

1. Our LifeLines verse for February 5, 2024 will be Isaiah 43:19.
2. FYI, February 12 will be our last LifeLines until after Easter.

LifeLines January 29, 2024

Today's Scripture: 1 Verse

Luke 18:1

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always & not to lose heart.

WHY WE'RE HERE

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All scripture is inspired by God & is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, & for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

CONTEXT

In Chapter 17, Jesus was teaching about His return, the coming of God's kingdom & the end times. These lessons took place near the end of His journey to Jerusalem. The message He shared was a *heavy* one. (Read it for extra credit. See if you can discern why it led Jesus into the section with *our* verse & what follows.) He probably felt He needed to bolster the group & give them reasons to hope & persevere.

In the parables that follow our verse, Jesus instructed the people on the importance of perseverance in prayer as we await "the end." (This could have a variety of meanings depending on what's going on in *your* life right now.) It's imperative that we actively rely on God & learn while we wait.

In the first parable (the persistent widow), the judge finally gave in to the widow so she'd stop badgering him. Fortunately, our God is not like this judge. God doesn't need to be badgered into listening to us or our prayers. In fact, the end of the parable says God will quickly grant justice to those who cry to Him. Then, the parable takes an eschatological twist, as Jesus asks, "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"

So – how do we not lose heart & maintain faith over time? How do we reconcile with God's time table instead of our own? Is prayer the answer?

DIFFERENT VERSIONS (Versions not listed are similar to the NRSV.)

AMP

Now Jesus was telling the disciples a parable to make the point that at all times they ought to pray & not give up & lose heart.

CEB (Common English Bible)

Jesus was telling them a parable about their need to pray continuously & not to be discouraged.

CEV (Contemporary English Version)

Jesus told His disciples a story about how they should keep on praying & never give up.

EASY

Then Jesus told His disciples a story. He wanted to teach them that they must go on praying always. They must not get tired.

KJV

And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, & not to faint.

NCV

Then Jesus used this story to teach His followers that they should always pray & never lose hope.

TLB

One day Jesus told His disciples a story to illustrate their need for constant prayer & to show them that they must keep praying until the answer comes.

SELAH

BREAKING DOWN THE VERSE

Then Jesus told them a parable... We know Jesus used parables to teach. We learn by example, too, when we hear stories people tell. Jesus' parables are still relevant in our lives today.

about their need to... Do you think of prayer as a *need*? Jesus obviously did. He prayed before setting out to find his disciples. He went alone many times to pray; prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane; prayed for Satan not to sift Simon Peter, and so on. He was in constant communication with His Father, through prayer, while He was on earth, & He continues to pray for us today (see Hebrews 7 & 1 John 2 verses). We are *not* the only ones praying! We are to emulate Him in the faithful practice.

pray always... The purpose of prayer isn't to fulfill an obligation we have to God. It's to "log into" His power which is available to flow into & through our lives. With prayer there *is* power. Prayer is faith displayed. Otherwise, why would we go to God in prayer? Prayer & faith go hand in hand. They result in the type of hope we spoke of in a recent LifeLines study.

Prayer opens us to God's blessings as we give thanks. God wants to be pursued & found by us. In the "Upper Room," 1/24, the author used interesting words – "Help us be

open to the good gifts You are giving us today.” This is a way of *not* limiting God in what He desires to do in & for us. In the 1/24 Jesus Always, Sarah Young writes, “So when you walk in collaboration with Me, don’t set limits on what you expect to accomplish.” In other words, *don’t set limits on God*. Let us be purposeful when we pray & leave room for God to add His two cents *or more!*

& not to lose heart...In the King James Version, the word *faint* is used instead of *not to lose heart*. That paints a vivid picture for us. Prayer & fainting are opposites. Fainting evokes weakness & powerlessness. We pray in the strength of the Lord, not as weaklings who are unsure of the One to whom we pray! Through prayer, we tap into God’s power to be His effective witness in this world. This is where we exercise the ability to speak to the devil (& his works) & command him, by the authority given us in the Name of Jesus, to flee from our lives as we resist him.

The faithful who spend/*invest* time in prayer have a great supply of God’s power available to them. Those who don’t spend much time in prayer rob themselves of the strength & ability that only prayer can give.

SELAH

RELATED VERSES (What other verses come to your mind?)

Psalm 13:1, How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide Your face from me?

Psalm 13:6, I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 27:13-14, I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, & let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Psalm 37:7a, Be still before the Lord, & wait patiently for Him;

Psalm 38:15, But it is for You, O Lord, that I wait; it is You, O Lord my God, who will answer.

Psalm 55:16-17, But I call upon God, & the Lord will save me. Evening & morning & at noon I utter my complaint & moan, & He will hear my voice.

Psalm 62:5, For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him.

Psalm 102:17, He will regard the prayer of the destitute, & will not despise their prayer.

Psalm 105:4, Seek the Lord & His strength; seek His presence continually.

Proverbs 15:29, The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Isaiah 6:11, Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And He said: “Until cities lie (in) waste without habitation...”

Isaiah 30:18, Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore He will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him.

Isaiah 40:31, But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run & not be weary, they shall walk & not faint.

Isaiah 64:4, From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides You, who works for those who wait for Him.

Jeremiah 29:12, Then when you call upon Me & come & pray to Me, I will hear you.

Lamentations 3:25, The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.

Matthew 6:7-8, “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.”

Matthew 7:11, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?”

Matthew 9:29-30a, Then He touched their eyes & said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” And their eyes were opened.

Matthew 26:41, “Stay awake & pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Mark 1:35, In the morning, while it was still very dark, He got up & went out to a deserted place, & there He prayed.

Luke 6:12, Now during those days He went out to the mountain to pray; & He spent the night in prayer to God.

Luke 18:7-8, “And will not God grant justice to His chosen ones who *cry* to Him day & night? Will He delay long in helping them? I tell you, He will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” (Italics added.)

Luke 22:31-32, “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded (obtained permission) to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; & you, when once you have turned, strengthen your brothers.”

John 5:19, Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.”

John 17, Jesus prays for His disciples. (Read the chapter for *extra credit!*)

Acts 1:4, While staying with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” He said, “is what you have heard from Me;”

Romans 12:12, Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

2 Corinthians 4:1, Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17a, So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,

Galatians 6:9, So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

Ephesians 3:20, Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can *ask or imagine*, (Italics added.)

Ephesians 6:18, Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer & supplication.

Philippians 4:6-7, Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer & supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts & minds in Christ Jesus.

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

Colossians 4:12, Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand in everything that God wills.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

2 Thessalonians 3:13, Brothers & sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

1 Timothy 2:8, I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument;

Hebrews 7:25, Consequently, He is able for all time to save those who approach God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 11:6, And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would *approach* Him must believe that He exists & that He rewards those who seek Him. (Italics added.)

James 5:16b, The prayer of the righteous is powerful & effective.

2 Peter 3:8-9, But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, & a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

1 John 2:1, My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

SUMMARY

Some lessons are fun to learn, like water skiing, learning a new skill or craft, anything that's *our own idea*! At their request Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer. He even gave extra guidelines on prayer in the Matthew 6 verse above. We've learned we must prepare to submit – *not my will but Thine* – as we pray The Lord's Prayer. Jesus also cautioned us not to say the same things over & over when we pray.

Learning other lessons may *not* be as much fun – like learning to wait on the Lord. Sometimes, we have no other choice than to wait on God. (Did you ever wonder how often *God waits on us* & how that makes Him feel?) Even though waiting on the Lord may not be fun or easy, it's good discipline & a good spiritual exercise. Throughout our lives, we'll be called to do so often. There are times we may *think* we're ready for an answer to prayer, & God feels we're *not*, or He has another plan. We may not be ready to or able to *understand or accept* His will.

Effective prayer is not a passive activity. It's one that actively seeks God & pursues His will. To persevere in prayer is to focus on God - *His* desires & will. Someone has said, "Praying while waiting is better than waiting *without* praying." Waiting is an invitation to participate in God's design & develop a mature prayer life of our own.

CONCLUSION

Does prayer sometimes feel like a *waiting game* for you? Take another look at Psalm 27:13-14, above. Last week we discussed the importance of hiding God's Word in our hearts. Tonight's LifeLine might be a verse you decide to hide in *your* heart: *Pray & don't lose heart!*

Are there things you've been praying for over a long period of time? Don't stop! Remember, we are to pray always. Trust the power, wisdom & love of God. God doesn't

give up on us, & we must *never* give up on Him. When we think He's being slow (2 Peter 3:8-9, above), we must stand to the end, firm in our faith built on the Rock.

Let us live moment by moment in an attitude of prayer to maintain contact with our Creator. Let us submit to His timetable. Let us must maintain an open channel of communication with our Heavenly Father, our Savior & the Holy Spirit, so that when the Son of Man comes (Luke 18:8), He will find faith on earth!

~ **Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always & not to lose heart.** ~

Let Luke 18:1 be a *LifeLine* for you!

SCRIPTURE IS OUR –

LifeLine!

Take a minute or two & write something you want to remember about this LifeLine:
