who you hang around.” Who are you most like?
- What if we let the first order of business in our regular prayer times be about “God, make me more like you!” How would that change your life?
- Is prayer a demand or a delight? Explain.
- Do you feel that you need to pray? Or can you get things done on your own? Why or why not?
- If your relationship with God looked like a joint checking account, what would it look like? In the red or in the black? Who’s making the transactions? What would the balance be?
- Pastor Mike shared that it’s really hard to sin when you’re in your prayer closet. Is prayer transforming your faith in the relationship toward God, or do you feel like you’re just going through the motions?

Pray for What Matters to God

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)

- What do your prayers say about your own heart?
- Pastor Mike asked, “What if you knew that your prayers were always being heard? What if you knew that your prayers were always effective? What if you knew that every time you prayed, you were oriented towards God’s heart and desires?” Knowing these things, what is the first thing you would pray for today?
- Whatever you become passionate for will become the desire of your heart. What if you were passionate about God? What if you prayed for God to be our passion and for His desire to be ours?

- What brings you delight? What would it look like for you to delight in the Lord in the same way?
- If we prayed for the things that God wants and they start happening, would you rejoice in it or be upset? Why?
- What would it look like for you to post about God on your social media? How do you interact with others' posts on social media about what God's doing?
- Do you avoid asking for things in prayer because you don't want the answer? Does your pride inhibit you from hearing from God? Explain.
- What would it look like to pray for all aspects of peoples' lives, not just their prayer request? What about for someone or something that frustrates you?
- What are you sharing with others about your church or small group? Does it create unity or division? Does it invite or repel people from joining?

Now What?

Encouragement: God wants to be in a relationship with you, and prayer is the primary way to grow this relationship. If we're going to continue to put God first in our lives, we have to make this relationship the best one in our lives. Find your spot, your slot, and strategy to pray. Keep making God first in your life. Pray for blessing, influence, God's presence, and protection. And see your prayer time as opportunities to grow close to God. Delight in prayer. Look forward to it.

Ask: Where is God first in your life and where is He not? Why do you pray? What would it take for you to see prayer as the primary builder of relationship with God? How has your prayer life changed you? Are you willing to let prayer transform your life? How can you start praying for the things that God wants, not just your needs?

Challenge: This week, pray for things that God is super passionate about:

I. Pray for the Lost (Luke 19:10; Luke 23:34)

Who do you know who is lost and far from God? What about the lost in your city? What about the lost all over the world?

II. Pray for the Poor and Oppressed (Proverbs 31:9)

What if you instantly prayed for that person you see sitting along the curb with their cardboard sign? Or for the person that you know is being wronged?

III. Pray for the Widow & Orphan (James 1:27)

What about the single mothers or children abandoned by their parents? What if you prayed for them whenever you see them?

IV. Pray for Unity in the Body of Christ (John 17:20-21)

What if you prayed for all Christians to unite as ONE CHURCH UNDER CHRIST? What could that ONE CHURCH accomplish?

V. Pray for Holiness among Christians (John 17:15-19)

We are all exposed to evil daily. What if we prayed for God's protection from this on a daily basis? What surprising things in our lives would we suddenly see as evil, as God sees them?

VI. Pray for Kings, Rulers, and Leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

What could we do if we prayed FOR our leaders instead of speaking AGAINST them?

VII. Pray for God's Kingdom to Come on Earth as in Heaven (Matthew 6:10)

What if, instead of being content to suffer in this world we've become accustomed to, we invited God to bring His kingdom to Earth NOW?

Closing Prayer

God, we thank you for this season of growing in prayer. We thank you for all that you've shown us, spoken to us, changed inside of us, and answered for us. Thank you for challenging us to get deeper in our relationship with you.

God, let this not be just another sermon series for the books, but let this become our way of life moving forward. We're committing to a God-first lifestyle. Lord, we want you to be first. May nothing get in the way of our chance to grow closer to you. Help us stay committed to our spot, slot, and strategy. May we be constantly reminded to keep praying for your blessing, influence, presence, and protection. Open our eyes and our hearts to prayer opportunities that we've never seen before. Align our hearts to pray for what you want in addition to our needs. We seek relational, transactional communion with you. Any bad thoughts or feelings we've had toward prayer, transform them and replace them with truth. We thank you for all of the amazing things that will come about from our new prayer lives because we know they wouldn't be possible without you. We ask for all of this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 15th, 2023

Sermon Series: Pray First

Sermon: A Prayer Like Jabez (1 Chronicles 4)

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- If you won the lottery today, what could you do for the kingdom of God?

Discussion Questions

Introduction

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked. (1 Chronicles 4:9-10)

For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield. (Psalm. 5:12)

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3John 1:2 NKJV)

I will bless you... and you will be a blessing to others. (Genesis 12:2)

- Notice the end of this passage, the text says, "God granted what Jabez prayed!" What is causing you pain in your life today? What if God granted your prayer and removed that pain from your life?
- The fact that Jabez had his prayer answered means that this is a prayer that moves God's Heart towards us when we pray it! Read Psalm 37:4. How can you pray in a way that you know God will answer you?
- In what way do you approach God in prayer now?

Pray for God's Blessing

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me..."

- The word "bless" means – to impart supernatural favor from God. To ask for blessing means to ask that God would bless you by making you BETTER than you are now. What if you prayed, "God, I want you to make me better than I am." every day this week? What do you think would happen in your life?
- Do you feel deserving of blessings from God? Why or why not? Does it feel weird praying for blessings for yourself?
- Pastor Mike encouraged us to pray for blessings in every area: In your relationships, in your health, in your emotions, at your job, in your finances. Where do you think God might want to bless you in your life?
- Have your prayers been more about how you can relieve the stress in your life or about how you can bless others?
- How can we stay humble as we pray for blessings in our life? Why is this important?
- What does it mean to be righteous? How is it different from arrogance and entitlement?
- Do you believe things happen in your life by coincidence or by blessings? Why the difference?
- In what ways are you sharing your blessings with others? If not, how can you start?

Pray for Godly Influence

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border..."

But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you... (2 Corinthians 10:15-16)

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory (Ephesians

3:20)

- What do you think Jabez meant when he asked for his territory to be enlarged? Was he speaking about land or something else? What would it mean to you for God to enlarge your territory?
- Who is your main influencer and how are they influencing you?
- When you're blessed, you become an influencer. How does that make you feel? Does that change anything you're doing or asking for now?
- What does it mean to you to be an influencer? Do you see yourself as an influencer? What are you influencing right now?
- What would it look like to have your territory or influence enlarged in this community? How much more could you reach people for God? What could you accomplish with God's power and for Him instead of on your own?
- If you get that next step in life or the blessing you've been praying for, how can you ensure that your faith doesn't change?
- Do you take the credit for things that God does? As an influencer, how can you make sure to give God the glory instead of taking it for yourself?

Pray for God's Presence

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "...and that your hand might be with me...

Acts 11.21 - And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:21)

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

- Where does your competence come from?
- What does "that your hand might be with me" mean? What does it mean to you?

- Think about the image of having God's hand with you. How does it make you feel? Do you run to God for affirmation or do you seek it from somewhere else? Explain.
- We're not doing this for us, but we're not doing this without the Lord either. We need to not only WALK WITH GOD'S PRESENCE, but that we walk with GOD'S ANOINTING and POWER! How would you ask God for that?
- Pray this: "Lord, anoint me because what you've called me to is too big for me. I need MORE OF YOU in order to be who you've called me to be!" Now, pay attention and see the blessings of God. What areas of your life need more of God?
- Where do you allow God's presence in your life? What areas do you limit his presence or influence? Why?

Pray for God's Protection

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "...that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!"

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God. Selah

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. (Psalm 3:1-3)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37)

- If you pray for and believe God for his BLESSING, his INFLUENCE, and HIS PRESENCE, you better count on the fact that the enemy will come against you! Where is the enemy coming against you right now?
- Why do we need to pray for protection?
- Do you feel like you're a threat to the enemy? Why or why not?

- Have you ever come under attack for something you were doing for God?
- Is that just physical harm or are there other things that could harm us that we need protection from? What do you think?

Now What?

Encouragement: Jabez teaches us the kind of prayer that God wants to answer, the kind of prayer that moves God's heart toward us when we pray it. In addition to the Lord's Prayer, God wants us to pray for His blessing, influence, presence, and protection. God wants to bless you because He wants you to be a blessing to others, for Him. And as He blesses you and you start blessing others, you'll start making a difference. Pray for God to be your influence as you influence others. Pray for God's presence as you start to influence others for the kingdom because you can't do it alone. And finally, pray for His protection because as you start making a difference for God, the enemy will try to come against you. These are the types of prayers that God wants to answer.

Ask: Where do you need God's blessing in your life? How has God blessed you now and how can you share that with others? As a Christ follower, do you understand your influence? How are you influencing others to the kingdom of God? How can you do it better? Do you allow God's presence in all areas of your life or just some? Why? Where would God's presence make a difference for you? Are you in a battle with the enemy right now? Where do you need God's protection? How are you going to change your prayer life so that you can bless others?

Challenge: Now that you have your spot, slot, and strategy, in addition to the Lord's Prayer, pray everyday this week: "Lord, bless me to be a blessing! Grow me in influence for your sake! Lord, be ever present with me, all Powerful in me! And Lord, strengthen me and rescue me from every attack of the enemy! I have your protection and I have victory in Jesus' Name!"

Pay attention to the ways God has blessed and will bless you this week. How can you use this to help others?

Getting insight from people who care for you spiritually is always helpful. Ask someone this week how they see God's blessing on your life, how they see you influencing others, where they see God's presence in your life, and where they see that you need protection from the enemy.

Closing Prayer

God, we thank you for all of the ways that we're learning how to pray. Thank you for showing us how to pray in a way that aligns our hearts with yours. Thank you for getting rid of any old thoughts and ways of prayer that have become routine to us and giving us a new, reignited, passionate prayer life. We pray for your blessing, not to have things or a certain status. Bless us to be a blessing to the people around us. Bless us and use us as you need. Help us grow our godly influence. As we start being a blessing to others, help us make sure that you get the glory, not us. We can do nothing in our strength, but in you, anything is possible. We pray for your presence to be with us in everything. We pray for your presence at home, at work, at the gym, with friends, wherever we go, send your hand with us. And Lord, as we grow as difference makers, protect us. We know that the enemy does not like when we live for you, so protect us against any attacks that come as we grow closer to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 8th, 2023

Sermon Series: Pray First

Sermon: A Practical Plan for a “Pray First” Year (Daniel 6, Matthew 6)

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- Are you comfortable leading a group in prayer, or do you secretly hope someone else will do it? Why?

Discussion Questions

Introduction

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. (Daniel 6:10)

- Pastor Mike explained that prayer is simply communicating with God, an opportunity to build a relationship with the Lord. Is this how prayer was previously explained to you? If not, what were your previous thoughts about prayer?
- What does your prayer life look like? How often do you turn to God in prayer?
- Do you have the same level of interaction with God that you have with others?
- God bends down like a good father bends to hear his child speak. It doesn't matter what you have to say to him or how you say it. He loves listening to you pray to Him, just like a father loves to listen to his own child. He loves to just listen to you talk to Him and tell you about your day and is never distracted. Knowing this, what will you pray to God about?
- God loves it when you pray! He's way less concerned with how you say perfect things than He is concerned that you pray to a perfect God! What obstacle or excuse have you been using to keep you from

praying? What would happen in your life if you dropped those excuses and start to pray more?

- In Daniel 6:10, we see Daniel continue to practice his SPOT, SLOT, STRATEGY of prayer, even while knowing that doing so violated the law and could result in his own death. If Daniel could do this with such conviction, why don't we?
- Is prayer important to you? If you said that time is a reason you don't pray and you always find time for what's important to you, then why is prayer not important enough to make time for? Are you ready to prioritize it?

Find a Spot

- You need to FIND A SPOT to call your prayer spot! You don't need a mountaintop or anything fancy. Maybe it's your desk at work, a place in your house, a chair in your basement. It's about finding a place where you can be in the right frame of mind to talk to God. Where is your "spot" for prayer?
- How do you protect your space so that you're not interrupted in your prayer time?
- What interruptions or distractions do you need to silence so that you can have your time?

Pick a Slot

- What does God have to do to deserve a slot in your daily routine? Why does He have to earn it?
- Make a LITERAL APPOINTMENT with God! And KEEP IT! It doesn't matter when. Just set aside a time. Maybe even set an alarm on your phone to remind you. What time works for you?
- What things do you consider when deciding what time slot works best for you? (i.e. work hours, cooking dinner, etc)
- It doesn't matter if it's 10 minutes or 2 hours, God loves to spend time with you. There is no time requirement. Are you aware of the amount of time you need to feel fulfilled?

Work a Strategy

Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)

Model of Prayer

Reverence: *Our Father in heaven.*

Worship: *Hallowed be your name.*

Submission: *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Provision: *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Forgiveness: *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

Protection: *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

Praise: *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

- What does your prayer strategy look like now? Does it include any of the above elements?
- Could you develop a strategy to pray like this for the next seven days? What do you think that would do in your life?
- What is reverence and how do you do it?
- What's your favorite name for God and why?
- Describe submission for prayer.
- Is provision all about stuff? What else can we ask God to provide us?
- What do you feel like you need to be forgiven for? Who do you need to forgive?
- What are the different ways we can praise God?

- What is the difference between reverence and praise?

Now What?

Encouragement: God loves when we pray. When we pray, we bring our heart to God. We bring our lives to God so that we can be aligned with His will. Prayer is our invitation to be in relationship with the Lord of our lives. It doesn't have to be complicated, but we do need to make a plan. Just like with everything else, if you don't make a plan or prepare for interruptions, it won't happen. If we're going to lead a God first year, prayer has to become a priority. Make a spot, a slot, and a strategy and protect your time with God. If your spot or time slot gets interrupted, don't feel like you lost your opportunity to pray. Find time in another part of your day or even throughout your day to spend time with God. Whether it's two minutes or two hours out of your day, God will take it and will rejoice for it. He loves you, and He's already made you first. So today, make the decision to put Him first and make this year the best year of your prayer life yet.

Ask: What does your prayer life look like now? Do you understand the importance of prayer? What are some old ideas or misconceptions that you need to let go about prayer? Are there any barriers in your prayer life? Do you need to switch it up? Which of the three (spot, slot, strategy) will be the hardest for you to implement? What do you need to take to God in prayer right now and why haven't you done it yet? What excites you the most about this fresh start in prayer? What will be the most challenging?

Challenge:

Commit to one week:

Find your SPOT to pray. Decide on a location today.

Pick your SLOT to pray. Set an alarm on your phone and follow it.

Follow Jesus' STRATEGY to pray the way The Lord's Prayer does.

Grab a copy of our PRAY FIRST guide.

Grab Pray First: The Transformative Power of a Life Built on Prayer by Pastor Chris Hodges.

Pastor Mike shared that there are so many different names for God that we can use in prayer (Jehovah Rapha (healer), Rohi (Shepherd), Shalom (My Peace, etc.)) If you always open your prayer the same way, find a new name for God and focus your prayer time around that change.

Closing Prayer

God, we're thankful that you made it possible for us to be in relationship with you. Thank you for the opportunity to spend time with you all day, every day. Help us realize how precious of a gift prayer is and the importance of using it. Thank you for bending over and lending us your ear, that when we pray, you stop everything to be present with us. Lord, we acknowledge the challenges that we've allowed to affect our prayer lives and repent of them. Let nothing else take away our opportunity to spend time with you. We drop those excuses today and pray for a reignited spirit of prayer. Help us make prayer a top priority in making 2023 a God first year. Show us the spot or location that we can dedicate for our God time. Reveal openings in our daily lives where we can schedule time with you. Father, we know that if we don't make a plan, everything else will take precedence. Help us create strategies for prayer that work for us. We want to grow in relationship with you, and we know prayer will help with that. Help it become a lifestyle. We look forward to all of the amazing things you're going to speak to us and all of the new things we're going to learn from you as we lean into this new time of prayer. Amen.

Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 1st, 2023

Sermon Series: Pray First

Sermon: Building a "God First" Year

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette

Icebreaker

- How did you celebrate New Year's Eve/Day?

Discussion Questions

Introduction

- Who or what do you consult when making decisions? What's the first thing that you do when you have to make a choice?
- Where do you think God wants to be first in your life? Is there something you've been struggling to hand over to Him?

God First in Devotion

- What does your Bible reading look like now? How can you make it better?
- What are your thoughts about fasting? Fasting is about denying yourself for a season while devoting yourself to prayer and studying of God's Word and should be a normal part of our lives.
- In what ways do you struggle with prayer? How can we help you as a group?

God First in Finances

- How we steward our money is a direct reflection on our heart towards money and our heart towards God. How do you view money?
- What's the difference between managers and stewards? Which one do you identify with right now?
- What would it look like for you to put God first in your financial decisions?

God First in Serving Others

- Do you have a “God heart” for others? Are you able to serve others without grumbling? Why or why not?
- What is something that you’re really good at? How could that be helpful to others?
- God’s plan is to use you as a blessing to others. How does that make you feel?

Now What?

Encouragement: Make 2023 the year where God comes first. Let’s do a reset and start seeking God first before we move. There’s nothing wrong with having things, goals and dreams, but God’s heart has always been that He is in first place in our lives. Decide to make God first and say yes to what He is calling you to do.

Ask:

- Where do you need God first in your life in 2023? And are you willing to pay the price it takes to put God first?
- Where do you need to deepen your devotion? Reading scripture, prayer, fasting, church attendance, worship, journaling, small groups, serving or something else?
- How can you put God first in your finances this year?
- How has God gifted you to be a gift to others?

Challenge:

- Commit to deepening your devotion in one of the areas mentioned above during the 21 Days of Fasting for Hope.
- Find a Bible reading plan.
- Decide to get on a budget for the new year so you can steward your resources well.

- Go through Next Steps and figure out how you can best serve others.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank you for bringing us another new year. God, we're believing in You that this will be our best year so far because we're inviting You back into the beginning of everything again. This year will be a God First year. Thank you for this message that reminded us that there's nothing that comes before You. This year, we're committing to growing in our devotion. We pray for rededicated, passionate prayer lives. Guide as we grow in devotion to reading Your word. We trust you to be our true provider and to help us refocus our finances so that we become good stewards of what you provide for us. Lord, show us the way you've gifted us to be a benefit to your Kingdom and to serve others. Lord, help us commit to making you first not just in these areas of our lives, but in all parts of our lives. Whatever you call us to do, we say yes. Thank you again for the best year yet. Amen.