

THE CORE VALUE: We value _____ and expect our desperate cries to
_____ the spiritual _____ around us.

TWO TRUTHS ABOUT GOD AND PRAYER:

1. God _____ when we pray

2. God _____ when we pray

ONE APPLICATION BASED ON THOSE TRUTHS:

3. We _____



The Take-Off

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone - whether in person or on the phone - and suddenly realized that they aren't there and you've been talking to no one?

In Stanly County, if AT&T is your wireless provider, you've probably had this happen on a regular basis!

You end up calling back, then going through the routine of figuring out exactly where you left the conversation, and then trying to regain the momentum of where you were before the dropped call.

In a word, it's frustrating, as you can tell from these people who have just experienced drop calls.

[Show pics of dropped calls]

Sadly, these pictures could also represent the frustration that many believers experience in their prayer life.

This morning, we want to learn how we can have a prayer life that is less like a dropped call and more like a super-charged Thunderbolt data connection.

So, today we take a look at our the last value that falls under the UNCONTAINABLE Kingdom of Jesus: Unwavering Prayer.

Our 10th core value is: **We value unwavering prayer and expect our desperate cries to change the spiritual atmosphere around us.**

Books have been written about prayer, entire Bible studies have been devoted to prayer, and so that's not our goal this morning.

My goal is to give you a bird's eye perspective on the topic and to accomplish 2 things:

- 1) Show you 2 truths in Scripture about God that will change your prayer life, and
- 2) Show you 1 absolute no-brainer application for your life as a result of those truths.

Ready? First, the 2 truths about God and prayer...

1. God hears when we pray

Let's face it, it's frustrating to talk to someone who isn't listening

We don't want to talk to the back of someone's head, or to blank eyes that are looking past us to the tv, or to a head looking down at a cell phone.

When we talk, we want to know that we're being heard.

If we're not being heard when we pray, then we can save ourselves a lot of time and trouble

Our prayers are pointless if they aren't heard, and many believers feel like their prayers aren't heard.

But the opposite is just as true: if our prayers are heard, then our prayers can be powerful

Let me just say that there are times that we botch the communication lines between ourselves and

God, but my purpose right now is simply to establish - beyond all doubt - from Scripture that God is a God Who hears when people pray.

Here are some passages for us to consider:

- a. Luke 1:8-13
 - i. There's no mention of Zechariah's prayer except by the angel
 - ii. He was doing his job and was interrupted by the angel
 - iii. What matters most for us is what the angel says in v. 13 - "Your prayer has been heard"
- b. Exodus 2:23-25
 - i. The Israelites prayed like we do! Groaning and crying!
 - ii. But v. 24 is our key: "God heard their groaning"
- c. Exodus 22:23, 27
 - i. Context? Laws for how the Israelites are to live, specifically concerning social responsibility
 - ii. Twice God says that He will hear the cries of people who have been mistreated (v. 23, 27)
- d. 1 John 5:14-15
 - i. Twice in 11 words John says "He hears us"

- ii. There's a lot more in these 2 verses, but for now let's agree that the author of the book has no doubt that God is listening to our prayers

It's great to have confidence in the fact that our prayers are being heard, but that's only one of the truths that can revolutionize our prayer lives.

The other is just as critical...

2. God moves when we pray

Let's diffuse a little truth perversion, okay?

When we say that God is moved by our prayers, it isn't the same as saying that God can be manipulated by our prayers

Some teaching can confuse the two

As a dad, there are times that my children could tell me things just to "get on my good side" so that I'll do what they want me to do

That's manipulation.

But let them come to me with a sincere request, and my heart will be moved

Is it possible for my children to manipulate me? Absolutely, because I'm not all-knowing and so I can't always correctly weigh the motives of their heart.

Proverbs 16:2; 21:2

But God can, and so God cannot be manipulated. But as we'll see, He can be moved by our prayers.

Here are a few examples:

- a. Exodus 32:9-14
 - i. The situation: God is angry with the Israelites and is ready to wipe the slate clean and provide Moses with a new group. (vv. 9-10)
 - ii. Moses prays and asks God to relent (v. 12)
 - iii. God relents (v. 14)
 - iv. A lot of smart men and women have debated this for years wondering if God really did change His mind, or if He never actually planned on wiping out the Israelites.
 - v. A simple reading of the story reveals a simple, astonishing truth: Moses' prayer mattered and was the pivot on which the situation turned!
 - vi. God moved because Moses prayed.
- b. Genesis 18:16-33
 - i. Another tricky passage about what God's really up to
 - ii. He has decided to destroy Sodom and tells Abraham about it
 - iii. Abraham starts to pray for Sodom (and his cousin Lot who lives there!) and asks God if He will spare the city if 50 righteous live there, then 45, then 40 and so on down to 10.
 - iv. It was kind of a reverse auction.
 - v. Now, ultimately the city was destroyed, but the key for us is that God lowered the number based on Abraham's prayer.
 - vi. Abraham prayed, God heard, and God moved.
- c. 1 Samuel 1:10-20
 - i. Here's a passage many young couples can relate to, and Wendy and I did, too
 - ii. Hannah is unable to have children (v. 6) and she finds herself praying passionately to a God Who hears her and moves for her
 - iii. Within the year, she gives birth to a son (v. 20) and names him Samuel because that name sounds like the Hebrew word for "heard by God"
 - iv. Every time she called her son, she was reminded that he was living proof that God hears and moves when we pray!
- d. Psalm 72:12
 - i. He hears the cry of the needy...

ii. ...and delivers them (moves)

Not only do we have the Biblical evidence, but we have examples here in our own body of answered prayers!

- a. Beth Poplin is in Virginia taking care of her sister-in-law who has throat cancer. The cancer is shrinking and she has gained 5 pounds.
- b. Joe Lucas got a job and started last week.
- c. Jan Goetz has a job after waiting for the Lord to provide it for about 3 months.
- d. Brittany McGuire has a new job after seeking the Lord for years for a job that fit her schedule better.
- e. Kathy Eudy has a new job making almost what she was making after being released from her previous job.
- f. Phil and Jennifer have Kayda after years of infertility.
- g. Wendy and I have Parker and Will (and Sydney) after years of infertility, too!

The list can go on and on. In fact, if you're here and want to weigh in as one who has seen God answer prayer, why not simply stand and lift your hands and let's give Him praise for being a God Who hears and moves when we pray!!!

So, let's sum up what it means for us that God hears and moves:

When we know that God hear our prayers, we don't have to feel ignored.

When we know that God moves in our prayers, we don't have to feel isolated.

So what do we do with these truths?

Finally, the 1 application based on those truths...

3. We pray

I wish I had something a bit more profound, but honestly this is the only application that matters. Why don't we pray? Because we're not really sure that He does hear and/or will act.

But if you knew that He was always listening to and always moved by your prayers, wouldn't you simply make sure that you were always praying?

Of course you would.

Maybe that's why there are verses in the Bible like Acts 1:14, Romans 12:12 (NLT), and 1 Thessalonians 5:17

So, because God hears and moves, we pray.

Let's close out by examining how to pray.

- a. We pray with humility (2 Chronicles 7:14)
 - i. They could have been mad (v. 13)
 - ii. Bowing in prayer reminds us we aren't God
- b. We pray with determination
 - i. Genesis 32:26 - "I won't let you go!"
 - ii. Luke 18:1-5 - "I won't give up!"
 - iii. Luke 11:5-8 - "I won't be afraid!"
- c. We pray with confidence
 - i. 1 John 5:14
 - ii. Hebrews 4:16
 - iii. Ephesians 3:12
 - iv. 2 Corinthians 3:4
- d. We pray with expectation (Daniel 10:1-14)
 - i. This story addresses it all: The need for direction, fasting and prayer to get answers (v. 2)
 - ii. Can you imagine how confused Daniel might have been for those 3 weeks?
 - a) Did God hear me?

- b) Does He care?
- c) Why aren't I getting an answer?
- iii. But verse 12 changes everything!
 - a) An angel appears (v. 5) and announces that from the first moment he prayed, Daniel was heard (v. 12) and he was sent with the answer (God moves!!)
 - b) The delay was due to warfare
 - c) God had heard and God had moved in response
 - d) We can pray with an expectation that our answer is on the way

The Landing

- So as we close, let me play a little "what if?"
- What if Daniel had thrown in the towel on day 2? Day 14? Day 20?
- When we know that God hears and moves, we pray expecting, not hoping.
- And so, we pray, and we don't waver in our belief that somewhere between God and where we are, a messenger is on his way with the answer.