

The Manly Art Of Prayer

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[0 : 00] Now when you build something, you need to get the basics or the foundation right. We've all been there, you've tried to make something, it's kind of fallen apart in your hands.

Oh, it's so frustrating when you make something from a Lego set to some DIY project that you're trying to get off at home. Don't those workplace fails just make you cringe?

You think, how did I get this right or wrong? Have a look at these mistakes that people have made. So that's the first one, I'm kind of worried about, this guy's trying to get his car back together and then...

Now, if you get the foundation wrong, if you take shortcuts, what's going to happen to these buildings, this car and those guys?

They're going to hurt themselves, the building is going to fall down, nothing is going to work. So you've got to get the building right, you've got to get the foundation right. You can't take any shortcuts. Well, in our passage today, or rather Paul's letter to Timothy is about a very important building.

[1 : 14] The most important building on planet Earth. That's not brick and mortar, it's the human beings that are sitting in the pews. It's us. Because we are the church of God. It's this building that God has built, this temple that God has built.

And Paul is writing a letter to Timothy to say, I want you to take care of this building. Make sure it's got strong foundations. Because if you end up like those guys over there, the whole thing is going to collapse. Our passage today teaches us two important principles about building a church that has strong foundations.

For a church that works and stays solid and strong and therefore is effective in the world. That car that you saw, that's not an effective car with a duct tape wrapped around it.

That's not going to go very far. You want something that's going to go the distance. And Paul's instructions to Timothy today and God's instructions to us are to do two things.

Let's look at the first one. The first point we're going to look at is prayer. The first foundation, the first thing that's going to make God's church strong is prayer.

[2 : 28] But not just any prayer. We're going to look at the art of manly prayer. Or the manly art of prayer. Because Paul's talking to men here. So men, you need to start listening up.

It's a little bit surprising maybe. The first thing that God wants us to do is pray. But look how Paul puts it in verse 1. First of all.

First of all. I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people. Etc. Etc. Etc.

And then later on in verse 8. I desire then that in every place that men should pray lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. So our passage is bookended by these two strong words that Paul uses.

That the church and particularly the men need to be in prayer towards God for their world. So clearly it's important to God for his people to be in prayer.

[3 : 31] In fact, have a look at verse 3. What happens when we listen to God and make this foundation strong? Verse 3. This is good. And it's pleasing in the sight of God our savior.

So we're going to spend time looking at the manly art of prayer and how we can make God happy with us at St. Mark's. And how we can build his church. It's a strong foundation for us here at St. Mark's. So first of all, we need to pray with a rich diet with all kinds of prayers.

Supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings. This is a smorgasbord of prayer. There's nothing in your life that you can't take to the Lord in prayer. Okay. None of us really use the word supplication really or even intercession.

The New Living Translation says this. I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them.

Intercede on their behalf and give thanks for them. So we are to take people that we know, not just ourselves, but the world around us.

[4 : 38] We look specifically, it's going to ask us to pray or tell us to pray about our kings and those in authority. But this is a strong work that we do in the church. By taking the world out there and showing them up to God and saying, God, these people need your help.

Prayers must be made for all people and especially for kings and those in authority. But why is it so important to be praying for those in authority and kings? Take a step back.

Remember the big picture of what's going on here. What has God started with the Apostle Paul, with the church in the New Testament? He's done an amazing new work.

He's taken the message that he's the God of the Jews and going to bless them. And he said, no, I want you to go and tell the whole world that I'm their God.

And I'm going to bless them if they come to the mediator, to my son, Jesus Christ. The gospel message is there's a new king on the block.

[5 : 42] And that's Jesus the Christ. And there's a new power structure in the world. God's kingdom. So Christians have this revolutionary message. And we're a revolutionary people.

And because Christ is a king, he wants all the other kings on planet Earth to know, I'm the new king. I'm the new high power. In those days, the kings of the world were taking on godlike power.

They were claiming to be divine. In fact, they demanded to be worshipped by their followers. And this message goes out into that world and says, no, no, no. The emperors of Rome, the caesars of Rome, who claim to be God, who claim to tell people how to live their lives, you need to realize that there's a new king on the block, one higher than you, which you need to submit your authority to. But we don't just go to them ourselves. We go to God and pray to God for the kings of the world, for the powers and authority structures in the world, to be taken over by the new power and authority structure in the world, the kingdom of God.

And it's king, Jesus Christ. And then later on, verse 8, Paul specifically addresses the men.

[7 : 00] Verse 8, I desire that in every place men. Okay, boys, you need to listen up. There's something for you to listen to here and to take on board.

You know, it's interesting. We're not often, men aren't often directly addressed in scripture. So when God does directly address us, it's something to listen to.

Ladies, next week, you're going to be spoken to. And I'm glad Nick is doing that session.

Nevertheless, men, we need to listen to what God tells us to do because it's important to him.

It's a foundational thing that he wants his church to get right. Manly men. Manly men.

If I ask you, what is your idea of a manly guy? A manly guy. I've got an answer. Ricardo.

[8 : 12] Amen. Amen. Amen. What a statement. Well, what do manly men do, guys?

Firemen. Ooh, an astronaut. A policeman. You know the modern version? This guy with a beard. But he's looking distinguished. He's got a nice coiffed hairstyle. Maybe some...

Well, I'm going to say suspenders. That doesn't sound very manly, but... A nice checkered shirt. But there's a problem with that because the modern world doesn't like manly men, does it?

In fact, I don't think it likes men. So we've got this thing called toxic masculinity running around. And it's a shame that there's this narrative in the modern world about toxic masculinity that says that anything that a man does is automatically toxic because it's potentially abusive and potentially hurtful.

Well, the thing is, men without Christ can be toxic. Easily toxic. If they don't have Jesus in their life, they tend towards being abusive, leaving relationships, hurting people, using people for their own pleasure, and in that process, causing harm and hurt.

[9 : 28] But, of course, because the modern world doesn't have the word of God, it sees the problem as men. And it wants to make men more like women. And diminishing all the thing that makes them good and manly.

Those guys on that ladder, they're fine. They're going to make it. That car's going to go. That building, hey, what's the problem? The problem isn't that we're men.

The problem is men without Christ. But a man with Christ, well, he's got Christian, Christ-like masculinity.

What does Paul want us to do with that? What does the Bible tell us to do with our masculinity? Paul says, raise your hands to the God of heaven and ask him for help.

That is the most manly thing a Christian man can do. It's a very different picture of what we think of a manly man, isn't it? And not just Ricardo, but all of us can do that. But it's a striking statement.

[10:33] What do men without Christ do when they raise their hands? Paul says in verse 8, I want them to raise holy hands, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.

Why does he say that? Well, men, how easy is it to get into a fight? Very easy. And then what do we do with our hands? Instead of lifting up to the God of heaven, we lift it up against our spouse, our children or the world around us.

We raise our hands either in violence to hurt or maybe we raise our hands to play sport on the weekend. How many men go and play tennis or a round of golf or play rugby or soccer instead of coming to church and raising their hands in prayer to the God of heaven?

Paul says, no, men mustn't raise their hand in anger or to argue or to fight, but to ask for help for yourself, for your family and for the world around you.

We must have holy hands, hands that are sanctified by the blood of Christ, serving a new purpose. Only Christian men can do this high calling of praying to the high king of heaven and expecting him to get an answer.

[11:51] He's listening to us. He wants us to pray because he wants to change the world. But he wants to do it through us. We become an integral part of the mission of God as we come under his authority and go to him in prayer.

Men, if you want to lead with Christian masculinity and not toxic masculinity, you've got to come under the authority of Christ. If you want to lead your, and God is expecting you to lead your home in prayer, your wife and your children.

He's expecting you to pray for your community, for the world around you, so that they come to know Christ and that you stand up and are counted as one who is a man of Christ.

He's got peace and tranquility in his heart and mind and who can stand with dignity. Have a look at verse 2. When we are to pray for all people, for kings and all who are in our authority, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

We're not to run around looking like the rest of the world, chasing after worldly things, getting upset at the smallest thing, worrying about us and our money and me and my career.

[13:15] We've got a much bigger playing field when you become a Christian as to what you can get involved in. God's project, the kingdom project, the kingdom that has arrived with Christ, is to change the world and to bring it under the authority and leadership of Christ.

And we get to play a part. Men, maybe the most manly thing you can do is spend time in prayer, not just for your family, but with your family.

And I'm not just talking about holding hands and praying at dinner. Do that. At the very least, do that if you're not doing that already. If we want to make a difference in this world, if we want to be a foundation that is seriously strong, men, we need to get down on our knees with our families and let them know that we have come under the authority of Christ.

That we've got this peace. We've got this joy. We've got this hope. We are a channel of God's power and joy and all the good things that he promises us in the gospel and in his word.

And that we take that seriously. We take seriously our responsibility to our family to lead them and to teach them about Christ. Be careful that our prayers are too small.

[14:36] This is applying to everyone now. That we just pray for ourselves and not praying for God's glory to come in the kingdoms of this world. That's why we pray for the kings of this world. So that they can change. So that we can live at peace.

So that we can get on with building God's kingdom on earth. Not that we build it, but that we're channels of God's grace by spreading his gospel and by spreading his love. Be careful that your prayers are too small.

Too focused on you and your comforts. Make sure your prayers include the kind of urgent appealing. That intercessory prayer is an urgent appealing. It's going urgently and saying, Lord, please help this person.

Please help our country. It's not begging, but it's not offhanded. It's involved. You care about what's going to happen to these people that you bring to God in prayer.

We can't do much to change things in the world around us. The huge problems our countries have got. It would be so nice. Oh, if they made one of us ESCOM CEO for the day.

[15:41] Hey, just don't drink from the mug, right? We say we'd like to fix it, and none of us have that authority. Well, men and women, we've got a higher authority.

When you get down on your knees and pray, we've got the ear of the high king of heaven and of his son Jesus Christ listening to us. The CEO of ESCOM, what has he got?

The king of our country, the leader of our country, he doesn't have this God at his beck and call. No, we haven't made our beck and call. But he doesn't have the ear of the God of heaven.

We do. We can't do much to change things, but God can. And by asking him to do that, we can make a real difference to the future of this country.

We've lost this manly art of family worship. So I mentioned, men, you need to pray with your families.

[16:45] Yes, you've got to spend time in praying for them that they don't know about. Go behind the locked door, spend time praying about things. But too often we've got this devotional mentality that Christianity is meant to be done by me in my own private personal space.

And I don't want to impose it on everyone else. Except you're the covenantal head. You've been put in that position because you're a man. You're the leader of your family. And you're supposed to let them know about Jesus and make sure they understand everything they need to know about Christ in order to be saved.

To live a Christian life. So there's this thing called family worship. I'm not sure too many people do it anymore. I just want to tell you, men, that one of the most powerful things you can do is spend time with your family, with your children, and your wife.

And pray for them. And pray for the things in their life. And open the word. And discuss something in the Bible. It's not rocket science. We're doing it now in our growth groups. It's easy. It's not rocket science.

It can be done. Don't be scared. It's one of the most powerful weapons that fathers have.

[17:59] This arsenal of having a happy family. The family that prays together is going to stay together. The privilege of having a Christian dad do Christian stuff with his family.

It's priceless. You're in such a cool position, these Christian dads in our congregation. Don't miss that opportunity to tell your family about Christ.

A famous missionary, John Patton, you might not have heard of him, but he was a missionary to the South Sea Islands. Samoa and those countries that are still Christian to this day, you know, the big rugby players, when they get, and they still pray.

And they sing those hymns. And it's because of this guy. And he remembers this about the impact that family worship left on his life. When he says this about his father. When on his knees and all of us kneeling around him in family worship, our father poured out his whole soul with tears for every need.

We all felt as if in the presence of the living Savior and learned to know and love him as our divine friend. It had a huge impact on this child who went on to become a missionary and had a huge impact on the whole of the Pacific region.

[19:20] Because his dad led them continually in family worship and made sure he did that well. So the first principle of a strong foundation for a strong church is men in prayer with their families.

Men in prayer at church for themselves, for their families, for the world, for the rulers and authorities, for the growth of God's kingdom. Men are you up for it?

I'm going to say amen. The second principle for a strong church, which gets, and this is where it gets its power from, where our prayers get their power from, is the uniqueness of Christ.

The central pillar, which is found in the center of the text, is the uniqueness of the one God and of Jesus Christ as the one mediator between God and the world. It's a little bit puzzling for us to see how these two pillars relate.

So Paul says, first of all, I want you to be in prayer. He ends it by saying, I want you to be in prayer. And the reason I want you to be in prayer is that there's one God. Verse 5, there's one God and there's one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.

[20:31] It seems like he's taking a bit of a left turn. Why is that? How are the two linked? Well, saying that God is one God is not a discussion about the doctrines of God or monotheism.

But it's saying that there's only one true God in the whole world. This is a new thing that God is doing.

And it gives power to what Paul is saying about prayer. In the past, the way the Bible works, we could take a big picture view of the Bible again. God was the God of the Jews.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Promised blessings to them. Until the time of Christ. But now that Christ has arrived, this message of blessing, of repentance, of forgiveness, of new life, is not just for Jewish people, but for all people.

So that when Paul and all his missionaries go out into this world, they were having to tell all the people that they met. Listen, you Greeks, you worship a whole bunch of gods. You need to know that those are false gods.

[21 : 35] There's only one God. And he's put this one person on the throne room of heaven. You need to forget the gods that you've been worshipping because they're rubbish.

The worship of those gods, it leads to utter destruction. Come to the one true God, the creator God of the universe, who rules in heaven and has got his mediator, this man, Jesus Christ, as the new king.

People can know the one true God and have their lives changed. They can join this new life, this new kingdom, this new way of living, this new way of doing things.

How can they do that? What has God done to show himself to the world? Well, that's why the verse talks about there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men.

The man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all. So Christ comes as the ultimate mediator. What does a mediator do?

[22 : 39] We all know what a mediator does. He brings peace between two parties that are fighting. What makes Christ so unique? Why is this the new thing that has changed in the history of the world? God had many mediators in the Old Testament.

Well, none of them made peace between God and man. Not even the high priest. The book of Hebrews tells us that he wasn't able. Those sacrifices they did in the Old Testament didn't pay for those sins.

He died. He had to pay for his own sins. So you get this. So God finally sends Christ into the world. Who's able to fully represent God because he's God.

And fully able to represent man because he's fully man. He stands exactly in the middle between God and mankind. He pays the ultimate sacrifice for sin by being the sacrifice himself.

But he doesn't stay dead. And his resurrection is proof that God accepts his sacrifice. And he not only pays for sins but breaks the power of sin in the world.

[23 : 41] So that men no longer find themselves caught up in their own feelings. With fear and anger and running after pleasure. But our eyes are opened.

And we've got this new thing that we can live for. We can build lives of peace and wholeness. And we can bring healing into the world. Men and women. And what is God doing with the fact that he's one and that there's this mediator?

What does Paul say? Verse 4. This God, this one God of the universe. Although the people don't know him. They're not his enemy.

He loves them. He desires all people to be saved. And to come to the knowledge of the truth. Because Jesus, verse 5, gave himself as a ransom for all.

God wants people to come to him to be saved. And that's the link between us praying and who God is. Because he's the one God who rules in heaven. Because there's one mediator, Jesus Christ.

[24 : 55] And because this God wants the world to be saved. And he saved us. When we ask him to save the world. We're asking him to do the thing that he says he wants to do. So that makes our prayers effective and powerful.

Does that make sense? So when we know that when we are praying, when we pray, we are going to have an effect.

Not a small effect. A massive effect. Because we're asking God to do the very thing he says he wants to do. But friend, if you're here and you don't have Christ as your mediator.

You don't think that you can just walk up to God and decide for yourself how you're going to relate to him. It doesn't work that way. We've seen in our Old Testament series when God pitches up in his holiness and power and glory.

Everyone is scared. You need someone to stand in that gap. Someone who's not going to be destroyed by the wrath and holiness of God. You can't go there and face that yourself. You're going to die.

[25 : 55] You need Christ as this mediator. That's why it's so important. So if you're here and you haven't done that. If you haven't bowed the knee to Christ as your kin. You need to do that. And ask him to help you. And to forgive you.

And to change you. The good news is that he says he wants to. You just have to ask. For the Christians.

Men, this is why we need to pray. This is why we take this message that there's one God. And all other gods are dismissed. There's only one mediator. Jesus Christ.

Because when we take this message out. All hell is going to break loose. There's a world out there that doesn't want these people to come into God's kingdom. There's a fight going on.

And so this means praying for our family and friends is vital. You might be the only person in their lifetime that is praying for God to save them. Have you ever thought about that? Imagine. You're standing on judgment day.

[27 : 02] Your own family. And God says, well, what do you know about me? Well, not too much. Well, one of your family members is a Christian. He served me. What happened there? Oh, I don't know.

Ask him. And then ask you. And you say, oh, yeah. Well, they didn't seem to want to know. Well, did you pray for them? Oh, it's a bit busy. Did you tell them anything?

I didn't think it was going to work. But you've just read from the mouth of God himself that he wants all people to be saved. So who are you to say that God isn't going to do this thing?

Oh, man. If we spend time in prayer, whew, man, these things are going to change. But this battle that's going on, Leon Morris, a really famous theologian, says this, when Christians evangelize, they're not engaging in some harmless and pleasant pastime.

They're not playing putt-putt at the golf course over here. They're engaging in a fearful struggle, the issues of which are eternal. No. In evangelism, we are wrestling against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[28 : 20] That's why we need to pray to God, to ask him to help when we do stuff. Because if we do it in our own power, it's not going to work. Because these things are stronger than we are. But we've got someone who's stronger than all of that and has broken it.

And that's Jesus Christ and God the Father. Friends, in closing, we all know South Africa is in deep trouble. Well, this text gives us hope.

Because the mediator, the one that listens and makes a difference in planet Earth, is on our side. He is our friend. He actually likes us. And because he takes our prayers to God, and because God the Father wants all men to be saved, we know that we can change the world by praying.

We're literally asking God for the things he said we must do, that he wants. And if we stand up and be counted, come under the authority of Christ and become men of prayer, you will see a dramatic change in the way that your life is, that you experience life.

I think that's worth asking God to help us with, don't you? Let's pray. Well, Lord God, you've given us ample reason to come to you in prayer and to ask you to change this world, because your kingdom is the kingdom that rules, and your king is the king that rules.

[29 : 44] And we want him to rule in our lives. We want to be men of prayer. We want to be men of integrity. We want to be men that pray for, stand in the gap, and pray for our friends, our family, and for the issues of this world that we ourselves can't change.

But Lord, these things are in your hands. You've started this new project, and you have changed the world, and are changing the world. Lord, help us to be part of that solution, to be men and women of prayer.

In Jesus' name, amen.