ANATOMY OF A POWER PRAYER

Thrive
Daniel 9 // Craig Smith
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Craig // Well, good morning. If you are wondering why our stage is amped up a little bit, it's because this week was sports camp for our kids. We had over 800 kids here, 200 volunteers, the place was hopping all week, and it was awesome. Hang on a second, we are just getting started. If you really want to clap, here's what you want to clap for. We had 87 kids make first-time decisions to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. That's something to clap about, right? That is awesome. So excited to be part of a church where God is moving in that way.

And I'm so excited that you are here today for our continuing study through the Book of Daniel. Why don't you go ahead and grab your Bible and make your way to Daniel 9. Let me say this while you are making your way there, I have been really excited about today's message. For the last couple of weeks, we have been in the middle of apocalyptic prophecy, which as a pastor, is a little bit more challenging, figuring how to bring that home in a pastoral way that people can actually grab a hold of and do something with. This week, though, my life got a lot easier because Daniel 9 is a super practical chapter, and it's super practical about something I think a lot of Christian struggle with, and that is -- prayer.

If you have ever felt like you struggle to pray consistently or effectively, which you will find is really encouraging, because Daniel 9 really does teach us how to pray consistently and effectively, so if that's something you have longed for, you are going to get really practical tracks to run on today, and I think you will be really glad you are with us today. Now, we are going to do something a little bit different today. That is, we are not going to start in the beginning of the chapter. We are going to start about 2/3 of the way through. The reason for that is because this chapter is broken into two parts. There is a prayer, and then there's a prophecy.

The prophecy, I kind of want to get through as quickly as possible. Is that okay? Yeah? Here's the reason I want to do that. Two-thirds of the chapter is focused on the prayer which says to me that needs to be where our primary attention is. And the reality too is that the prophecy was the answer to this prayer. And so all that says to me that the prayer needs to be where we spend most of our time, but I genuinely believe what 2 Timothy 3:16 says, which is that all scripture is God-breathed, and it's useful for teaching, rebuking and training and righteousness, so we are not going to skip the prophecy, but we are going to move pretty quickly through it so that we can concentrate on that prayer, so if you want to join me we'll actually be in Daniel 9:20 to get started where we see this: While I was speaking and praying – this is Daniel – while I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill – while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.

And the main thing you want to pay attention to here is how many times we have the reference to the speed with which God answered this prayer. God answered this prayer really quickly. Daniel says, while I was speaking and praying. While I was speaking and praying, God was already moving. And then he says, while I was still in prayer, the idea is that Daniel hasn't even gotten it out, and God's already begun to answer. He's already sent Gabriel, and then Gabriel came to him in swift flight. The point is that Gabriel's booking it. Gabriel – he appears to Daniel as a man, but he's an angel – so Gabriel's booking it. It's like he was – he came like a -- like honestly, the phrase that I want to use is he came like a bat out of hell, but that's so inappropriate for this context. So it's like the exact opposite of that. He came like an angel out of heaven which sometimes doesn't have the same kind -- but the point is, he's booking it. He's really moving. And so there's this really strong emphasis on the idea that God answered this prayer incredibly quickly.

As we continue on, we see the same thing happening. Verse 22 says that Gabriel instructed me, and he said to me, Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision.

He says as soon as you began to pray. You get this image that it's almost as though Gabriel is kind of stunned in God's urgency in answering his prayer. It's like Daniel started praying and God was on the edge of His throne and He's like Gabriel, go, go, go! And Gabriel's like, okay, okay, I'm going. It's almost like he's there, and he's almost out of breath, and there is a really strong emphasis on the speed with which God answered that prayer, which sort of begs the question, doesn't it? What was it about this prayer that caused God to answer it so quickly, because I don't know if you have ever been in this place, but I think a lot of us find places in our lives where we feel like, I'm praying and God's not responding very quickly. He's taking an awful lot of time to answer this prayer. Anyone ever felt like that? What if - what if the reason that God responded so quickly to Daniel's prayer, was the way that he prayed?

Wouldn't that be useful to know? That if we could somehow bring our prayers into line with the way that Daniel prayed, if it held up the promise
that perhaps God would respond more powerfully, more quickly. That’s the question we want to ask. What was it about Daniel’s prayer that caused God to answer so quickly? That’s kind of our prize. That’s what our eyes are on today. Before we take a look at his prayer and try to understand the answer to that question, let’s look at the answer. Here’s the answer that Daniel got, verse 24. Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and anoint the Most Holy Place.

Know and understand this, from the time that the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Anointed One, the ruler comes, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two sevens, the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood, war will continue until the end and desolations will have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of the seven, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

Anybody lost at this point? Like when I say, you know, and all God’s people said -- normally you go, amen, right? You read that, and if I said, and all God’s people said, and the answer is probably like, what? What is that? If you are confused by that, don’t worry. Honestly, scholars have been debating the exact meaning of that for about 2,500 years now, literally. Okay, so if you are a little bit confused by it, don’t worry about it. Let me try to boil it down to its essence. What God is basically telling Daniel is this. He’s saying, over a period of 490 years broken down into three stages, the rebellion of Israel will come to an end.

See in the context, what’s happening is that Daniel is experiencing the discipline that’s been brought upon Israel because of the rebellion. They have rebelled against God. They have disobeyed God. They have moved away from His commandments and obedience to His word. They have worshiped false gods, and so they are being disciplined, and God has basically said to Daniel, hey, Daniel, over a period of 490 years broken into three stages, that rebellion is going to come to an end. I say 490 years because in the beginning He says seventy sevens are decreed. Back in the Book of Leviticus, there was a precedence established where the Hebrews often talked about years in the collections of seven.

Kind of based off the week so you know we have seven days in the week, and the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath, it was a rest day. And the Hebrews had in their calendar that every seventh year was a Sabbath year, so they often talked about years in clumps of seven. Seventy sevens in would be seventy times seven which would be 490 years, and God says that, that period is going to be broken into three distinct phases. There’s going to be a period of seven sevens, that’s 49 years. There’s going to be a period of sixty-two sevens. That’s 434 years and then there’s one more seven, okay? Now what happens is that during these stages, significant events take place. Sometimes they are positive. Sometimes they are negative.

On the positive side he says, the city of Jerusalem is going to be rebuilt. He’s probably anticipating the rebuilding of Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. You can read about that in the Old Testament. He says it was going to be during times of trouble. That’s exactly when it was taking place. Sometimes we have positive things. The temple is going to get rebuilt. The Sabbath is going to start up again. And there’s also some negative things that happen in these periods of history. One of which is that somebody is going to come, and he’s going to desecrate the temple again. The sacrifices are going to come to an end. He’s probably anticipating what we have talked about over the last few weeks, the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century.

But the important thing is that what God’s doing here is He’s saying, there’s a countdown clock running. We talked about this a little bit last week. It’s coming to zero. What He says is that at the end of this time, the rebellion of Israel will be at an end. Back at the beginning of this thing He said seventy sevens are decreed to finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring in everlasting righteousness. His point is, this exile is not going to go on forever. Jerusalem is not going to lie destroyed forever. There is a countdown clock running. Really, what He’s doing is reminding Daniel of a truth that we saw last week in Daniel 8, that for God’s people, there is always a countdown clock on our suffering. He’s telling Daniel, hey, the clock is started. I’m watching the clock. It’s ticking down to zero. It’s going to come to an end.

And our job is not necessarily to know when that moment is, but to know that there is a countdown clock, and that we don’t need to watch the clock. We need to watch the one that’s watching the clock. We need to trust in God and live faithfully in the midst of that, knowing that the end is coming. That’s what he’s reminding Daniel of. This is the answer to the prayer that Daniel received. But it’s the prayer itself that I want to spend most of our time on because what seems to have happened is that Daniel prayed, and God was so quick to respond that even the angels can’t believe how quick it was, and so I want to ask that question again.

What was it about that prayer that caused God to answer so quickly? Let’s take a look at the prayer. Why don’t you pull back up to the top of Daniel 9, and let’s see what we can learn about this prayer. I believe what we are going to find here are three building blocks for what I’m going to call “power prayer.”

Power prayer is prayer that God responds to quickly and powerfully. We are going to see three building blocks for that here. Chapter 9:1. In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes [a Mede by descent] who was made ruler over the Babylonian Kingdom – in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the scriptures according to the Word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last
Here's what's happening. Daniel's been reading his Bible. Daniel doesn't have the Bible that we have. He wasn't reading his own stuff, right? So the whole Bible hadn't been completed, but he had some of the scriptures, and one of those was a prophecy that was given to a prophet by the name of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 29:10 is what Daniel was reading. This is what Jeremiah 29:10 says. This is what the Lord says: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.

Now, Daniel would have understood that Jeremiah wrote those words in about 605 B.C., the first year of Darius' reign when Daniel said, I kind of read this. That was about 65 -- 66 years later, so he kind of did the math. God said seventy years back then. It's been 65 or 66 -- we are getting close, and so Daniel began to pray, but what I want to suggest to you is that Daniel's prayer wasn't just motivated by that number. It wasn't just motivated by the 70 years, it was also, and maybe even more importantly motivated, by what he understood about God's character in reading Jeremiah.

What he learned about God's character here when God said I will come to you and fulfill my good promise, he realized two things about God. First off he realized that God is -- good. That's probably not a new revelation to him, but as he read Jeremiah, he remembered. My God is good. He's willing to make sacrifices for His people. He longs for good to be done for His people. He realized that God was good and he realized that God was faithful. Because God said, I'm going to fulfill my promise and Daniel said, that's right. God always fulfills His promises. God never makes promises that He doesn't fulfill, and so He realized that God was good and faithful, and he continued to read on, he realized a couple of other things about God's character. Jeremiah 29:11 says this:

For I know the plans I have for you, declares The Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Now God was speaking these words to a group of people who were in rebellion against Him at that time, but even at the beginning of that period of rebellion God said, I have good plans for you. I have plans to prosper you and not to harm you. As Daniel read those words he realized two new things about God, or at least he was reminded of them, and that is that God is gracious, and that God is -- He's gracious and what? He's forgiving. He's forgiving. No matter how much we sin against Him, God is ready and willing to forgive that sin, to wipe out the debt, the moment that we are willing to repent and return to Him.

He's realized four things about God's nature here. He's realized that God is good. He's realized that God is faithful. He's realized that God is gracious, and he's realized that God is forgiving, so Daniel, chapter 9:3, having learned these things about God's character, verse 3 says this, so, therefore, I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting and in sackcloth and ashes. And those three things, fasting, sackcloth and ashes, those three things are traditional Hebrew ways of demonstrating repentance, of confessing hey, I have done wrong, and I'm sorry for that. I'm turning away from my sin, and I'm turning back to You, and what Daniel began to do is repent. I think on his own behalf, but also on behalf of his people. He began to repent. Why? Was it because of the 70 years? Only partly. It was primarily because of what he realized about God's character, that God is good, and He's gracious, and He's forgiving, and so he began to call upon those things that he knew about God as he repented, and this is the first building block of power prayer.

Power prayer responds to God's perfect character. Power prayer responds to God's perfect character. It's actually the foundation of powerful prayer. Powerful prayer, it understands, and it flows out of, and is rooted in an understanding of who God is. Now, when we understand who God is, there are two natural responses. Number one is to praise God for who He is, and number two, to confess all of the ways that we are not what He is. Those are the two natural responses to God's character, praise or confession, and as we read Daniel's prayer, I want you to notice how often those two responses come up.

Verse 4, I prayed to The Lord my God, and I confessed: Lord, the great and awesome God, praise. Who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, confession. We have done wrong. Confession. We have been wicked and rebelled. Confession. We have turned away from your commands and laws. Confession. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our ancestors and to all of the people of the land -- confession. Lord, You are righteous. Praise. This day, we are covered with shame -- confession. The people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel both near and far, in all of the countries where you have scatter us because of our unfaithfulness to You. Confession. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, lord, confession, because we have sinned against you, confession.

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving -- praise. Even though we had rebelled against Him, we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws He gave us through His servants the prophets. Confession. All Israel has transgressed Your Law and turned away, refusing to obey You. Confession. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against You. Confession. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing us on great disaster. You said the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem.

Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all the disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to Your truth. Confession. The Lord did not hesitate to bring this disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything He does. Praise. Yet, we have not obeyed Him. Confession. Now Lord our God, who brought Your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand -- praise. Who made for Yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned -- confession. We have done wrong. Lord, in keeping with
all Your righteous acts -- praise. Turn away Your anger and Your wrath from Jerusalem, Your city, Your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and Your people an object of scorn to all those around us -- confession.

You see it, right? This prayer is founded upon a response to God's perfect character, and the two responses are praise for who God is and confession for what we are not. It's over and over and over again. That's the first building block of power prayer. Power prayer responds to God's perfect character. Power prayer is rooted in and flows out of a response to God's perfect character, whether that response is praise or confession, power prayer is rooted in that response.

Now you might go, hang on a second, what is the big deal with the praise? Like why is it the powerful prayer, prayer that God answers quickly and powerfully is so steepled in praise? I mean, is it what I learned as a kid that if you really want something out of mom or dad, you have to butter them up first? If you want that boss to give you a raise, you are going to start by saying some nice things, getting them on your side. Is that what's happening? Are we buttering God up? No. Not at all. Here's what's happening. Praising God's perfect character aligns our prayers with God's nature and desires. Make sure you understand this. When we praise God, what happens is, we are beginning to align our prayers with God's nature and desires.

So for instance, maybe you have somebody in your life who's difficult. Anyone have a difficult person in their lives? Don't look around. Maybe it's a bully at school. Maybe it's a teacher at school that's making your life difficult. Maybe it's that neighbor who reports you to the HOA 12 minutes after midnight on the day you didn't take the decorations down, right? Maybe it's that person at work who gossips about you? Maybe it's -- maybe it's the person who works for you that's undermining you with the other employees. I mean, the difficult person. The thing is, like our natural human response is to pray for God, hey God, blast them. I know, don't actually pray that, but that's kind of what we want to pray, right? By the way, if you feel like that, you are in good company. That's how Peter the Apostle prayed at one point.

He had a bad experience with some people in the village, and he had been sharing the good news of Jesus. He went back to Jesus, and he was like, Jesus, can I pray for lightning to come down and consume them? He was like, can I, can I, can I? Can I pray to blast them? So that's a natural human response. We want to pray for God to get rid of them, to fix them right now, right? That's a natural prayer, but if we read scripture, one of the things we begin to learn about God is that God is patient. We when sin, His immediate response is not to blast us, but to be gracious and merciful to us. He's patient to us even when we are acting terribly.

And here's the thing, it's really hard to praise God for being patient with me, and pray for Him to blast somebody else as quickly as possible, and so what happens when we praise God for being patient with me, we begin to go -- God, I really want you to take care of this situation. I want you to fix this situation, but in the meantime, would you make me more patient in dealing with this person? Would you make me more gracious? You see what's happening, as we recognize what God is, our prayers begin to get in line with Him.

And there is just no escaping this fact. The prayers that God is most likely to answer quickly and powerfully are those prayers that are in line with who He is and what He's longing to do. So when we praise God, it brings our prayers into alignment with God's nature and desires, which is why praising God is so important. What about this confession business? That's the other natural response to God's character. You are this, but I'm not. Why is confession important? It's a simple, straightforward fact. It's not a pleasant fact, but it's an undeniable fact from scripture, and it's this. Unconfessed sin hinders our prayers. You hear me? Unconfessed sin, it hinders our prayers. It gets in the way. It blocks the effectiveness of our praying.

According to Psalm 66:18, and this is just one of many scriptures we could go to, the Psalmist says if I had cherished sin in my heart, if I had held on to it, if I had refused to call it what it was which is sin, if I had not confessed it, The Lord would not have what? The Lord would not have listened. Unconfessed sin hinders our prayers. On the other hand, when we confess our sin, we have a God that loves us so much that He sent His son to the cross to pay for our sin. His son died taking our sin upon himself paying the penalty for all of our sin, and then He rose again from the dead three days later, so simply by trusting in what He did on the cross, we can be washed clean, we can be made pure before God. All that stuff that gets in the way of our communication with God can be taken care of. That's how much God loves you. He's done that, and all we have to do to take advantage of it is to call sin what it is, to confess and say I'm sorry.

The problem is when we have unconfessed sin, we are turning away from God, and now our prayers are going this way instead of to the Father. When we say, I have done wrong, and we turn away from it, now we are turning back to the Father, and that has a huge impact on the effectiveness of our prayers. So this is the first building block, it's the foundation of power prayer. It's a response to God's perfect character, whether that is in praise or confession. And it's only after he's established this that Daniel begins to make his request. I want you to pay attention to what he asks for and why he asks for it.

Verse 17, now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of Your servant. For Your sake, Lord, look with favor on Your desolate sanctuary. Notice he says for Your sake, Lord. Not for my sake. Not for my people's sake, for Your sake. Look on Your desolate sanctuary. Not my people's temple. Not my place of worship, but Your -- Your desolate sanctuary. Interesting.

Verse 18, give ear, our God, and hear: Open Your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears Your name. We do not make requests of You.
because we are righteous, but because of Your great mercy. He's praying for the city that bears Your name. Not my city. Not my homeland. Not my people's place, but for the city that bears Your name.

Verse 19, Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act. For Your sake, my God, do not delay because Your city and Your people bear Your name. For Your sake. Not for my same. Not for my people's sake. For Your sake, God, fix this. There is no way to miss it. Daniel is focused on God's glory. Daniel is pursuing God's glory, not his good, not his ideal circumstances. He's pursuing God's glory, and that's the second building block of powerful prayer. Powerful prayer focuses on God's glory. Powerful prayer focuses on God's glory. It pursues God's glory. It seeks God's glory, and I realize there is a natural human tendency at this point to go, that's kind of egotistical of God, right? I mean, you are telling me, Craig, that the kinds of prayers God responds most quickly and powerfully to are the ones that are seeking his glory? Isn't that narcissistic? Isn't that self-centered of God?

Think about this. You are out on the highway in February and a blizzard has rolled in, and it's tough going. The snow is whipping at you. It's hard to see anything. The snow is deep. You are kind of just inching along and all of a sudden you hear that noise coming up behind you. It's a deep, growl of a big engine. There's scraping on the concrete. You look in the rear view mirror and there's a huge snowplow. And it's coming up mind you, and you look in the rear view mirror because it's getting really close, and you may be getting nervous, and you see the guy in the window signaling you to get out of the way and get behind him. Of course your response is who does this guy think he is? Who made him king of the road? He thinks I should get behind him? It's not all about him, right?

But what happens if you actually do it? What happens if you get over, you get behind him, and you let him be the king of the road? Oh, life gets so much easier, doesn't it? Because he is bigger than you. He does need to be the center of attention. He needs to be the center of the road. He needs to be that, and you need to be towing along behind him, and really, that's what's happening when God calls for us to seek His glory. The reality is that He's so much bigger than we are. He's so much more powerful than we are. When we are pursuing our glory, that's like putting a two-year-old in charge of the house finances.

We have no idea what we are doing. We are like, I think it should be this or this or this. Popsicles, we definitely need popsicles. Like that should be at least 30% of the disposable income. Like we don't know how to do that. We are seeking what we think is good for us but the reality is that everything is falling apart around us when we are doing that, but when we put God in the center, when we make God the king of the road, when make Him the king on the throne, and it's all about you, what happens is we take our orbit around Him, and things begin to work out because that's the only way it can ever work.

So the second principle of powerful prayer is that we are focused on God's glory, and as a natural consequence of that, the third building block of power prayer is this, is that power prayer trusts God for our good. Power prayer trusts God for our good. I want you to notice as you read through this, Daniel has prayed for really nothing for himself, and really not even anything for the good of his people. It's all been about God. Now here's the reality, if God is glorified, if the temple is rebuilt, if Jerusalem is rebuilt, if the walls go back up, if the sacrifices begin going, and God is worshiped begin, hey his people enjoy some benefits from that, don't they?

They have their nation back. They have their city back. They have protection back. They have sovereignty in the land. They have all of those good things, but those are a bi-product of God being glorified, and so rather than asking for those things for his people, he pursues, he focuses on God's glory, and he trusts that his good, his people's good will be a natural bi-product of that. That's the third building block of power prayer. Power prayer trusts God for our good. You know, throughout this series, the question we have been asking for each of these chapters in Daniel is what does it mean to thrive in difficult circumstances?

And every week we have tried to boil down that chapter down to a principle that we can go, okay, to thrive as God's people in difficult circumstances, we do this. We understand this. We trust this. We act in this way. And what we see here boils down to, in that same kind of language, this. Daniel began to understand that we thrive when our prayers respond to God's character, focus on God's glory, and trust Him for our good. Because these are the kinds of prayers that God leaps off His throne and goes, go, go, go. Yes, that's what we have been waiting for. Yes, we are going to do that. And when the power of God moves, difficult circumstances part.

When we are behind Him focused on His glory, we begin to experience even in the midst of those difficult circumstances, there's movement. There's momentum. There's hope. There's purpose. There's goodness. We thrive as God's people when our prayers respond to God's perfect character, whether that is through praise or confession, when we are focused on God's glory, and when we trust Him for our good. Let's get super practical, okay? Let's talk about how we can begin to put this into practice, because I find that Christians struggle with prayer. In fact, I think more people struggle with prayer than don't struggle with prayer. And sometimes that can have a lot of guilt associated with it because we feel like, I know I'm supposed to pray, but I don't know that I really understand how to pray or when to pray or what to pray or what to pray for, so there can be insecurity in that. There can be guilt in that. There can be frustration in that.

So I want to get super practical and give you some really clear tracks to run on, to put into practice what Daniel is teaching us here. I'm going to give you five R's. R number one, read scripture. Start by reading scripture. That's what Daniel did. The reason we read scripture is because that's where we get a glimpse of God's character. A great way to do this, honestly is to read a Psalm before you pray. Psalms tend to be pretty quick, but they are packed full of staples about who God is, about God's perfect character. So that's step one, read scripture. Understand who God is. Step
two is to recognize what it says about God's character. You read a Psalm and you go, oh, this is telling me God is this, this and this.

One of the things I see consistently in the Psalms, for example, is I see God cares deeply about the fatherless. God cares deeply about the lost, the marginalized, the disenfranchised. I see it over and over and over again. I read it, now I recognize, this is who God is. Step number three is to respond to those recognitions, to respond to His character, as we have understood it. So I praise God. I say to Him for instance when I'm reading that God is the Father to the fatherless, I say God thank you for that. I praise You because You are so gracious and kind because I wouldn't be in a relationship with You if You hadn't sent Your son for me, if You hadn't taken the initiative, if You hadn't pursued me. I thank You for that. Then I confess. God, I'm not as concerned about the lost as I should be. The Church in America is not as concerned about the lost as we should be.

I understand, Lord, that You are a seeker of the lost, and You built the church so that we could shine the light of the Gospel to the world, and yet often times, we become so self-centered and focused on doing church that we forget that the whole reason that we exist is to shine the light of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the lost in the world. Lord, I confess that I and we are not as concerned about the lost as we should be. Forgive us. We are responding to the recognition of what we read. We read, recognize who God is, and then we respond. Then, we begin to request. That's the fourth step.

We request, but we request things that will give God glory. We request things that will give God glory. So when I read in the Psalms all of these truths about God seeking the lost, I find myself going, okay, God, would You give me a greater heart for the lost? Would You give Mission Hills a greater heart for the lost that don't know the Good News of Jesus Christ and don't have the hope that we have, would You give us as a church, would You give the Church in America and around the world the greater hope in You that they can't help but share?

Would You make us compassionate and deeply passionate about the lost, because I know that's going to bring God glory. I know that's going to raise His name higher. I know that's going to extend His kingdom, so I'm praying for that which will bring God glory, and the fifth step is that we rely on God for good. We rely on God for good. We rely on God for good. We -- I think sometimes it's important that we flat out say it. We say, God, I know that You are good, so I trust when I pursue Your glory, You are going to bring good into my life. We acknowledge it. We just say it. There is something powerful in actually saying it. There is a part of our heart that doesn't quite feel it until we declare it. God, I trust You for my good. I'm not going to ask for a whole bunch of things that I think would be great because I trust that what You are going to do for me is way better than I ever imagined.

I could ask for my good in this and this. I have a whole bunch of ideas about what would be great if You do it, but the reality is that what God wants to do in our lives is so much better than what we would ever dream of asking for, and it's only in retrospect that we look back and we are like, yeah, that was way better. And so I rely on God for my good. These are five really easy steps to begin praying the kind of prayer that Daniel prays here, the kind of prayer God leaps off of His throne to answer. The kind of prayer that responds to God's character, that pursues God's glory, that focuses on God's glory, and trusts Him for our good, we read scripture, we recognize what it says about God. We respond to what it says in prayer and confession. We request things that are focused on God's glory and we rely on Him for our good.

Three quick questions to wrestle with as you begin to think about putting this into practice this week and praying more like Daniel. Question number one, what steps will I take to learn about God's character? Because that's the foundation. That's the bedrock of it all. Understanding who God is, is the indispensable foundation of power prayer. How will you begin to learn more about God's character? Maybe just do what I said. You are going to go, I'm going to try that for a week. I'm going to read a Psalm before I begin to pray, and I'm going to model my prayers around what I understand there. Maybe that's what you begin to do. Maybe you need to join a Bible study, join a life group, to begin to on a regular basis to understand more about who God is. Maybe you say, I'm going to come to church more regularly. I'm going to tune in online more regularly, but I need to be in a place where I'm understanding more about who God is so my prayers are founded in that response.

Second question is this, what can I do to develop a focus on God's glory? That's not a natural thing for us. Our natural tendency is to focus on our glory, our good, but we have to get behind the snowplow, right? So how can I begin to develop that greater focus on God's glory, and I would suggest to you that the number one, easiest, most powerful thing you can do to focus more on God's glory is to begin serving others, to do something that takes your eyes off of yourself and put it on others.

How are you going to learn more about God's character? Second question is this, what can I do to develop a focus on God's glory? That's not a natural thing for us. Our natural tendency is to focus on our glory, our good, but we have to get behind the snowplow, right? So how can I begin to develop that greater focus on God's glory, and I would suggest to you that the number one, easiest, most powerful thing you can do to focus more on God's glory is to begin serving others, to do something that takes your eyes off of yourself and put it on others.

We want every single person who attends Mission Hills to be volunteering in some capacity to be serving in some capacity. Our kid's ministry has a great thing going on right now. It's serve two times. Maybe you go down to the kid's wing after the service today and say, tell me about this serve two times thing. Maybe you go to the welcome center and go, I want to get signed up to volunteer in some way. Hook me up. But understand the reason we encourage volunteering is not because we have a bunch of slots to be filled. No, we encourage volunteering because we believe that it's in serving that we really begin to make progress in becoming like Jesus and joining him on mission.

We become more like God, we become focused on what God's all about and we get in line with that through serving, so if you are not serving, I really encourage you to go out to the welcome center and say, hook me up, today. They would love to talk to you about that.

Third question is this, how can I focus on God's glory in the things I'm praying for now? Understand what Daniel teaches us here is not everything that the Bible says about prayer. There is a lot more to be said, but this is foundational teaching on how to have a powerful, consistent prayer life that God responds to. You can still ask for things that are on your heart. That's okay, but my challenge is, is there a way that you can begin to ask
for those things that you are already asking for in a way that focuses on God’s glory, because it might be that, that’s the missing element.

The Book of James says sometimes we don’t have because we ask with wrong motivates, but if we are pursuing God’s glory, we are beginning to get our motivates in line. How can you prayer for those things that are already on your prayer list in a way that focuses on God’s glory. Would you pray with me? Let’s put this into practice right now. God, we have learned that You are a God that is merciful and gracious and forgiving, and we are grateful for that. We praise You for it. We confess that we are not always those things, and that You are willing to sacrifice for us, and yet we are often selfish. We confess those things to You.

Lord, we ask that You change our hearts, that You would lift our eyes from our circumstances and we would put them on You and we would begin to focus on Your glory, and to trust You for our good. Lord, we know that You are so good that nothing we ask for seeking our good will ever hold a candle to the good that You are going to pour into our lives when we are seeking Your glory and trusting you You. We know we can be confident in that because of who You are and what You have done for us. We thank You, and we ask that You would help us take hold of these truths that You we find in your servant Daniel’s prayer, and we would begin to come to You in a similar way. We thank You in Jesus name. Amen.