

Study #2

Persistent, Digging Prayer



Think about PERSISTENCE regarding prayer.

How long do you persistently pray for something as you pray?

Think about ASSURANCE regarding prayer.

How sure am I that God is actually hearing what I say and answering what I'm praying for?

Being persistent in our prayers is not always easy, or very well understood. One of the reasons we think persistence in prayer is actually *not encouraged* is because of what Jesus said.

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

(Matthew 6:7 NIV)

John Wesley wrote these words in response to this verse: *“Indeed all the words in the world are not equivalent to one holy desire. And the very best prayers are but vain repetitions, if they are not the language of the heart.”*

Do you see the words “holy desire” and “language of the heart?” What does desire have to do with persistence in prayer?

But Jesus also told a parable that had a motive of persistence behind it.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. **(Luke 18:1 NIV)**

Is there a contradiction here? How can Jesus' words in Matthew 6, and this motive in Luke 18 be reconciled?

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?"

(Luke 18:2-7 NIV)

Both passages of scripture apply. Many words with impure heart and motives produce nothing. Persistence, that is rooted in a pure heart and godly desire, produces answers and brings justice.

A Model and Metaphor for Persistent, Digging Prayer

Genesis 26:12-25 NIV Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. (13) The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. (14) He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. (15) So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.

Persistent Prayer = *Digging Wells in the Spiritual Realm*

To the Israelites, water was equivalent to life. Water is also representative of the Holy Spirit when mentioned in the Bible. Jesus spoke of Living Water while speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well.

Throughout Scripture, natural imagery is used to mirror supernatural realities. These verses provide a powerful metaphor for the persistence with which we pray, “*unearthing Living Water – the Flow of the Holy Spirit!*”

Skepticism

Think for a moment about gifts of Holy Spirit such as healing, faith, miracles, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy.

Are you skeptical of these gifts? Why or Why Not?

Have you ever considered that control of these gifts is equivalent to quenching the Holy Spirit?

Persistent digging in prayer will reopen the wells (*i.e. overcome the quenching of the Holy Spirit, removing the “earth” that has “stopped up the wells.”*)

But there is more than one well to dig.

(16) Then Abimelek said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us." (17) So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled.

Gerar = Ruminant, ponder, “chew the cud.”

Persistence in prayer gives us time to ruminate over what we’re praying. In the times of persistent, digging prayer we ponder those things for which we are praying. We “settle” in the “land of ruminating.”

Have you ever prayed a long time for something?

Did the persistence cause you to think over the issue for which you prayed?

Did you receive any revelation from God as a result of the rumination?

(18) Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

The Same Names = *The best from our past that has been lost.*

Here is an example of something that has been deemphasized in our churches today, yet is biblical, and well worth “reopening.”

1. **DESIRE FOR HOLINESS.** *We tend to lean today on the thought that “we’re all just sinners – some of us are just forgiven.”*
 - a. Have you ever said that? Read 1Peter 1:13-16.
 - b. *What does it mean to “be holy.”*
 - c. Is it possible to *desire* and *pursue* holiness?
 - d. What does prayer in the direction of opening the wells of pursuing holiness look and sound like?

In the Valley of Gerar (rumination) God will help us recapture the best of what has been lost.

Esek, Sitnah, & Rehoboth

(19) Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. (20) But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him.

- Isaac named the first well “dispute.”
- As we “dig the wells” people will dispute what begins to flow.
- Those who pray persistently will encounter words of dispute, calling into question the authenticity of the flow of the Holy Spirit.
- There may be words of accusation, accusing the intercessors of being overzealous or too emotional.

(21) Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.

- Isaac named the second well “opposition.”
- As we “dig the wells” people will oppose our digging in the second wave of the Holy Spirit’s movement.
- Those who oppose that kind of intercession will actually begin to take action to try to stop it. Just as Isaac was not stopped by the opposition he encountered, neither will be the intercessors.
- There will be tangible acts of intentional sabotage, but no weapon formed against us shall prosper.

(22) He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land."

- Isaac named the third well “room.”
- As we “dig the wells” the third wave will be undisputed and encounter no opposition.
- God is leading us to dig persistently in prayer so that we will learn perseverance.

James 1:2-4 NIV Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, (3) because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. (4) Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Why is perseverance so important in the life of a Christ-Follower?

Consider the digging of the wells in prayer, and the encounters with both dispute and opposition as the Holy Spirit begins to flow and manifest in powerful ways. Can you see that we are “tested” in our faith through the presence of dispute and opposition?

What does it mean to you to persevere in prayer?

Restore *the best from our past in intercession.*

Revival. *Intercession that must persevere through dispute.*

Revival. *Intercession that generates momentum and freedom.*

Just like digging a well.

God appears to Isaac.

(23) From there he went up to Beersheba. (24) That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." (25) Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

Are you the kind of praying person that wants a sign (appearance) from God first, before you pray, or are you so devoted to prayer that your persistence will draw out His appearance after you pray?

Isaac blessed God with his persistence, and then God blessed Isaac. Can you see the pattern? If we bless God with our obedience and persistence in prayer, He will bless us.

Beersheba = “The Seventh Well”

Beersheba is the place of completion when it comes to intercessory prayer. In the seventh wave of intercession and the release of God’s power resulting from that intercession, there will be such great power that we simply can’t fathom it at the moment.

Who will partner with God to do this kind of persistent, digging prayer?

Pray:

Write a prayer from your heart as a response to this lesson.