

"THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER"

John 16:23-33

In our text today, Jesus is in the last hours of His life. He knew He was going to die. Beyond that, He knew . . .

- **where** He would die
- **how** He would die
- **why** He would die
- **when** He would die.

He even knew what would happen after He died. These were crucial moments. He had to prepare His disciples for what would come **NEXT** .

The Apostle John has preserved a record of what Jesus highlighted as vital for the apostles and for all disciples going forward. If you were to sit down and read straight through John 14-16 you would find that Jesus said, "**If you ask...I will do**" six different times. Dr. Curtis Mitchell made this observation...

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In this simple statement, prayer is set forth as the primary human factor in the accomplishment of God's program on earth. With startling boldness, Christ asserted that divine action, in some mysterious manner, is conditioned upon believing prayer.

Graduates, in the next few years, you will make some destiny-defining decisions concerning your career, your family, your finances, and your spiritual life. You've got to prepare for what's **NEXT**.

CFBC, on May 15th, we will nominate members of this body to serve on the Pastor Search Team. At that point the search for a new pastor will begin in earnest. Hey, we've got to prepare for what's **NEXT**.

What Jesus considered to be vital for His disciples is essential for these graduates and for this church. So, here's the truth I want to drop in your heart this morning . . .

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER!

This message resonates throughout the Scriptures . . .

Jeremiah 33:3... 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

Matthew 7:7... "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Colossians 4:2... Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of* thanksgiving.

For the next few minutes, I want you to focus on five keys that lead to a power-packed prayer life.

1. THE APPEAL

John 16:23... "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."

In the first part of this verse, Jesus refers to "**that day.**" This is an allusion to our Lord's resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Pay close attention to the instructions here—"**If you shall ask the Father.**" Earlier the Lord had taught them to pray, "*Our Father who is in heaven....*" Get this. The Creator God who is sovereign and all-powerful listens to you when you pray. He never shows favoritism. He never deserts you. He always wants what's best for you!

You can approach God in prayer as your heavenly Father if you have received Jesus as your Savior and Lord (**Jn. 1:12**). This makes you a part of His forever family. Listen, your relationship to the Lord is the foundation of a strong, vibrant prayer life.

2. THE AUDACITY

John 16:23... "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."

Notice our text again—***“If you shall ask the Father for anything.”*** That little verb ***“ask”*** is in the present tense and it means to keep on asking. Do you understand that your heavenly Father never gets tired of hearing your prayers?

Look at that word ***“anything.”*** Take a deep breath and let the implications of that word sink deep into your heart. It includes . . .

- **job problems**
- **financial problems**
- **relational problems**
- **educational problems**
- **church problems**
- **parental problems**
- **emotional problems**
- **spiritual problems**

All of these and more come under the heading of ***“anything.”*** There is no limit to what the Lord can do in and through your life. There is no limit to what He can do in and through this church. Pray with great boldness!

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Jeff Henderson, in his book, *What to Do Next*, included this helpful reminder . . .

Just. Keep. Walking. You see, what to do next requires movement, change, and for you to fill a larger space than where you are right now.... If you'll do the work, keep walking, show up each day, eventually, inevitably, not only will you find what to do next. What to do next will find you.
[pp. 6-7]

That's why I'm challenging you to . . .

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER!

There are five keys to making prayer really pop in your life. We've looked at two of them—the appeal and the audacity. Here's the third one . . .

3. THE AUTHORITY

John 16:23... In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so

that your joy may be made full. 25 These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf.

This was a revolutionary concept for the disciples. The Lord Jesus was about to offer His body and blood as the atoning sacrifice for their sins and for our sins. With His death and resurrection, the Old Covenant would come to a close and the New Covenant would be initiated. **Direct access to God the Father through Jesus would then become a reality for believers living under the New Covenant.**

Hebrews 4:14–16... Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. **16** Therefore let us draw near with confidence to

the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus hammered this new concept into their minds with repetition—**14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23, 24, 26**. To pray in the name of Jesus means that...

- **we come into the Father's presence based on the finished work of Christ.**
- **we pray based on His authority. In heaven there is no greater name than the name of Jesus. [Acts 4:12, Philippians 2:9-11]**
- **we pray according to His will and consistent with His character. [1 Jn. 5:14-15]**

Jesus said these things to His disciples so that **their joy might be full**. When we read through the Book of Acts, we find joyful believers praying, fasting, and glorifying Jesus during times of great kingdom advance and even adversity. Joy is a by-product of abiding in Christ. The more you abide the greater your joy will be.

Do you want to know *what's next*? Exercise your God-given authority by praying in the name of

Jesus! Here's the next key that opens the door to a devoted prayer life . . .

4. THE AFFECTION

John 16:26–27... “In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; **27** for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”

The Greek word used for "love" here describes a person's love for his/her closest friends. This word is used of God's love for Jesus in John 5:20...

John 5:20... “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.”

So many Christians feel like they must beg God to do something in their life. Jesus clarified an important issue for us—“For the Father Himself loves you, because you loved Me.” Wow, God

loves you and me because we love His Son and we have believed that He came forth from the Father.

Be honest now, how many of you pray with the understanding that God the Father loves you?

His love for you is not based on your performance; it is based on His marvelous and infinite grace. He welcomes us to the throne of His grace at all times because He wants what's best for us!

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER!

There are five keys to making prayer really pop in your life. We've looked at two of them—*the appeal*, *the audacity*, *the authority*, and *the affection*. Here's the final key . . .

5. THE ASSURANCE

In the final verses of this chapter, the Lord Jesus put the finishing touches on His deeply personal teaching time with His disciples. For these men to overcome the shock of seeing Jesus betrayed by Judas, arrested by the authorities, mocked and beaten, crucified, and buried they had to grasp

these final words. They had to have assurance about "what's next." Here's what Jesus said...

John 16:28-33... "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." **29** His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. **30** "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." **31** Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? **32** "Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. **33** "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

There are times when we, like the disciples, imagine that we are much stronger in our faith than we really are. Tribulation will bring us back to reality and will remind us how much we need to trust Jesus and depend on Him. **Faith is an**

indispensable key in any believer's quest to discover what's next!

Matthew 21:22... "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Jesus promised that His followers would be blessed with supernatural peace. It is the depth of our relationship with Him that gives us peace in the midst of life's storms and reminds us that He has overcome the world.

CONCLUSION

God is always in the process of getting us ready for **WHAT'S NEXT**. That was true for our Lord's disciples. It's also true for our graduates, all believers, and the church itself. So, today my challenge is simple . . .

DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER!

We've examined five keys to making prayer really effective in our lives so we can process what's

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coming next. They are—*the appeal*, *the audacity*,
the authority, *the affection*, and *the assurance*.

Will you make a commitment to pray and fast as you seek **WHAT'S NEXT** in your life and **WHAT'S NEXT** for the church in the *Pastor Search Process*? A 21-Day Prayer and Fasting Guide is available. Grab one and let's all use it during this season of prayer.

Since the foundation of prayer is a relationship with the Lord, I must ask you—*have you been born again?*

John 1:12–13...But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.