

THE POWER OF PRAYER

HOW TO PRAY. WAYS TO PRAY. WHY WE PRAY.

PRAYER 03/03: **WHY WE PRAY**

In life, to get the right outcome, we need to know our ultimate goal. The same is true for our prayer lives. We must approach God intentionally to get as much out of it as possible. When studying dozens of popular prayers in the Bible, a theme emerges. God has three goals in mind for you when you pray. What are they? Let's conclude our journey by studying another popular prayer from the pages of Scripture—Psalm 46.

Preparing for Your Talk:

- Talk about the diversity of paint colors. Have paint swatches from the hardware store as a prop.
- Share pictures of doomsday bunkers.
- Print the small Group discussion guide (or text it to leaders).

Sources & Suggested Study Materials

- NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible by Zondervan.
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary by Frank E. Gaebelin, John H. Sailhamer, and Walter C. Kaiser Jr.



BIG IDEA:

Prayer helps you experience God's protection, power, and presence.



SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVE:

We will examine how prayer helps us connect with the protection, power, and presence of God. Then, we help students pray together during group time.



SCRIPTURE USED:

Psalm 46: 7-11
Psalm 91:9-10

ILLUSTRATION

- ILLUSTRATION: Talk about the diversity of paint colors.
 - Want a great idea for a date night? Next time you have some free time on a Saturday, go to the hardware store and head to the brightly-lit section with all the paint sample papers. You know the one, right? It's just walls and walls covered in little paper color swatches. While there, hunt for the weirdest paint name you can find. It's an absolute adventure. Here are just some of the peculiar paint names out there:
 - Dragon's Blood
 - Mayonnaise
 - Flamingo Dream
 - Hugs and Kisses
 - Phantom Mist
 - One summer, I was helping my church paint some rooms on campus. Our team was insanely quick (not terribly careful, but quick) at getting the job done. That said, we often ran out of paint before the day was over. One humid Friday, we used the last pour of paint in the pail four hours before the weekend. The fellow who usually got the paint was on vacation, so they sent me to pick up some paint from the store. Well, they didn't send me as much as I volunteered. Driving into the city meant at least one hour in the air conditioning, so I leaped at the opportunity.
 - I walked into the hardware store and simply asked the clerks for white paint. They laughed at me. Once their giggle fits calmed down, they went on to explain that they carried hundreds of different shades of white, from "White Daisy" to "Mayonnaise" (Gross). How on earth can there be so many shades of just white? After guessing and going back and forth, he refused to help me without knowing the exact shade we needed. I drove all the way back to the church, grabbed an empty paint can out of the garbage and drove back. It turns out the color was "Polar White."

TENSION

- To get the right outcome, I needed to know my goal. The same is true for our prayer lives.
 - We must approach God intentionally to get as much out of it as possible.

- When studying dozens of popular prayers in the Bible, a theme emerges. God has three goals in mind for you when you pray. What are they?
- Let's conclude our journey by studying another popular prayer from the pages of Scripture.

BIBLE STUDY

Psalm 46: 7-11

7 The LORD Almighty is with us;

the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come and see what the LORD has done,

the desolations he has brought on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease

to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;

he burns the shields with fire.

10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth."

11 The Lord Almighty is with us;

the God of Jacob is our fortress.

CONTEXTUALIZING THIS PASSAGE

- Psalm 46 was a song of prayer written by the Sons of Korah—a team of musicians that worked closely with King David.
 - Many believe this song was utilized as a communal prayer for God's people, similar to the Lord's Prayer today.
 - Archeologists suggest that this specific psalm inspired other artists, too. Ancient influencers would adapt this psalm into paintings, dramas, and performances.
 - How fascinating is that?
- If Israel had the radio, this song would likely be at the top of the charts.
 - The Sons of Korah were Israel's Beatles.

- Their music was inescapable because every song was prolific and powerful.
 - What makes this particular prayer so powerful? It's because it's centered on the purpose behind prayer.
 - Every line speaks to something God wants to do within you.

God's Protection

- Psalm 46 still inspired artists long after the Sons of Korah were gone—even a thousand years later. “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” remains one of the most famous hymns of all time.
 - Most people do not know that it was written by Martin Luther, the reformer that nailed a protest poster to the door of the All Saints Church in England.
 - He wrote his famous hymn after reading Psalm 46.
 - Korah's antique song delivers a timeless message. Whatever is happening around you, God is protecting you.
 - He is your fortress, your refuge, and your spiritual storm shelter. This song reminds us that God is strong, safe, and secure.
 - Prayer is the path to God's protection.
- Our world is an uncertain place.
 - Wars wage.
 - Storms churn.
 - Nations rise.
 - World leaders fall.
 - While planet Earth displays so much majesty, it can also be pretty scary.
 - Do you know what proves that point? Doomsday bunkers.
 - In recent years, underground bunkers have become a multi-billion-dollar industry.
 - Since the world proves to be scary, people invest a lot of money to hide underneath the ground.
- A company named Survival Condos made its mark on the bunker business world in the last few years. It created twelve luxury underground bunkers with a modest price tag of \$3 million down plus recurring membership fees.

- All of this is for a home you'll likely never live in. Does that seem too expensive for your taste?
 - What if I told you these bunkers have a movie theater, resort-style pool, dentist's office, library, and an arcade?
 - Still too expensive for your taste? Yeah, mine, too.
- While Survival Condos' bunkers have all the bells and whistles you'd crave for the apocalypse, do you know what they don't have? Windows. Parks. Grass. Fresh fruit. Oxygen from trees.
 - Honestly, most of us would hate living inside an underground bunker.
 - I am getting claustrophobic just thinking about it.
- According to the Sons of Korah, God is your fortress. He's way better than a bunker, too. God brings protection to you.
 - You don't have to flee, disappear, or get on an underground elevator.
 - Thanks to the power of prayer, God transforms our personal homes into fortresses. When we pray, God protects us.
 - Look back over your life, and you will inevitably see all the ways God protected you without you even knowing it.
 - He's likely protected you from the wrong relationships, the wrong jobs, the wrong turns, and even the wrong decisions.
- While we often think of prayer in the context of provision, the psalmists clearly see it as a source of protection. Psalm 91:9-10 expounds on this idea: "If you say, 'The LORD is my refuge,' [...] no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."
 - God guards you. Prayer deploys an army of angels to protect you. You are safe and secure in God's arms because He is powerful.

God's Power

- The earth-shattering reality that God protects us should make our heads spin.
 - The God of angel armies is defending us in our neighborhoods. We can have confidence in the quality of His protection because we can have confidence in His power.
- The Sons of Korah wrote this song as a celebration and an invitation. They asked the listeners to "come and see what the Lord has done."

- What do they want them to see?
 - God's glory is on display all around us.
 - He ended wars.
 - He molded mountains.
 - He put together continents like puzzle pieces.
 - God is powerful. Do you want to know why that's good news for us? Our powerful God is on our side.
- Let's try to wrap our minds around God's power. At this present moment, where are you? I can hear your remarks already: "I am sitting in my room in Montana. I am in the church in Malaysia."
 - But you should zoom out. You're on a planet called Earth. You're on a space boulder floating in the void of the universe.
 - Want to know something even crazier? The universe is expanding with every exhale of your lungs.
 - God's power is holding all of this complexity in order.
 - He's holding our molecules together.
 - He's ensuring the sun doesn't burn us to a crisp.
 - He developed plants that enrich our air and food that grows from the ground.
 - Even crazier, God custom-made trillions of people, and every single one of them is distinct. God is powerful.
 - If He can hold the universe together, He can help you put the pieces of your life back together.
 - If he can sculpt mountain ranges, imagine what He can build in your career.
 - If God has an army of angels at His command, imagine how safe you are in this moment.
 - Prayer helps us tap into God's power and experience His presence.

God's Presence

- Towards the end of their psalm, the Sons of Korah go from God's universal power to God's personal presence. They encourage their listeners to "be still, and know that I am God."
- This is so much bigger than a suggestion to slow down.

- Prayer opens the door to the presence of God.
- Life makes us all move quickly, doesn't it? Work, school, family, responsibilities, chores, and errands stack on top of each other like stress legos.
 - Even the strongest people will find themselves exhausted.
 - In the midst of your commotion and chaos, take some time to slow down.
 - Take a break.
 - Find a quiet place.
 - Retreat to your room.
 - Turn off the notifications.
 - Just be still before God.
 - While your body needs movement, your soul needs stillness.
- Prayer helps us slow down and recalibrate our lives. What's the source of our recalibration? God's presence.
 - Sometimes that reality is cloudy. How do you make it clear? With prayer.
 - Whether you're in a classroom, a courtroom, or a car, bask in God's presence.
 - It's only a prayer away.
- Landing: Prayer is powerful. It's my hope that you see that prayer is so much bigger than making requests for provision.
 - It's much more extensive than that. Prayer helps you experience God's protection, power, and presence.
 - How do you experience all those things?
 - Simply close your eyes and start praying, "Dear Jesus..."

BREAK FOR PRAYER TIME & SMALL GROUPS

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: What do you think most people would say is the reason they pray?

Q3: Has anything in this study changed your perspective on prayer? How so?

Q4: What are some ways you've seen God's protection for you?

Q5: What practical step you can take to "be still" before God this week?

Application: Simply be still. Find intentional time to escape from the chaos of your life and just enjoy a conversation with God.

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Acts 16:25-26

James 1:5-6

Philippians 4:6-7

John 14:13-14

Matthew 7:7-11

Ephesians 6:18

Hebrews 4:14-16

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.