

Learning to Pray with an Old Servant: Success and Prayer

Genesis 24:1-28 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 23 January 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Do you have a favorite story of how one of your family members or close friends met their spouse?

Worship: [Psalm 145](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Genesis 24:1-28](#) (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

As God's children, we cling to His promise made long ago to Joshua: that if we hold fast to God and His word, we will find success wherever we turn. As Christ-followers, we come to realize that the entirety of our hope rests outside of ourselves or our abilities. Christ and the cross alone determine and define our success. As Psalm 118 pleads, "Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success," (v25). We've discussed in previous weeks how prayer interfaces with God's care in our sufferings and taps into the fountain of His forgiveness of our sins. And prayer is also crucial to God's success being made manifest in our lives.

In Genesis 24, we learn of how an unnamed servant of Abraham was sent to find a wife for Isaac. This is a mission to realize God's promise of bringing grace and blessing to the world through Abraham's son. This is more than the desire of an old father to see his son marry before he dies; the success of God's kingdom is at stake. And we can learn how prayer and success are bound together through this story's central characters:

Abraham // Our prayers bring God's success as they tap into the promises of God. In Genesis 24, we get to listen in on Abraham's prayer life as he invites a trusted servant to enter a covenantal ceremony before God. If God will bless the whole world through Isaac, then he will need a wife – not just to bear children, but someone who will embrace God's promises together with him. So, Abraham has his servant pledge to trust God and live out God's promise on his behalf. We see the patriarch's humility and growth as a man of God here; he doesn't know how things will work out. But he will die trusting God to fulfill His covenant. We see in Abraham that it isn't perfect achievement that is needed from us. Living by God's promise is to lean into His person, to experience that God Himself is the fulfillment of our longings. Prayer is what teaches us this new definition of success: that success is leaning into and upon God Himself as the great prize that our souls truly seek (Gen 15:1).

Rebekah // Our prayers bring God's success because they ground us as we give up everything to follow Him. Rebekah shows us what it looks like to jump in – to receive grace and to begin to live by it. She gives up everything in order to follow God's call, because she is seeking to find her story inside God's story. And as she does this, we get to hear the song/prayer that her family blesses her with ([v60](#)). She will leave what she has known and yield control over her life to enter God's story. She embraces the adventure of the Kingdom of God. This is success.

The Old Servant // When seeking God's success, prayer is the real work. By entering into a covenant bond with Abraham, this trusted servant is enabled to set out on an uncertain and challenging journey, which just might cost him his life. He does this because he is willing to embrace his own smallness to amplify the magnificence of God. And when he later overhears the prayers surrounding Rebekah leaving her family, he rejoices and is empowered to get her back to his master, so that God's plan can move forward. He prays and patiently puts his confidence in God. He watches, he waits, he clings to God and His steadfast love. And yet, even as he waits to see God's will played out, the servant rejoices in spontaneous praise and thanks to God ([v26-27](#)). Prayer and Worship are everything to him. And they should be for us as well. For when we pray and worship, we are doing the very acts of Heaven now. We are readying ourselves for what is ahead. As Jonathan Edwards once said, "We are becoming larger vessels to be filled with the oceans of God's love and joy!"

Discussion Questions (You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)

Abraham: Our prayers bring God's success as they tap into the promises of God.

- What have you thought about the idea of "success" and prayer together?
 - For Abraham, what would success look like in this story?
 - Read [Gen 12: 1-3](#) and review God's promises to Abraham. What did God plan for Abraham, and how would that plan have changed if the servant did not successfully complete his mission?

Rebekah: Our prayers bring God's success because they ground us as we give up everything to follow Him.

- What did Rebekah give up in this story?
- How would you describe Rebekah based on what we briefly learn of her in this story?
- Read [Mark 10:17-31](#). What made it so difficult for the young man to follow the Lord?
 - What "treasures" make it difficult for us to give up everything and follow the Lord?

The Old Servant: When seeking God's success, prayer is the real work.

- The servant's prayer is a focal point of this story. What is unique about his prayer?
 - Can you relate to this type of prayer – one where you asked with this kind of specificity? Please share about the experience.
- What stands in the way of our making requests like the servant does or like we read in the Psalms?
 - Is there something on your heart that God is calling you to pray for in this manner?

Prayer

For use in your personal prayer times, or family or group prayer – the Weekly Prayer Guide is linked [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude

In Psalm 123:2 we read, *"Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us."*

We show our regard for others by looking at them when we speak to each other. Psalm 123 suggests the same is true when we talk to God. This is not an occasional glance at God but rather the intense gaze of a servant to the master. When we gaze at God with the eyes of our heart, we avoid focusing on our need, and we move closer to focusing our prayer on Him, the One who deals with our need.

A method for developing "an intense gaze toward God" is to address Him meaningfully and with variety – corresponding and appropriate to our prayers. (For instance, addressing God as *Bread of Life* in prayers of thanksgiving, *Rock* or *Master* in prayers of repentance, or *Helper* in prayers of intercession.) Using scripture as your guide, write some prayers this week addressing and gazing at God in a variety of ways. For more about this read, [Pray With Your Eyes Open, Chapter 2: A Servant's Gaze](#).

If your group wishes to work through the book [Pray With Your Eyes Open](#) by Richard Pratt, along with the discussion guide, you can find the link to purchase [HERE](#).