

I remember Tony Campolo saying that almost from the moment he was born his mother prayed that he would enter the ministry. She prayed this prayer daily. He added, "What choice did I have? How could I have done anything else with my life?" He then challenged all of us to pray for our children and for God's leading in their lives.

It is good to know that there is someone who is praying for us. We got a note from Clem Winbush from the Evergreen office this week: "Dennis, thank you and the folk at FBC-MLT for remembering me in prayer. Each time I see the note in your newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am that you consider me as you pray. Thank you! With gratitude, Clem."

Jesus prayed. In John 17 we have a prayer of Jesus. He began by praying for those who were present with him, those who would hear his prayer. They will soon face the greatest challenge of their lives. Ahead for them was Good Friday and the cross. They will be confronted with betrayal, denial and death. Then will come the news of resurrection. The world they have known will be turned upside-down. Jesus had been trying to prepare them for this moment and he prays that:

They will remember his teachings and his actions.

They will be protected from the evil that would silence them.

They will bring honor to one who has called them - God.

He was sending them out into the world as he was sent to the world (he came willingly). It may be something like sending a child off to college or the military. We hope we have trained them well and that they will find the strength to represent us in good stead.

Jesus then changes the focus of his prayer to us. He prays for those who believe on him because of the messages and actions of these who are his followers. His prayer was that we might become one. He lifts up the example of his relationship with God. "*If you have seen me you have seen God*" (John 14:9). One does not contradict the other. In Jesus we have the mirror image of God. Jesus has demonstrated the true love of God for the world. And now, his prayer is that we might understand that relationship and mimic it in our lives.

Now, we still have a long way to go. We are more divided than we have ever been (maybe). There are more and more divisions, denominations, sects than ever before. Often it is the little things that separate us, things that are not really important. Try repainting the Sanctuary! Not all agree on the color. We have all heard stories of congregations that want to dismiss members who do not agree with them politically. Differences are not tolerated - this is not what Jesus prayed. Not that we all be clones but that we all be one in Christ.

And, he prayed that we would be with him. As he has forgiven us so has God forgiven us. Thus, we should be reminded of the depth of God's love and grace on our lives. We should love because we have been loved and we have discovered the love of God, our Creator.

If Jesus prayed, should we not be a people of prayer? I wonder if we have lost the importance of prayer. If prayer has been regulated to a minor place in our lives - a 911 call when needed. I recall a cartoon from the past. The pastor is on his knees in his office in prayer. The secretary opens the door and the caption reads: "O good, I am glad you're not busy." Prayer may not always be a high priority in our lives. I recall one person noting that as long as schools have tests there will be prayer in schools. If we had taught our children how to pray then it would not matter. No one can take away our right to pray. Maybe they can restrict vocal prayers but not prayer. There was an article on Facebook this week about public prayers and he wondered if they accomplish what people hope they will. The author noted that Jesus calls us to pray in secret, in a private closet, those who pray in public have their reward already, their piety!

Prayer is not an excuse for non-action. “I am praying for you,” is not enough if we can do something about the situation. If we have the ability to change the person’s situation then we are called to do it (James 2:14). When someone responds, “I will pray about it.” It usually means that they are hoping that God will give them a reason to say “no” to the request. That is not what prayer is for.

What if we are the answers to the person’s prayer? What if our action is required? If there is rain and flooding and we have a boat do we go into the chapel to pray or get in the boat and begin rescuing people. There are times when we need to stop praying and get in the act of doing. The AB men have several emergency vehicles that respond to natural disasters around the country. The vehicles are equipped with materials needed to help (chain saws and other such tools). Yes, they pray before heading out but then they head out.

Jesus prayed and then he left the upper room and put his prayer into action. The cross. Prayer was an important part of his life, his connection with God. If he prayed, should we not also pray?

One of my cousins posted this on Facebook this week: “When I say I am praying for you, it does not mean that I am trying to convert you to my religion. It means that I believe in prayer.” It should also mean that we are willing to do what we can to help the situation. We stand in support of you and what you are going through.

We need to teach our children how to pray. I recall one night when I was putting our eldest son to bed - he was around 5 or 6. I was running late and had a meeting to attend but always tried to put him to bed and listened to his prayers. We knelt by his bed and there was silence—in my mind the silence of delaying going to bed. I nudged him to get going. He turned, looked at me and said, “But Daddy, you always are quiet before you pray.” —My pastoral prayers always have a few moments of silence before I start to pray. I waited until he was ready.

I imagine it was a great teaching moment for the disciples when they saw and heard Jesus pray. It is not a magic formula, a 911 number to be used in emergency situations. It is a relationship with one greater than we are and who wants to hear from us. It is a place to find strength and to have our strength renewed. It is one step in the puzzle of faith — it goes hand and hand with action.

Jesus stands as our example. Jesus prayed. Then he put his prayers into action. He did what was necessary to redeem and rescue us. He prayed that we would learn how to be One and then to demonstrate that Oneness to the world. He made us one by his actions.

We discover love by being loved. Mother’s Day is a reminder of the depth of love that is possible. The depth of love one can have for another. May others discover that love because we pray and because we then go out and put those prayers into action in the name of the one who prayed for us.

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988