

## **Devotions for the Week of February 3, 2019**

### **LARGE-PRINT**

**North East United Methodist Church**

**Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

### **Sunday, February 3, 2019**

This week I want to share with you several passages from a book called To Busy Not to Pray by Bill Hybels. I hope the following passages will challenge you this week to go deeper with God, help you understand that the struggles you have with prayer are common, and know that God is waiting to sit and talk with you. God Bless!

#### **From Chapter 2, “God is Willing”**

- *God is busy keeping the cosmos in order. He doesn't want to hear about my little problems.*
- *God would think I was selfish if I prayed for my own needs. If I really love him, I'll put myself in last place.*
- *I know that “the cattle on a thousand hills” belong to God, but that's just a figure of speech. He's not in the business of taking care of me, and I won't ask him to do it.*

*Have you ever made statements like these? If so, you're not alone, but you're tragically mistaken. Those statements are all based on a lie straight from hell – the lie that God doesn't care about his children.*

*All through the Old Testament we see the theme that God is ready and willing to share his resources with his people. In the New Testament this concept is extended and made even more precious. There we learn that we have been adopted as God's sons and daughters and have become heirs, along with Jesus*

*Christ, of his glorious kingdom. Jesus taught us to call God Father, actually, Papa....*

**Read Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:7; and Romans 8:16-17.**

*Hybels goes on to say, “What a fantastic promise! God will cover us with blessings because he has adopted us as his sons and daughters! As God’s children and legal heirs, we own the world and the universe! Should we ever fear to tell our Father our needs!”*

Take time tonight, telling God your needs. Sharing with Him your hurts. Thanking Him for adopting you as His child.

**Monday, February 4, 2019**

**From Chapter 5, “Praying Like Jesus”**

*God doesn’t want us to pile up impressive phrases. He doesn’t want us to use words without thinking about their meaning. He wants us simply to talk to him as to a friend or father – authentically, reverently, personally, earnestly. I heard a man do this once when I least expected it.*

*I attended a conference at which a number of high-level Christian leaders were present. The conversation was intense; I had to strain to keep up with the theological and philosophical issues being discussed. Lunchtime came, and we all gathered at a nearby restaurant, the Hole in the Wall. A seminary professor was asked to pray. As we bowed our heads I thought, “This prayer is going to sound like theology class.”*

*The theologian began to pray. “Father,” he said, “I love being alive today. And I love sitting down with brothers in the Hole in the wall, eating good food and talking about kingdom business. I know you’re at this table, and I’m glad. I want to*

*tell you in front of these brothers that I love you, and I'll do anything for you that you ask me to do."*

*He went on talking like that for another minute or two. When he said, "Amen," I thought, "I have some growing to do." His sincere prayer showed me how often I pray on automatic pilot. But God isn't interested in stock phrases. Psalm 62:8 says, "Pour out your hearts to him." Talk to him. Say, "Lord, this is how I feel today. I've been thinking about this recently. I'm worried about this. I'm depressed about this. I'm happy about this." Talk to the Father sincerely.*

Avoid meaningless, repetitive phrases when you pray. Don't try to pray like your friend, your pastor, another Christian. Pray like you. Pray from the heart and tonight simply talk with God.

## **Tuesday, February 5, 2019**

### **From Chapter 7, "Mountain-Moving Prayer"**

*Read Matthew 21: 21-22. That sounds good, but how can we learn to pray with a faith-filled heart? How can we develop the confidence that removes roadblocks?*

*Faith comes from looking at God, not at the mountain. How do you pray a prayer so filled with faith that it can move a mountain? By shifting the focus from the size of your mountain to the sufficiency of the mountain mover, and by stepping forward in obedience. As you walk with God, your faith will grow, your confidence will increase and your prayer will have power.*

*Read Numbers 13. Ten looked at the size of the mountain and fell back; only two looked at the sufficiency of the mountain*

*mover and wanted to move forward. **Read I Samuel 17.** The warriors look at the size of the mountain, the giant...the adolescent shepherd David looks at the size of God and goes forward.*

*Probably every human being alive is standing in the shadow of at least one mountain that just will not move: a destructive habit, a character flaw, and impossible marriage or work situation, a financial problem, a physical disability. What is your immovable mountain? Have you stood in its shadow for so long that you've grown accustomed to the darkness? Do you end your prayers by thinking, "What's the use?"*

*I challenge you to shift the focus of your prayer. Don't spend a lot of time describing your mountain to the Lord. He knows what it is. Instead, focus your attention on the mountain mover – his glory, power and faithfulness. Then start walking in faith, following his leading, and watch the mountain step aside.*

Tonight, shift the focus of your prayer from the mountain to the God who can move mountains. Give all to Him and trust Him to carry you.

### **Wednesday, February 6, 2019**

#### **From Chapter 8, "The Hurt of Unanswered Prayer"**

*I couldn't begin to count how many people I've counseled about the mystery – or perhaps more accurately, the agony – of unanswered prayer. And the people who suffer most keenly are those who truly believe that prayer moves mountains.*

*In private counseling sessions with individuals who are troubled because their prayers aren't being answered, I use a little outline I borrowed from a pastor friend of mine:*

*If the request is wrong, God says, “No.”  
 If the timing is wrong, God says, “Slow”  
 If you are wrong, God says, “Grow”  
 But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are  
 right, God says,  
 “Go!”*

*First, before bringing a request to the Lord, it’s a good  
 idea to ask: If God granted this request,*

*Would it bring glory to him?*

*Would it advance his kingdom?*

*Would it help people?*

*Would it help me to grow spiritually?*

*Secondly, If the timing is wrong, God says,  
 “Slow.” ...Sometimes God delays so we can modify our  
 requests...sometimes God delays so that we can develop  
 character...sometimes God has His own reasons...*

*Thirdly, it is possible that something is wrong in our lives,  
 that we have set up some barrier between ourselves and God, or  
 between ourselves and another one of God’s children.*

**Read Isaiah 55:8-9.** Have you been bothered by  
 unanswered prayers? Take a hard look at what you are asking  
 God and at your own life. Do you trust Him? Do you believe  
 you can trust God even if you don’t see immediate results?

Know that He loves you and that His ways are best. Talk  
 to Him tonight.

## **Thursday, February 7, 2019**

### **From Chapter 10, “Cooling Off on Prayer”**

*We can remember to pray the same way we remember anything else that matters to us – by writing prayer into our daily schedule. As we noted in chapter five, Jesus simply assumed that his followers would make time for prayer. If we find we are praying less and less, it may be because we have never made prayer a fixed part of our everyday routine.*

*Choose a time when you are usually undisturbed, when you can shut the world out and tune in to God. At the same time, choose a place that can be your refuge, your sanctuary, while you are sitting in God’s presence.*

*Any place can become a place of prayer. What is important, if we want to remember to pray, is to establish a particular place and a particular time for our meetings with the Lord.*

Have you put a time and place for prayer in your daily schedule? When and where do you pray? Do you need to get up an hour earlier...turn off the television an hour sooner? Ask God to help you make prayer a part of your daily life.

## **Friday, February 8, 2019**

### **From Chapter 11, “Slowing Down to Pray”**

*One day you may have to say, “That’s it! I am not going to go through the motions of being a Christian anymore. I am not going to put my Christian life on autopilot, go through meaningless prayers and page through a Bible that I don’t let saturate my life. I’m not going to play halfway games anymore. I’m going to pay whatever price it takes for an authentic walk with Jesus Christ.”*

*Christians who make that commitment know that time is required. Something good is going to have to give way. Some practical vehicle will have to be employed to get the rpms down from ten thousand to five thousand to five hundred, where they can be at peace with God and be in a condition to hear what the Lord is saying.*

*Nobody ever said that the Christian walk is easy. But is anything in this world of greater or more lasting importance?*

Hybels goes on to suggest journaling as a way to slow down. One might schedule God into your daily appointment calendar like you would any other meeting. Find what works for you but do it! Don't wait any longer. Don't let the world choke out your time with God. Take time with God tonight.

### **Saturday, February 9, 2019**

#### **From Chapter 13, "How to Hear God's Leadings"**

*God's power is available to us when we come to him in solitude, when we learn how to focus and center our hearts and be quiet before him. When we learn the discipline of stillness before God, we find that his leadings come through to us clearly, with little interference.*

*That is why I have made the commitment to spend from half an hour to an hour every single morning in a secluded place with the Lord. I don't do this to earn merit badges from God. I do it because I grew very tired of leading an unexamined life.*

*I used to try to pray and receive God's leadings on the run. But it became obvious to me that the pace of my life outstripped my capacity to analyze it. It exhausted me to be constantly doing and rarely reflecting on what I did. At the end of a day I would wonder if my work had any meaning at all.*

*So I developed my own disciplined approach to stillness before God. It is the only spiritual discipline I have ever really stuck with, and I am not tempted to abandon it because it has made my life so much richer.*

*After I reflect on the previous day and write out my prayers, my spirit is quiet and receptive. That is when I write an L for LISTEN on a piece of paper and circle it. Then I sit quietly and simply say, “Now, Lord, I invited you to speak to me by your Holy Spirit.”*

*The moments with God that follow are the ones that really matter. This is where authentic Christianity comes from. Not from prayers on the run, not at Christian concerts or conferences, not when I’m flying around here and there, even if I’m engaged in ministry.*

*No one can become an authentic Christian on a steady diet of activity. Power comes out of stillness; strength comes out of solitude. Decisions that change the entire course of your life come out of the holy of holies, your times of stillness before God.*

*Oswald Chambers writes, “Get into the habit of saying, ‘Speak, Lord,’ and life will become a romance (1 Samuel 3:9). Every time circumstances press in on you say, ‘Speak, Lord,’ and make time to listen.”*

*Make time this weekend to sit with God, to stop talking, and to simply listen. Ask God to speak and every time your mind wanders, have a scripture that you repeat over and over until your mind focuses back on God, and then, once more pray, “Speak, Lord.”*

**AND DON'T FORGET TO INVITE SOMEONE TO  
CHURCH TOMORROW!!!**