

# BELPRES CHURCH

## THE INTREPID PRAY

Daniel 1:8-21, 2:17-24, 6, 9

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God, please do something with us today, Lord. As your Holy Spirit is here, change us today even if it's just a little bit. May he just open the doors to let you into our hearts. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear. In your beautiful and glorious name and we all said, amen.

Amen.

So about 10 years ago, a pastor of mine challenged me to 21 days of prayer and fasting. And I had fasted before, but only for like a day. I've never done 21 days. And along with that, I was going to wake up every morning at 5:00 a.m. and pray for one hour. For an hour. Now, I come from a Latino church and we pray you all, I don't mean to be judgemental, it's not timed to two minutes and three and a half minutes. It's prayer until prayers happened.

And so I grew up where a group of people ... Because we were ... Most of us were poor immigrants here in the U.S. so we needed prayer. We pray for an hour, two hours, but not by myself. So the first day that I woke up at 5:00 a.m. it was terrible. I couldn't stay awake. I'd lose my train of thought. I'd run out of things to pray for. I didn't make it that first hour, but that was the commitment. Every 5:00 am, pray for an hour.

An interesting thing happened is that every single day my prayers got deeper, my prayers got more fervent, my prayers got even more desperate. And something else happened, I ran out of stuff to pray for. I prayed for every cousin I could think of, every aunt, every grandma with toe fungus or whatever was going on. I ran out of junk to pray for.

And eventually, I got to a place where I had to listen to God. Eventually my request, my one-way street conversation became a two-way street. And at the end of those 21 days, an hour went like that. I could have prayed for one, two, three hours because I learned in those 21 days of prayer and fasting the power of prayer.

This continual conversation and soaking in the spirit of God with me. It is not just a place for me to say what I want, but it was a place for me to grow my relationship with God. God, what do you want for me? God, where are you leading? God, what is your Holy Spirit doing in my life and those around us? And that's what our topic is today. That prayer is a clear mark of a disciple.

Now, we're in a sermon series called All In, and the tagline for that sermon series is, how to become a disciple versus a church attender. Now, just a side note, the word Christian in Greek is Christianos. And that word means the follower of Christ. And the word disciple means learner. But in the biblical world, disciple means someone who follows a teacher, a rabbi, a master, or a philosopher.

So it's fair to say, that if you are a Christian, you are a disciple. There is no difference. You can't say, "Oh, I'm a Christian, but I'm not a disciple." Well, then who you following? You can't be one or the other. You are both. But what you can be is a church attender. You can come to worship services, you can come to the potlucks and get some free food.

You can go to events, but you cannot follow the ways of Christ. And that is not what God is asking of us. And speaking of Jesus, every Christian church out there, we point to the life of Jesus, as the life we're supposed to live by, the example for every Christian. And I've said before here in this church, "If you want to be Christ-like you kind of need to know what Christ was like."

And I can tell you all read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and that cat prayed. There are so many times that he retreated to prayer, especially after doing large miracles. Just one of the examples is in Luke 6:12 says "In these days, he, Jesus, went out to the mountain to pray and all night he continued in prayer to God."

And what did he do the next day? He jacked up some kid's lunch box and he fed thousands with fish and loaves. It needed all night of prayer. Aside from Jesus, another person that I would suggest to you, that I would say study in the Bible. It's In the Old Testament, the book of Daniel. And that is Daniel. Daniel lives a life of prayer that I think we can all learn from.

And Pastor Alexis and I, we had a two and a half hour sermon, so we're going to be here for a while, so just get comfortable. Hopefully you got coffee. We had to reduce it down to 20 minutes. So this is like the cliff notes of the cliff notes. So we can't go through like everything that Daniel went through.

So I'm only going to highlight a few things in his life to exemplify his life of prayer. Now, right off the bat, we've got to find out what's going on with Daniel. Well, first of all, God had chosen the Israelites as his chosen people. It was their job to show the love of God to everyone in the world,

but these cats weren't quite listening well.

They kept on doing things that God didn't want them to do. God warned them, "Please repent, come back to me or you will be overtaken, you'll be overthrown." And that's exactly what happened. Babylon came and Jerusalem fell. And King Nebuchadnezzar, the King of the Babylonian rule, ordered that "The Royal family, Nobles and youth without blemish be taken to his royal court to be taught the ways of the Chaldeans."

So to be taught everything Babylonian. And one of the cats in that was Daniel. So Daniel's taken out of his homeland, and he's taken into exile, into oppression, into Babylon, and he needs to be taught everything Babylonian. But Daniel, we see right off the bat and Daniel 1:8, he is going to live a life for God and nothing is going to stop that.

Because the rule was that those cats who are going to be taught Babylonian, were going to eat from the King's meat and his wine. And Daniel said, "I will not defile myself with the King's meat and wine." Why? Because most likely that meat and wine was sacrificed to the idol Baal and he was not going to go against God's will. So he asked to be a temporary vegetarian. And it all worked out.

Now, that little request could've got him killed, could have got his homeys killed. It could've got the Babylonian cat who was overseeing him killed, but Daniel was already living a phrase that we have said in these All In sermon series, "Lose our life so we can find it." Daniel is not afraid of losing his physical life because he has already found his existence in following God. He was not going to be intimidated.

So he does a bunch of other stuff, he interprets dreams. And we're going to fast forward to Daniel six, probably one of the most famous stories of Daniel. Even U.S. Americans who aren't Christians, at least know the phrase Daniel in the lion's den. So what's going on? Nebuchadnezzar's gone.

Now there's a new King Darius. He has Daniel within his royal court. He really appreciates and loves Daniel, but he gets swindled by his advisors to say that there is a time that anyone who doesn't worship you for a time will be thrown in the lion's den. And Daniel knows this, he's part of the royal court. So he reacts.

We read in Daniel 6:10 it says, "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem. He got down on his knees for three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God that he has done previously." Daniel knew the document was going to be signed and in rebellious to Babylonian rule, he got on his knees and he prayed to who he was true to. And that was God.

That was a lot of to's in one sentence. English is difficult you all. Pray for me. And the other thing that the Bible says is that he prayed three times a day, but then he gave thanks. Daniel, may I remind you, is in exile. He's in oppression and he gives thanks in the middle of all this. We are free here today and sometimes we forget to give thanks.

My goodness, Daniel. Mercy. Does this sound like someone who was intimidated by the world? No, but why? See, I believe that the answer is right there in Daniel 6:10. Right at the end it says, as he had done what previously? Here's the message that I believe God wants you to hear. Daniel did not pray in reaction to his life being threatened. No, no, no. Daniel was praying unceasing. He had always been praying. He changed nothing.

Prayer, my sisters and brothers, is the mark of a disciple. How else is a disciple going to make miracles? How else is a disciple going to call upon healings? How else is a disciples going to prophesy, preach a loved one's neighbor, bring healing to the world around them? How else are they going to do that without prayer?

Prayer is the conversation we have with God. The way our relationship grows and strengthens. It is the way that we know that the Holy Spirit is leading. It is through prayer that we will do these things. And a disciple doesn't simply pray for themselves because as we build this relationship with God, the things that break God's hearts begins to break our hearts. We get beyond the fact that God is not only just paying attention to us, he's not just here to save each one of us, he's here to save everybody.

And when we align with God, we recognize what's going on in our communities, what's going on in our cities, what's going on with our neighbors. We can learn from Daniel because in Daniel's prayers, when you read through the book of Daniel, it's not just requests, it's thanksgivings, it's praise and it's asking for forgiveness.

My friends, I hope this is not too harsh, but I have to say that here in the U.S. America sometimes our prayers are too arrogant. We don't always humble ourselves before God and admit the sins that we have committed. We open up prayers like, "God please forgive me of my sins." And then we move on to the request we want from God.

I don't know about you all, but I'm a sinner. If I took the time to lay out my sins before God, I'd be praying for a long time. But we cheat grace by not admitting our faults. And God's victories in our lives seem small because we have not laid down all of our sins before him. Let us learn from Daniel's humility.

The scripture we read to start off was part of Daniel nine. And all of chapter nine is Daniel pleading

with God, asking for mercies, laying out all the sins that the people of Israel had done. Pleading with God, praying, "Please forgive us. Please have mercy on us. Turn your face back to us." And you hear him at the end, this beautiful prayer of asking for forgiveness.

"Oh Lord, hear. Oh Lord, forgive. Oh Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not for your own sake. Oh my God, because your city and your people are called by your name." How many of your prayers end with asking for forgiveness? I know mine usually starts with the asking for forgiveness, but I quickly get to the things that I want. And I never circle back to ask for my forgiveness. This is just me.

And although I have fasted and I've prayed for hours and prayer's so important to me, even I fail. Prayer is vital to my relationship with God. Now Daniel was in exile, so I'm going to ask Pastor Alexis to come up here because Pastor Alexis and I ... See, that we grew up in more hostile environments than maybe some of you all grew up, maybe some of you all did.

But it is only by the grace of God that we're here. And so I thank God every single day for the breath in our lungs. And so I want to ask Pastor Alexis to share a little bit of his story of his upbringing because there's so many things that have happened in Congo where he's from that it just exemplifies how important prayer is. So Pastor Alexis, how important was prayer during the time of the conflict in the Congo?

Thank you very much, brother soldier, for asking me this question. As I have been share about in my story, I grew up in the Congo. I born in Congo. It was a country up to now, our community, our tribes live with the fear. I remember, I start to pray, fasting, you play and the fasting. When I was five years old, it's not because I knew God who is.

Because what my parents was facing, they knew only without God, no one can fix. In the five years old, I remember one time in my dad and my mommy called me to say "All the family, all our tribes, we going to pray and the fasting." And next week, Tuesday, I keep remind dad will be killed.

The only way was getting together to pray, all tribes, prayer and fasting. How much is very much important? We have been going through community Banyamulenge since I was young. We have been lost so many people. I remember one day, one night, 252 people, was including my grandma and my grandpa, died the same night. 2004, 162 people die one night.

Our community have been going along in the world, East Africa, the thousand people. How much of the prayer is a very much important? Is you have been a changed to us to see who is God, to focus on God, not to focus how the big problem is. This is also our challenges. This was our giant. What is your giant? What is you're facing right now?

Almost 300 years ago, we have been praying, praying. Up to now, we are still praying. We are the tribes, the community. I can't tell you what is our country? Our neighbor, our friends say, "This is not your country." Everywhere we want to go, "This is not your country." But we have been pray, pray, pray up to now.

I want to tell you, we never stop pray. Because the prayer change us. Because the prayer, it's a beautiful relationship no matter what's going on. Prayer, it's a beautiful connection between me and God. One of the biggest reason we say the prayer, we want to bring it to God. What do we need?

But the prayer, God need from us beyond all of that. He needs you building the relationship. He needs you to see how is God is big. Our community have been a going everywhere but remember, God timing. We trust him. We never stop praying. No matter what's happen right now, what's going on, we keep praying.

Amen. So what Pastor Alexis is describing is the Banyamulenge tribe at one time had a place. But because of the conflict, borders have shifted and now the Banyamulenge have no country and they're not wanted in any country. They're continually targeted to be killed. That's the conflict that's going on. Is the Banyamulenge tribe are being killed just simply because they're Banyamulenge.

And they say, "Go home to your country." But they don't have one anymore. 300 years, there's been problems in Congo. 300 years, your people have been praying. Now, this conflict continues small then maybe the wars that were before. But why is it so important now, Pastor Alexis, that you lead New Hope Revival, your sisters and brothers in church, to continually pray even though people are dying?

Even the people, we keep dying. Deaths that this conflict have been from March up to now, more than 200 have been killed. The hospital, the school. The refugee, they are allowed sitting there the day with raining and no home, nowhere to go. But we never stopped pray. As the big as the problem keep growing, never stop praying.

This is Isaiah 55, I want you just share only this. This Isiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways, declared the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thought than your thought." This is the question. We are always pray about hearing, we are always pray "God, we need you to fix this."

I want to tell you, this is only your way. This is your way. Remember, God's ways is the higher than your ways.

Amen.

You were just focus for one way. It's different than God. You just focus the I need this. No, no, no,

no. God needs you. Trust him, his way. He have so many ways you can't imagine. As heaven is the higher than earth. You can't imagine. Look at that. Everyone look like this. Look high at dawn. That is high his ways. Don't focus how big the problem is, focus how God is big and trust him.

No matters what's going on, one, focus building relationship you and the God. He just needs you more than to give the answer. He just needs you more than answer. And then, whenever he give the answer, sometimes it's different what you're pray for. That's why the people must say, "I have been pray, pray so long time."

God have been giving you the answer with the problem, you can't see it. Because you have only one way, this is what I need. This morning, I want to tell you, enjoy the answer from God in his way.

Amen. Can we give Pastor Alexis a round of applause for sharing part of his story? I believe Alexis, sometimes we are praying for the wrong things because we are not aligned with God. We're simply praying for the agenda that we want to happen and that is why prayer is the mark of a disciple. As you read through Daniel, you see the pattern that Daniel has. He always turns to prayer.

We've already shared a little bit of the difference of our lives and the fact that I thank God every single day for being here because it is only God's grace and only by God's mercy that I'm here. And in scripture, Daniel said he prayed three times a day. But remember, he lived in exile for 70 years.

What do you think he prayed for? The conflict in the Congo has been happening for over 300 years. What do you think they're praying for? Yesterday was the beginning of Black History Month. We had slavery here for over 300 years. What do you think those slaves were praying for? My friends, the intrepid pray.

And if you don't know what intrepid means, I didn't either so I had to look it up, even though I used it. I kind of knew what it meant. Courageous and fearless. Because to be a disciple, to follow Jesus calls for some courage. But not because of your own self doing. It is this constant relationship with God to remind you that you are not doing it on your own.

Daniel was not led to prayer because of his circumstances, but it was his prayer that led him through his circumstances. And if you're thinking, "How am I going to do this? What am I going to do?" Here's some suggestions, I've given them to you before. This week until next Sunday, pray 20 minutes a day, at least 20 minutes a day.

You're going to run out of stuff to pray for. It might be around Wednesday. You might have to start listening to God. If you're having trouble with prayer, you don't know what to do. Start with the

Lord's prayer, it's in Luke 11 and Matthew six. And if you would like to join us, every Friday here in S141 on 7:00 p.m. we are praying with Pastor Alexis for the conflict that's happening in the Congo. Come and pray with others.

And again, on Wednesday nights, the rest of the story come and listen to ... What is it? Senior Pastor Reverend Dr. Scott Dudley. Good grief. I'm going to try to be there too. But come on Wednesdays to learn more. Because Pastor Alexis and I had a two and a half hour sermon, maybe we'll give it to you there. Who knows? We don't know. But we'll give Dudley the notes and he'll do it. He'll be like, "When I was a young boy in Congo at the age of five ..."

Pastor Alexis, we don't have a lot of time but I want you to pray for us.

Hallelujah. Everyone stand up. Father we are so thankful again. Would everyone lift our hands. This a great moment, father, we need you. As disciple asking Jesus, teach us how to pray. This morning, we need you. Teach us how to pray effectively. Teach us how to trust you more and more and more. We keep knowing you, when we pray in the right way. I pray for everyone. Thank you Jesus. In the name of Jesus, amen.

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**Discussion Questions:** Read Daniel 1:8-21, 2:17-24, 6, 9

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1. What was Daniel rebelling against in Daniel 1:8-21? (hint, King Nebuchadnezzar was deeply religious and worship Baal with all sorts of offerings to Baal.)
2. In Daniel 2:17-18, what do you believe Daniel is asking Hannaniah, Michael and Azariah physically do? If you were in the same position as Daniels friend how would you go about it?
3. What type of prayer would you describe Daniels respond in Daniel 2:20-24?
4. In Daniel 6:10, what does it reveal about his prayer life?
5. In Daniel 9, why is Daniel praying? (hint Daniel 6:1-2) What type of prayer would you describe Daniel's prayer?
6. In all of Daniel's stories, he lives a rebellious life to Babylon's rule, but only when it contradicts worshipping God. What do you believe the message of Daniel's life to us is about prayer?