



Prayer (Part 1) – A Call to Prayer

Hunter Hall – January 4, 2015

Good morning. Happy first Sunday of 2015. Is anyone having a bad year so far? I'm kidding. I hope not. Hey, my name is Hunter Hall. I'm the campus pastor here at The Village Church Plano Campus. It's so good to see you here today. Go ahead and turn to Ephesians 3. That's where we'll be camped out all day, in Ephesians 3. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one around you somewhere, in the seatback in front of you. Feel free to use that.

If you don't own a Bible, we would love to give that to you as a gift to take home to read, to study, to meditate on. That's our gift to you. In all seriousness, I hope you had a great holiday season. I had an incredible time. I just took some time off work, hung out with my family, hung out with friends. I did nothing but break away from the normal rhythm of work life and eat good meals and play games and watch movies and stay up late and take naps.

It was an incredible time, but in that time, I realized just how important rhythm is. To break from rhythm for a season is good, but after a while, I found that it sometimes can get kind of mundane. I'm not as sharp as I am, and I like rhythm. Rhythm is a good thing, right? You want songs to be in rhythm. If a song is not in rhythm, it's awkward. You just want it to end, but it's also good to have a rhythm in life and specifically in church life.

We believe that here at The Village. We think rhythm is a good thing, so we structure our ministries in such a way that every single fall, we preach through a series. This past fall, we preached through manhood and womanhood with our *A Beautiful Design* series. The fall before that, we preached through *Recovering Redemption*. Every fall, we preach through a series at the church. Matt, our pastor, will preach through a series. That usually ends around Thanksgiving.

Then, every year, we move right into an Advent study where we consider and celebrate the incarnation of Christ in his first coming and we rejoice and hope in his second coming. We just wrapped that up. Every single year in January we move into a month-long series of prayer. The

rhythm then is fall series, Advent, prayer, fall series, Advent, prayer. We think that's a good healthy thing, to be consistent and to keep before us these things.

The month of prayer is where we find ourselves today, as Jamin said. This month, we're devoting to prayer. It's not that we only pray in January and then don't think twice about it February through December, but this is a time when we want to come together, unite our hearts, focus our attention, join hands, and pray over three specific points. We pray over the same three points every single year.

The first of those three points is the sanctity of human life. We believe that every person from the moment of conception until their last breath has inherent worth because God created us that way. We want to be champions for life. We want to celebrate that the Lord is the author of life. We live in a culture that continues to devalue human life, be it through abortions or sex trafficking or other oppression, kidnappings. We want to step into that darkness as the church with fervent prayer and action. Sanctity of human life.

Also, we pray for racial reconciliation every January. We believe that Jesus Christ came to save sinners from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Through his death, burial, and resurrection he has brought us together, as diverse as we may be. We pray for diversity. We long for diversity. We believe it's a picture of heaven, where all the nations come to worship the Lord. Maybe you think this doesn't apply to you. You live in the suburbs, and maybe you're like, "Well, I don't think it applies to me." You need to know that racial prejudices, racial tensions, racial divisions permeate our culture and, sadly, our churches.

We also pray for the nations. We want to celebrate and join in rejoicing with our missionaries who are overseas, who are around the world doing the work of ministry in tough places. We want to celebrate those missionaries. We want to pray for those missionaries. We want to pray that the Lord would raise up more missionaries from our church, from our campus.

Then we want to pray for the Great Commission to go forward. We want to believe those things. We want to ask that the Lord would save. We pray those three things, so in the coming weeks, Matt will be here. He's out sick this weekend. Pray for him. He has the flu or something. I don't know, but he's sick. Over the next weeks, he'll be preaching through these topics.

Today, my hope is simply this. I just want to set the table for us for this month of prayer. As we concentrate on our prayer life, that we would be honest with each other in this room today. I'm just going to ask that you would just be honest and listen and ask the Lord to teach you something, to speak to you, to minister to you in this next 40 minutes or so. You're in Ephesians 3. Let's begin reading in verse 14.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning and ask that you would sweep through our hearts today, that you would stir within us a greater desire to fall on our knees in prayer, that you would minister to us so softly and tenderly if we're fragile, that if we're stubborn in heart in here today, that you would break through that stubbornness.

I ask, God, that you would set free those who feel like they are captive to sin this morning. I trust you, Holy Spirit. I ask, and we pray every single week that as we leave here, we would know you and trust you all the more. Do what only you can do, Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

We live in a culture of boredom. We do. We have more available to us in this day and age than ever in history, yet we are so bored. Here's an example. Somehow, we've gotten bored with food. No longer is just eating a taco normal. We now have to go... We have the option to eat a taco that is wrapped in a Nacho Cheese Doritos shell.

No longer is just a chicken sandwich okay to eat. No longer does that hit the spot. We've done away with the bun. Let's deep fry those patties and use them as buns, fill it with bacon, cheese, and sauce

and call it a sandwich. We got tired of the chicken sandwich. Who does that? We're bored. How about in our cars? No longer are 20 radio stations enough for us. We now need 536 radio stations.

You're driving, and you think, "You know what I could really go for in this music? I could really go for some Canadian country folk music to listen to." We're bored. We're a bored culture. We're a bored people. Sadly, I think this boredom hits home for us as believers in the church as well. I think we're bored with our prayer lives. I do. I think we're bored in our prayer lives.

If I were to ask you if you think prayer is important, every single one of you would say, "Absolutely, it's important. Yes, it's important." If I were to ask, "Hypothetically, in a 24-hour day, how many hours of your day are spent filled with prayer?" My guess is no one in here... Maybe 98 percent of us in this room would say, "I'm not killing it. It's not filled very much." My hand is up here. I'm confessing.

Then to take it a step further. When we do pray, how many of us actually believe the prayers we're praying? You see, because when we're bored, we either won't pray, or we won't believe that what we're praying matters. When we're bored, we have to think and examine and know why it is that we're bored. My hope today is not just to heap a load of shame on us today. I don't want to do a drive-by guilt trip here today, but I just want us to be honest and have a conversation and examine our hearts.

Maybe we're bored because we're praying the same things over and over and over again in the same ways over and over again, toward the same things over and over again. Maybe it's because we expect answers to our prayers in 30 seconds. Maybe it's because we don't approach prayer intentionally, or maybe it's because we're so distracted with everything else going on around us.

You could probably think of a dozen other reasons why we don't pray and that contribute to this boredom, but I want to suggest that one large reason we're so bored in our prayer lives is because we have a love problem. We have a love problem. I'm not saying you're not a loving person. I'm saying we forget just how deep the Father's love is for us.

When we forget that foundational, massive truth, our love toward God and others will suffer. A direct result of that is that our prayer life suffers. It's a love problem. God commands us to pray, right? We all know this. Scripture is abundantly clear. Colossians 4:2 says that we are to continue steadfastly in prayer or to devote ourselves to much prayer.

First Thessalonians 5:17 encourages believers to pray without ceasing. I could go on and on with other texts, but God expects us to be a people of prayer, but when it comes down to it, as one theologian says, God's command of us to pray is a command of love. God's command of us to pray is actually a command of love. I don't travel much, but when I do, my wife expects that I call her. Right? It's not an expectation that is rooted in control.

She's not checking up on me. She doesn't want to make sure I'm going to bed on time. She wants to hear from me. She wants to talk to me. She wants to hear my voice. She wants to hear all about my day. She wants to tell me how one kid ran into the wall or another kid was acting like a dog that day and scared one of the other kids or whatever it may be. She wants to hear my voice. That's what people in love do. They talk to one another.

So it is with the Lord and prayer. Church, he loves you. He desires to talk to you. He doesn't need us, right? You know that. He doesn't need our prayers. He's not lacking in anything. He knows everything we're going to pray before we pray it, but he loves us. He wants to shower us with blessings. His command for us to pray is a command of love.

We need to be reminded today of God's love for us because prayer is too important for us to either not pray or not believe that our prayer matters. This text in Ephesians gives us a glimpse of how we are to pray from the position and reality of God's great love for us. We see in this text that Paul is actually praying for the saints in Ephesus. He's able to pray such a bold, compassionate prayer because he himself has been gripped by the love of God.

We see in chapter 1 that Paul came to understand just how blessed he was by God through Jesus with the Holy Spirit. In chapter 2, we read how his heart is full with the reality that God has saved him from his death and destruction with his amazing grace. Here in chapter 3, he is now prepped and drawn and ready to pray.

Verse 14. Paul says that he bows on his knees to pray for the saints. That may not strike us as odd when we read that. We may just think that's normal, but in that day and age, that wasn't the posture of prayer. In that day and age, in the Jewish tradition, Jewish culture, you actually stood to pray. That was the posture. For Paul to kneel on his knees, to bow on his knees, it indicated an extraordinary plea he was about to make.

Paul clues us in on the importance and urgency that he has for the believers to know something big in the following verses, and that something is the incredible love of God toward his people. He's praying for three aspects of God's love for the Ephesians. He's praying for *God's love envisioned*, *God's love established*, and *God's love examined*.

1. *God's love envisioned*. Let's look at verses 16 and 17. "**...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...**" Church, this is the vision. This is the picture of God's love for us, that according to the vast richness of his glory, he has given believers the Holy Spirit to strengthen us and also Christ to dwell in our hearts.

Let that sink in for a second. The very one who left his home in glory, the one who came to this earth, the one who cast out demons and healed the sick, the one who laughed and cried and played and worked, the one who turned water into wine, the one who fed thousands upon thousands of people with just a little bit of food, the one who was mocked and beaten, betrayed, the one who was crucified, the one who was resurrected, the one who now sits enthroned at the Father's right side, church, is the one who dwells in our hearts. That's Christ. He dwells in our hearts.

That is a picture of love. I know it's a picture of love because I know I don't deserve that. I don't deserve for Christ to dwell in my heart. I am keenly aware that my heart is not a suitable home for a king. I know how much work needs to be done to my heart. There are rooms of my heart, chambers of my heart that are so wicked, but through faith, Christ has stepped into that space and is repairing what is broken.

D.A. Carson says it this way. "When Christ by his Spirit takes up residence within us, he finds the moral equivalent of mounds of trash, black and silver wallpaper, and a leaking roof." I love that. "He sets about turning this residence into a place appropriate for him, a home in which he is comfortable. There will be a lot of cleaning to do, quite a few repairs, and some much-needed expansion. But his aim is clear: he wants to take up residence in our hearts, as we exercise faith in him." I love that quote.

This is Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is the vision of God's love for us in saving us through the love of Jesus. As Christ dwells and repairs and cleans and expands our hearts, he will fill our lives with a deeper love for God and a love for others that propels us into a vibrant prayer life. It doesn't stop there.

2. *God's love established.* Verse 17. Look at it with me again. "**...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love...**" *Rooted* and *grounded* are two illustrative words Paul uses to show us the type of love we are to be established in both from God and toward one another. These two words mean something similar, actually in two separate fields of life. *Rooted* carries a meaning of gardening. Paul is saying we must be rooted in love.

I'm no horticultural genius by any means, but I do know a plant can't thrive and live if it's rooted in bad soil, if it's planted in bad soil. I've killed many a shrub rather quickly by putting it in the wrong soil. This is what Paul is saying. Paul is saying in this analogy that the soil we are to be rooted and planted in is God's love, not our own understanding, not our own ways, not our own efforts. That's bad soil. It will dry up and fade. Our life will fade away if we are not rooted in God's loving soil. We're to be rooted.

Paul also uses the word *grounded*. *Rooted* is a gardening term; *grounded* is more of an architectural term. It has that idea. It's that kind of illustration. This is an analogy of a building structure. Like buildings, the structure of our lives must have a solid, steady foundation of God's love. We know this to be true when we read Jesus' words in Matthew 7 with the wise and foolish builders, right?

What did the foolish man build his house on? Sand. Yeah. What did the wise man build his house upon? The rock. A foundation. A steady, secure, unshakable foundation. Church, we must be established in that unshakable love of God, in that rooted love of God, in that grounded love because if we aren't, our prayer life won't stand a chance against the heat of day or the storms of life.

3. *God's love examined.* Verse 18. Paul prays that the saints would examine and measure just how great God's love is for them. He says that you "**...may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**" Paul gives us four terms we use in everyday life to help us try and wrap our tiny minds around just how massive God's love for us is: *breadth* or *width*, *length*, *height*, *depth*.

A. *Breadth.* Church, God's love is broader than the ocean. It's wider than any planet. It's more extensive than the entire universe itself. When God demonstrated his love by becoming man and living on earth, that was no narrow love. When he loved the woman who was caught in adultery,

when he loved little old Zacchaeus, when he loved back-stabbing Judas... His love is broad enough to cover everyone, no matter where they are or who they are.

B. *Length*. How long is God's love for you? Have you ever thought about that? When does his love for you run out? When does it end? When did it begin? Was it when you first believed that he loved you? Was it when he first created you that he loved you? Was it when he created the world? No. God's love has no start date.

That's mind-blowing if you really think about it, because everything you and I know and everything we could study has a beginning point, has that starting line, but not God's love. It has always existed. Charles Spurgeon says this about the length of God's love for you. "It's so long that your old age cannot wear it out, so long your continual tribulation cannot exhaust it, your successive temptations shall not drain it dry..." Praise the Lord. "...like eternity itself it knows no bounds."

C. *Height*. How high does his love reach? As high as the heavens? Yes. As God sits above the entire universe, so sits his love for you.

D. *Depth*. How deep does the love of God run for you? Deep enough for his Son to be crushed by the weight of all the world's sin? Deep enough to send Jesus to the darkness of the grave? Yes, that deep.

A pastor friend of mine summed up these four words beautifully. He said this about God's love. "It's a love that is broad enough to embrace the whole world, long enough to last forever, high enough to take sinners to heaven, and deep enough to take Christ to the very depths to reach the lowest sinner." Church, that is how we are to measure and examine God's love for us.

When we do that, our lives will be filled with all the fullness of God. God's love envisioned, established, and examined. These eternal reminders will stir within us a compassionate, authentic prayer life that is void of any boredom. I don't know how you can have a boring prayer life if you are gripped by this kind of love, that Christ dwells in our hearts, that we're rooted and grounded in unshakable love, and that love is wider and longer and higher and deeper than anything we could possibly imagine.

God's love envisioned. God's love established. God's love examined. That's what's before us. Understanding a realization, a gripping of that love will drive away the boredom of our prayer life.

Then Paul gets to his crescendo, his doxology really of the first three chapters of Ephesians but of this text too. Let's marvel together at verses 20 and 21. **"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."**

These are two of my favorite verses in all of Scripture, and I love what Paul is saying here. He says God is able to do everything we ask. If Paul had stopped right there, that would have been pretty remarkable, right? God is powerful enough to do anything we ask. That makes God the winner. It does. If my kids come to me and ask me to fix one of their toys, I might be able to put a Band-Aid on the toy and be their hero for a day, but there is going to come a day where they're going to ask me to fix something or do something that I'm not going to know how to do. I'm going to let them down.

That's not the case with God. That's not his MO. He is wise enough and powerful enough and strong enough to do anything we ask of him. Paul takes it a step further. Not only is God able to do what we ask, but he's able to do the things we even think. We all have these desires, these longings, these yearnings that either we don't ask for or don't know how to ask for. Paul is saying that God is able to do those things. That's crazy.

Even if you're Mr. Fix-it, and you can do everything in the world, you still can't read minds. This is our God. He's able to do everything we ask or think, and as amazing as that is, this is what grips me. Every time I read this text, here's what gets me every single time. God is not just able to do what we ask or think; he's able to do far more abundantly than what we ask or think. Another way of saying that is he is able to do exceedingly abundantly more.

That's kind of weird grammatically, right? If you were to say to your girl, "Hey baby, I love you." She says, "I love you more." You would say, "I love you exceedingly abundantly more." You're going to get a weird look from her probably. Paul does this. Sometimes he'll step outside the fence line of traditional grammar to make a point. It's a massive point he really wants to drive into the hearts of his readers.

He comes up with these mega-superlatives. "Exceedingly abundantly more." He wants us to understand that far above anything we could imagine, anything we can think, anything we can ask, God is able to do it. If that doesn't stir within us a boldness to approach his throne, then I don't know what will. There is nothing you can think or imagine or ask that God isn't able to accomplish. That should fire us up, church. That should fire us up.

I mentioned that I love this verse here. My wife Becky and I have been married for about eight and a half years. Some of you know her. She sings up here often. She's actually in this service. About a month before our marriage, she was in a car wreck driving down 35. It wasn't a seemingly bad wreck. She was sore. Her shoulder was sore. She walked away from the accident actually.

She went to the doctor. The doctor just said, "It's whiplash," gave her some pain meds, and said, "Go on your way." We got married and went on our honeymoon and came back from our honeymoon, but the pain was still there. She still was sore in her shoulder. Actually, the pain started to spread to her arm. She went back to the doctor and said, "Hey, I'm still hurting. Is it sprained? Is something going on?" The doctor said, "No, everything is fine." Some more pain meds.

Then she went to the chiropractor. She said, "Maybe I just need to get adjusted. Maybe something is just off." She went and got adjusted, and the pain was still there, and the pain increased, and the pain increased more, and the pain increased more. Then burning was introduced. It was starting to happen all day long, every single day and throughout the night. It got the point where she had to walk with her arm up close to her chest because if someone bumped into it, it hurt all the more.

Through tears and frustration and disparity, we finally got referred to a pain specialist, and he diagnosed her with a disease called RSD, reflex sympathetic dystrophy. If you don't have RSD or don't know someone who has it, chances are you've never heard of it. It's an extremely rare disease. Basically, RSD is this. During the healing process of something... Either a sprained ankle or a surgery, in my wife's case, a car wreck with whiplash. During the healing process, the brain stops recognizing that part of the body as existing and stops sending signal to it.

In the accident, as her body was trying to heal from the whiplash, the brain said, "Actually, your shoulder, your arm is no longer existing. It's dead. It's cut off." It stopped sending signal to the arm. It's a horrible disease, horrible. It's excruciatingly painful. On the pain scale, I think childbirth is somewhere in the upper 30s. This is upper 40s. They say it's like having your finger amputated over and over and over and over again. Nonstop chronic pain, 24/7.

They actually call it the suicide disease. People have it, and because it's so difficult to diagnose, they think, "I don't know what's going on. At least if I take my life, I won't be in any more pain." It's a horrible disease. She had this disease, and we prayed and asked the Lord to take it away. We did.

We prayed and asked the Lord to heal her from it, had friends asking the Lord to heal her from it. This was our first year of marriage.

Let me just tell you, you don't worry about the toilet seat being left up and the toothbrush being left out when you can't hug your wife. Those things are just not in our history. We prayed and asked and researched, and we found out there is no real sure cure for this. At least there wasn't at that point. I don't know if there is today. We found a pain management solution called a spinal cord stimulator. She had this device about the size of an Oreo implanted into her hip underneath her muscle with leads that ran up her spine that sent current to mask the pain in her body.

It's amazing technology. There are remote controls. You have to charge this thing once every month. She's kind of a bionic woman. It's kind of awesome, but it masks the pain. It wasn't very comfortable, but at least it was not painful. She described it as when your hand wakes up from falling asleep, that tingling feeling, that feeling we have. She said that's what I felt like. One of the side effects was that she couldn't feel temperature on her arm.

We would pray, but we noticed that once the pain was more manageable, our prayers kind of shifted a little bit. We prayed maybe a little less, were maybe a little more generic in our prayers. Through the birth of our son Carson, it spread to her other arm. She pulled out her remote control and spread the current to cover the other side of her body. Awesome. Then through the birth of our daughter, it spread to her legs. After the birth of our daughter, this numbness, this tingling, this whatever it is was throughout her entire body.

She was resolved to just live with the pain management. We were. Again, it wasn't as bad as the pain itself. It was manageable. It was livable. She thought the Lord would heal her. I thought the Lord would heal her in heaven. We had friends pray for us year after year, five years of this, five years of us asking the Lord, five years of getting used to the adjustments. Then on Memorial Day weekend of 2011, we were hanging out in our home. We had some friends over. Isaac Wimberley and his wife Dru were there and some other friends.

One of the ladies that was there just asked my wife, "Hey, can I pray for you? Can I pray that the Lord would heal you?" My wife said, "Sure, yeah. You can pray." This woman started praying, and she started praying more and more and more. Then she stopped and asked, "Is anything different?" My wife said, "No, everything is still the same." Then this woman prayed something like this. "God, I

know you're able. Would you show us that you're doing something?" Then my wife just prayed Mark 9:24. "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

In that moment, that instant, her stimulator shut off. It just turned off. It doesn't do that. Even if she forgets to charge (which she didn't), it's a slow fade off with the pain immediately coming back, but it just shut off, and she got full feeling back in her arms and her legs. Dru Wimberley grabbed a piece of ice and brought it for my wife to hold, and she dropped it. She said, "It's too cold. I can't take it." On May 29, 2011, the Lord healed my wife in a moment.

We worshipped, and we rejoiced, and we sang songs until 2:00 a.m. that morning. Sorry, neighbors. It's a night I will never forget. I won't forget it for several reasons. Obviously because the Lord healed my wife that night of something we were asking for for five years, but also because the Lord really convicted me that night. If I'm honest with you, whenever I would pray for the Lord to heal her, I don't know that I truly believed he would do it.

I know that may sound silly. I believed he could heal her. He is strong enough. He is powerful enough. I see in Scripture all these miracles he does. When it came down to it, I just didn't expect that he would be willing to do so. My prayers had become just talking to a God who I thought was distant from our situation, and I forgot about his incredible love for my wife and me. This woman prayed with expectancy. She believed what she was praying, and she was determined to not stop praying until he moved.

I don't know why the Lord chose to answer the prayers on that particular night over any other night, but what I do know is that night, the Lord reminded me of his love for me and taught me to pray with expectancy and not to just pray but to keep praying and not to just keep praying but to keep asking, to keep begging, to keep believing, to keep expecting that he is far more abundantly able to do it. Church, I want that for us. I do.

I want us to not stop praying, to not stop asking, to not stop believing that when we pray, we keep praying. The Puritans used to say, "Pray until you pray." D.A. Carson once again is helpful with his thoughts on this phrase. "Pray until you pray. That is Puritan advice. It does not simply mean that persistence should mark much of our praying—though admittedly that is a point the Scriptures repeatedly make.

What they meant is that Christians should pray long enough and honestly enough, at a single session, to get past the feeling of formalism and unreality that attends not a little praying. We are especially prone to such feelings when we pray for only a few minutes, rushing to be done with a mere duty. If we 'pray until we pray,' eventually we come to delight in God's presence, to rest in his love, to cherish his will.

Such advice is not to become an excuse for a new legalism; there are startling examples of very short, rapid prayers in the Bible (e.g., Nehemiah 2:4). But in the Western world we urgently need this advice..." Listen. "...for many of us in our praying are like nasty little boys who ring front door bells and run away before anyone answers."

I love that. That's such a good word. We can't just offer up words to God and then move on before he answers. We must be a people who are marked by a deep sense of conviction and belief that our God loves us. Not only does he love us; he hears us. Not only does he hear us; he answers us. I want us to be a people who pray until we pray.

I think it starts small. I think it starts with us begging the Lord to take away our headaches, our colds, to help us find our keys when we lose them, that he would keep us safe as we drive to work. Does that make sense? If we aren't asking him in the small, everyday things, there is no way, absolutely no way that we're going to believe he's able to answer the big things we're asking him for. There's no way.

Take the three points we're praying for in this month alone. The sanctity of human life. That's a big thing, a big thing. Worldwide, there are 1.2 million lives eliminated through abortion every single year. That's a big thing. Do we really believe God is strong enough and able and willing to shut down every abortion clinic in the world? When we pray those things, are we truly believing in faith that he's able? Are we praying for it and praying for it and praying for it?

Racism. That's a huge issue, right? Just look at the news. All of the riots, all of the killings around the world that are racially motivated. Do we really believe that our God loves us and loves the world so much that he has a plan for unity and peace for us? Do we believe that? Are we praying from that position? Then take the nations. Seven billion people live on this planet, about two billion Christians, which means there are five billion men, women, and children who do not know the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do we believe the gospel is strong enough, that he is strong enough to save? Are we praying for that? Are we believing when we pray for revival? Do we really long for that? Do we really ask for that? These are massive things we're asking the Lord for, and they're too big for us to pray about without us expecting and believing God to be able to heal and to save and to set free and to fix. We're only a few days into the new year, which means we have an opportunity this year to grow as individuals and as a campus into becoming a people of prayer.

More than you're resolved to get swoll in the gym this year, my earnest hope and plea for you is that you would grow exponentially in your prayer life and that we would mature as a church in kneeling prayer. Most great movements in history got their start by a small group of people who gathered together and got on their knees and sought the Lord. I want that for us. I do, not so we get any attention from the world, not so we would be famous, not so we have anything we ourselves can boast in, but because his name is great.

This love to be experienced and established and envisioned and examined is too great a love for us not to share with the world. Next Sunday night, as Jamin said, we will gather in this room for elder-led prayer at 5:00 p.m. My hope is that this place would be packed with men and women who are committed to driving away the boredom in their prayer life by grasping the great love of the Father, that we would be a people who pray until we pray.

Sometimes that means we just clear our schedules and spend hours praying. It may take hours. It may take a while for us to move from just the generic, flat-line talk time to a deep-seated, compassionate, authentic communion with our King. We believe he is able to do exceedingly abundantly more. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I just confess my own sin in not believing you enough and not trusting you when I ask you for things and for giving up too quickly to move on to whatever is next in my day. Father, I pray that you would bring revival to my heart, that you would awaken my soul this year to a greater sense of your nearness and presence in my life, to a greater understanding of your love for me, that I would be a man who prays until he prays, that my wife would be a woman who prays until she prays, that we as a church would be a people who pray until we pray.

Father, I thank you for loving me, not just loving the world but specifically for loving me and calling me your own. Jesus, thank you for dwelling in my heart. God, I ask that you would sweep through

our body here, wherever we find ourselves today in this room. If we feel near to you, would you embolden us all the more?

If we feel distant, would you bring us near that we would know, that we would be able to have the strength to comprehend with all the saints the breadth and length and height and depth of your love for us and that our lives may be full with the fullness of you? Jesus, we love you. We thank you for the cross. We boast in the cross this morning. Amen.

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