



2020 Week of Prayer

April 5-12, 2020

AFFIRMATION: PRAISING THE HANDIWORK OF GOD

“The best affirmation is rooted not only in the character of God, but in the gospel. Which means that every glimmer of good in the life of God’s children is blood-bought. Jesus died to make it possible.”

(John Piper, p. 8, forward of [Practicing Affirmation](#))

It is no secret that from time-to-time we all experience a certain spiritual coldness or hardness toward the things of God. Sins of anger, bitterness, lust, lack of forgiveness, deceit and rebellion lie sometimes hidden just beneath the surface. Perhaps more prevalent and just as deadly is the reality of spiritual lethargy that leads us in our indifference towards the majesty and glory of God. This seen clearly in our passivity toward prayer. Perhaps the recent change of pace that we've all experienced has helped to heighten our sensitivity to our prayerlessness in general. Indeed, prayerlessness is sinfulness.

For over 25 years I have seen both the roots and fruits of such spiritual indifference, especially in my own life. Yet I've also witnessed the tremendous outpouring of blessing in times of refreshing revival. Oh, how I long for those times in my life and for our church. Perhaps you've heard the following account that brilliantly

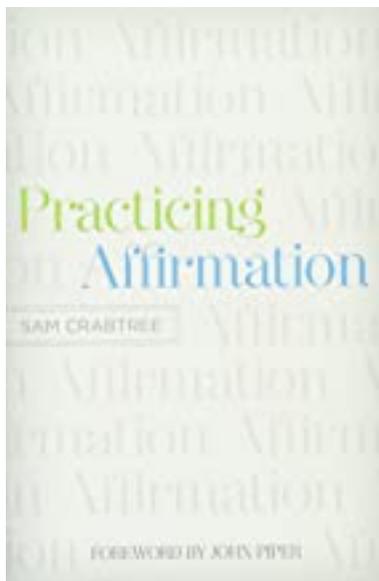
Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famed C.H. Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the doors to open, the students were greeted by a man who asked, "Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?" They were not particularly interested, for it was a hot day in July. But they didn't want to offend the stranger, so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway, a door was quietly opened, and their guide whispered, "This is our heating plant." Surprised, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly closing the door, the gentleman then introduced himself. It was none other than Charles Spurgeon (Tim Challies, at <https://www.challies.com/articles/how-do-you-do-a-week-of-prayer/> on 03/04/20).

Each year, our Week of Prayer is intended to bring us to a greater love for God Himself. It's during this time that we are praying that we might be enthralled with Him and that we would treasure Him as the Greatest Treasure and most worthwhile Pursuit. Our motivation for prayer is always the glory of God. Prayer is not our way of earning points with God but rather an expression of our utter dependence on Him for all things.

I hope that you'll not only participate by following the devotional layout of this guide but that you'll use this time to pursue knowing and loving Him. Maybe you'll set time aside for a personal fast as you seek the Lord in prayer.

-Pastor Joe Fauth

This year we will be using Sam Crabtree's book Practicing Affirmation: God-Centered Praise of Those Who are Not God to help to guide our thinking and praying as we seek the joy of communion with the Lord together.



"The point of being created in the image of God is that human beings are destined to display God. That's what images do. And the point of being redeemed by Jesus, and renewed after the image of the Creator, is to recover this destiny. But why? Surely not so that God's handiwork in His people would go unnoticed or praised. If God is sovereign, and every good gift is from above, then not praising the good in others is a kind of sacrilege and soul-sickness" (John Piper, forward to Practicing Affirmation, p. 7).

Sunday, April 5

“I Give Thanks Always For You”

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all” (Phil. 1:3-4, NASB).

Reading

Scripture Reading: Philippians 1

Practicing Affirmation: pp. 7-33; Forward and Chapter 1- “God-centered Affirmation of Those Who Are Not God”

Reflection

What was the cause of Paul’s joy-filled thankfulness for the church at Philippi?

How did the confidence Paul mentioned in 1:6 contribute to his thankfulness?

Crabtree writes, “Good affirmations are God-centered, pointing to the image of God in a person. The only commendable attributes in people were given to them. Everything is from God, through God, and to God so that in all things—including the commendable qualities in people—he might get the glory...” (Crabtree, p. 18).

List the things that Paul saw as commendable in the Philippians (from chapter 1):

As you read this text, do certain friends of yours come to you mind? Who?

Praying

One way to state the purpose of life is this: Christlikeness (Rom. 8:28-29). The best affirmations acknowledge and encourage progress in the direction that fulfills that very purpose for living on this earth... (Crabtree. p. 31).

What things in your life are least Christ-like? List those things here and begin to thank God that you are NOT condemned if you are in Christ. Ask God to begin the work of spiritual change this week.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the pattern of life that is to be avoided in 3:18-21?

Crabtree’s warning against flattery is particularly important in a book like this.

Godly affirmation approves of Christlikeness and disapproves of anything contrary, whereas the flatterer approved anything—Christlike or not—that may achieve the desired response (Crabtree, p. 108).

Which mistakes that Crabtree listed are particularly instructive for you?

Praying

In our praying today, let us beg God that He would draw us to treasure Christ as our supreme hope. Review your own testimony as Paul does in the first part of Philippians 3. Take the following four points that unfold in Philippians 3 as a guideline for your prayer today.

- Trusting in the righteousness of Christ alone
- Treasuring of Christ as the greatest joy
- Seeking to know Christ at the expense of all else
- Looking for and longing for the return of Christ

Thursday, April 9

Rejoice in the Lord

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4, NASB).

Reading

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4

Practicing Affirmation: pp.133-141; Chapter 7 “Sightings of Jesus ”

Reflection

How does Crabtree define a Christlike characteristic? (p. 135)

It is important to remember that in those who love him, God is working all events and circumstances toward on things: Christlikeness. ... So, we should be on the lookout for such conforming work underway in all circumstances (Crabtree, p. 136).

Compare Philippians 4:4 and 4:10, what do you notice about those verses? How were the Philippians directly responsible for Paul’s rejoicing in the Lord?

Praying

What issues of sin, spiritual apathy, wrong thinking, or coldness have been revealed to you this week? List them here and seek a repentant, humble, and pliable heart in dealing with those issues. Is there a godly friend that you can share these with and pray together about them?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Acts 10:24-33

1 Corinthians 1:4

1 Thess. 4:18

Praying

John Piper provides what he calls the “I.O.U.S” prayer (When I Don’t Desire God . pp. 150-153), make this the theme of your prayer time today.

Almost every day I pray early in the morning that God would give me desires for him and his Word, because the desires I ought to have are absent or weak. In fact, I follow the acronym myself that I have given to many people to help them fight for joy. The acronym is I O U S. It is very limited and focused. It’s not all we should pray for. But this book (and most of my life) is about the fight for joy. And that is what I O U S focuses on. Here’s the way I pray over the Word in my fight for joy.

I—(Incline!) The first thing my soul needs is an *inclination toward God* and his Word. Without that, nothing else will happen of any value in my life. I must *want* to know God and read his Word and draw near to him. Where does that “want to” come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 119:36 teaches us to pray, “*Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!*” Very simply we ask God to take our hearts, which are more inclined to breakfast and the newspaper, and change that inclination. We are asking that God create desires that are not there.

O—(Open!) Next I need to have *the eyes of my heart opened* so that when my inclination leads me to the Word, I see what is really there, and not just my own ideas. Who opens the eyes of the heart? God does. So Psalm 119:18 teaches us to pray, “*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*” So many times we read the Bible and see nothing wonderful. Its reading does not produce joy. So what can we do? We can cry to God: “Open the eyes of my heart, O Lord, to see what it says about you as *wonderful.*”

U—(Unite!) Then I am concerned that my heart is badly fragmented. Parts of it are inclined, and parts of it are not. Parts see wonder, and parts say, “That’s not so wonderful.” What I long for is a united heart where all the parts say a joyful *Yes!* to what God reveals in his Word. Where does that wholeness and unity come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 86:11 teaches us to pray, “Unite my heart to fear your name.” Don’t stumble over the word *fear* when you thought we were seeking *joy*. The fear of the Lord is a joyful experience when you renounce all sin. A thunderstorm can be a

trembling joy when you know you can't be destroyed by lightning. "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to . . . the prayer of your servants who *delight to fear your name*" (Neh. 1:11). "His *delight* shall be in the *fear of the LORD*" (Isa. 11:3). Therefore pray that God would *unite* your heart to joyfully fear the Lord.

S—(Satisfy!) What I really want from all this engagement with the Word of God and the work of his Spirit in answer to my prayers is *for my heart to be satisfied with God* and not with the world. Where does that satisfaction come from? It comes from God. So Psalm 90:14 teaches us to pray, "*Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*"

I O U S ADMITS GOD IS OUR ONLY HOPE FOR JOY

This acronym has served me well for years. This is frontline warfare for me. I know the agonizing experience of Robert Robinson's hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." What makes this hymn so relevant for me is that it acknowledges God's absolute right to bind my heart to himself, and then it turns that right into a prayer.

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.⁸

"Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee." A "fetter" is a chain. I pray this—oh, how I pray this with all my wandering heart—"Grant me, O God, to see the surpassing value of your goodness so that it binds me, as with a chain, to you." It's the same prayer that George Croly (1780-1860) prayed in his well-known hymn, "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart."

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart; Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move; Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art, And make me love Thee as I ought to love.⁹

I have heard people object to that last line. They say love should be free, not forced. True. But there are two kinds of forcing. One is against our will. The other is by changing our will. The first results in coerced action. The second results in free action. My own suspicion is that those who object to this prayer have never seriously confronted their own hardness of heart. They have not taken seriously enough the biblical diagnosis of our condition found in the word *cannot* in Romans 8:7-8: "The mind that is set on the flesh . . . does not submit to God's law; indeed, it *can-not*. Those who are in the flesh *cannot* please God." And I wonder, have those who object to this hymn ever come to terms with why the psalmist prays so urgently and repeatedly, "Incline my heart" (Ps. 119: 36, 112; 141:4)? For my part, the only hope I have to love God as I ought is that he would overcome all my disinclination and bind my heart to himself in love. That is the grace I must have to be a Christian and to live in joy. Hence I pray to God repeatedly: Incline my heart! Open the eyes of my heart! Unite my heart! Satisfy my heart! Prayer is, therefore, not only the measure of our hearts, revealing what we really desire; it is also the indispensable remedy for our hearts when we do not desire God the way we ought.

What bold actions have you been called to this week?

Praying

What does God desire from our church? What biblically-motivated, God-centered dreams do you have for our church family? Maybe you'd like to see our Missions Budget doubled this year. Perhaps you are longing for a movement of revival in our church. Or maybe you'd love to see 10 new families come to faith in Christ this year. Whatever it might be, would you record those things here? Write them down and commit to praying for these things this year...and let's be ready to share how the Lord moves in our midst!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Church Ministries

- C2C Youth Group
- Kids Treasuring Christ (KTC)
- Hospitality Team
- Building Team
- Finance Team
- Council of Elders
- Body Builders
- Counseling/Discipleship
- Mom's In Prayer
- Every Man a Warrior
- CBC Missions Team

Church Missions and Missionaries

- Ron and Barb Chivers
- Dave and Joyce Hilt
- York Rescue Mission/LifePath
- Human Life Services
- Doug and Faith Clark
- Misiker and Meaza Kebede, Spread of Grace Ministries
- Mike and Kristina Miosi, Spread of Grace Ministries
- Wes and Lori Tabor
- Rhys and Becky John
- John and Ronda Lennon
- Luann and Suzanne Goosen
- Tim and Sue Shirey
- Jack Douglas
- Paul and Miriam Beliasov, York County Prison
- Mark and Charity Borisuk

Additional Burdens

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____