

# McCabe United Methodist Church

Prayer 101 (Part 3): Prayer Deficit Disorder  
Psalm 8 \* Mark 1:35-39: February 1 & 2 , 2014  
Pastor Rick Fossum

*Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying.* Let's sing this chorus once again. Use the words to put yourself in a praying frame of mind.

**Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your Spirit in this place; Lord, listen to your children praying, send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

*"Lord, listen to your children praying."* That's us! We are God's children. God hears us when we pray.

Today, is the third message in a series we're calling *Prayer 101*. We started this series by talking about 'why' we pray. Is prayer simply a way to ask God for stuff or to ask God to help us out of some trouble? Or, is there more to prayer? Hopefully, we discovered that one of the main reasons we pray is to grow and maintain a relationship with Jesus Christ. Through prayer, we grow closer to Jesus and closer to the persons we are meant to be.

Last week, we looked at praying like a child. In the Bible, there's a special place in the Kingdom of God for children. There's something about children that Jesus wants us to know about. In fact, there's something about children that Jesus wants us to be like.

Today, we'll talk about paying attention. That's it. Paying attention when we pray.

I've never been tested, but I've always suspected that I had something called *Attention Deficit Disorder* or *ADD*. Some of you, I'm sure, know more about it than me. Looking back on my younger years, especially in middle school and high school, I always had trouble paying attention to my teachers. Not only paying attention, but also following the rules. I'd often act on impulse and I'd forget about the consequences. I think this is why I found myself on the wrong side of teachers way too many times!

It reminds me of a story about President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had grown tired of smiling, shaking hands and saying the usual things at all those White House receptions. So, one evening, he decided to find out whether anybody was paying attention to what he was saying. As each person came up

to him in the receiving line with extended hands, he would smile and say, "**I murdered my grandmother this morning.**"

People would smile, nod their heads and say something like, "**That's nice.**" Or, "**keep up the good work.**"

The president was right! Nobody listened to what he was saying, except one person. When the president said, "**I murdered my grandmother this morning,**" the other person replied, "**I'm sure she had it coming to her, Sir!**"

Paying attention is important. I wonder how many arguments are caused in a marriage because one person isn't paying attention? I was talking to a young couple one day. We were talking about the value of communication in a marriage. I said something about how the '*lack of communication*' is the number one reason for divorce. "**How are your communication skills,**" I asked them?

The young man said, "**Oh, we talk all the time. Communication is not a problem with us.**"

The young woman had a different response. She replied, "**Yeah, he thinks he's listening, but he keeps the TV on and plays with his cell phone. He pretends to listen, but I know better!**"

I think this might describe a lot of us. I remember a story about this one pastor. He was sitting in his office working on Sunday's message. He was interrupted by a homeless man. The pastor didn't appreciate the interruption. He was busy after all.

The homeless person started telling the pastor his story. The pastor was listening . . . sort of. Actually, he wasn't listening. His mind was on the message and how much longer this homeless person was going to stick around.

Finally, the homeless person stopped and said, "**Pastor, if it's not too much trouble, would you please listen to me.**" He didn't want money or anything else. He was just in a rough stretch of life and needed to talk to about it. Sadly, the pastor's mind was somewhere else

People can tell whether or not we're paying attention. Maybe it's the glaze in our eyes when someone is talking to us or maybe it's the way we squirm and move around or maybe it's the look on our faces that say, "**Hurry up!**" Or, "**Not now!**" Or, "**I'm bored.**" But, people can tell.

I think this is how many of us act when we pray. We come to Jesus, but mentally and emotionally, we're not there. Our minds are a hundred miles away. We go through the motions of praying, but we're thinking about the problems we have that need solving or the jobs that need doing or the schedules that need keeping.

Do you think Jesus notices that we're not paying attention? I don't know this for sure, but I think some of us have what I'm calling "*Prayer Deficit Disorder*." We don't pay attention. We're there, but not really.

*Prayer Deficit Disorder* is when we give Jesus less than our best. It's when we go to Jesus, but our minds are somewhere else. It's when we pray, but our hearts aren't in it.

In our passage from Mark, we caught a glimpse of Jesus and his prayer life. For Jesus, prayer was a crucial part of his day. **"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."**

The Bible is full of examples of Jesus taking the time . . . or, Jesus making the time to pray. No distractions. No tv. No cell phones. No computers. No appointment books. Just Jesus and God.

If prayer is important to us, then we need to give Jesus 100% of our attention. We can't afford to let our *Prayer Deficit Disorder* come between us and Jesus.

Billy Graham said this about prayer, "*It is not the body's posture, but the heart's attitude that counts when we pray.*"

Norman Vincent Peale put it this way: "*Prayer is the greatest power available to the individual and the benefits of prayer power are astonishing.*"

Soren Kierkegaard talked about prayer this way, "*Prayer does not change God, but it changes those who pray.*"

Pastor Guy H. King described prayer like this, "*No one is a firmer believer in the power of prayer than the devil; not that he practices it, but he suffers from it.*"

Will Rogers said, "*The trouble with our praying is, we just do it as a means of last resort.*"

If prayer means anything to us, it ought to be worthy of our time and attention.

Two men were cutting down some trees and gathering the fire wood. One of the men was cutting and chopping all day long. He didn't take a break. At the end of the day, he had a decent pile of fire wood.

The other man would cut and chop for fifty minutes and then take a ten minute break. At the end of the day, he had a much larger pile of fire wood than the first man.

**“How can this be,” the first man asked? “I never stopped working. You took a break every hour. I don't understand.”**

The second man replied, **“It's simple. When I stopped to rest, I also sharpened my axe.”**

The point is this: He made time for what was important.

Prayer. It's you and me making time for what's important. It's setting everything aside and inviting Jesus to join us in conversation.

Today, sometime, somewhere, I invite you find a quiet and private spot. Turn off the tv, the cell phones, the computers, set aside the worries and busyness of the day and turn to God. Turn to God 100%. Give God your complete attention and see what happens. Your relationship with God deserves nothing less.

Come back next week and we'll ask the question, **“why are some prayers not answered?”**