



Lord, Teach Us to Pray

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**“Lord, teach us to pray!” – Luke 11:1**

### **The Call to Prayer**

Last Sunday I offered a “prophetic word” to River West Church. It went like this, “In 2010 God is going to do amazing things in our lives and in our church. He will do this in answer to prayer.” The message was designed to be encouraging and timely, as we head into a new year and continue to live in difficult times. But at the heart of the message was a challenge: will YOU pray? Will you make prayer a regular part of your life? Will you make prayer a priority in your life?

All week long I’ve been overwhelmed with a sense that we’ve come to a moment of divine destiny - both for our lives as individuals and as a church. I know that sounds really dramatic and intense! But what if it’s true? I believe we have come to a breakthrough moment for our lives and our ministry. I can’t tell you exactly what that means or what it is supposed to look like. All I can tell you is that the key to this divine moment is – prayer. Jesus is calling us to pray.

### **Getting Past the Intimidation Factor**

I imagine you might feel a bit intimidated by all this. Prophetic words; divine moments; and calls to deeper prayer; it all sounds pretty overwhelming! We need to get past the intimidation factor. Remember that Jesus didn’t call a bunch of super spiritual types to be His first disciples. He called a bunch of uneducated (and mostly difficult) fishermen; a tax collector (think of a corrupt accountant); and a couple of political zealots (Greenpeace advocates? Right wingers?). None of these people were experts in prayer or any other aspect of spiritual life for that matter. Jesus started with these people for a reason. He wanted to show us that He takes ordinary people and calls them to believe and follow. Then He works with them; patiently teaching and transforming them. One of the very most important things that Jesus did was to teach His disciples to pray. He wants to teach us too. This is an amazing gift. Nothing is more important. Nothing you can do as you head into 2010 will make a bigger difference in your life than this. Prayer.

### **Learning and Doing – The “Practice” of Prayer**

The only way to really learn to pray is to pray. Think of it like swimming. You can read a book on swimming, but you aren’t swimming until you get wet. You’ve got to get in the water. This of course can be a scary experience! You go to the pool and you see other people diving in, swimming around, and enjoying the experience. But for those who are just learning it seems so foreign and unnatural. So you get some points of instruction and then it’s time to wade into the water and give it a try. And so it is with prayer. On Sunday mornings we will be getting some instruction on prayer from God’s Word, but you must wade into the water of prayer and give it a go. It’s the only way. Even if it feels awkward – go for it. The more you stay at it, the more you will begin to feel at home in the “practice” of prayer. And by the way, I like that phrase, the “practice” of prayer. It’s perfect, because if you practice something, you will improve at it. Of course, if you still need to practice that implies that you haven’t yet mastered it, you are still a learner. And that is true of ALL of us, no matter how long we have been followers of Christ. We are called “disciples.” A disciple is one who follows, as a student, learning from their master – Jesus.

### **So, What About Zechariah?**

Oh yeah, Zechariah! Zechariah is God’s Word of encouragement for those who have answered God’s call to build. We started our study in Zechariah, with a deep sense of God’s call for us to build. That means we are partners with God in His work of building in our lives, in our church, and in the world around us. There has been a tremendous response to our study in Zechariah. I am seeing more and more people at River West answering God’s call to build.

I cannot shake this overwhelming sense that God wants us, right now, to focus intently on prayer. Everything we have studied in Zechariah has been a fantastic preparation for this special divine moment as Christ is calling us to pray. He is calling us to learn about prayer AND even more than that to actually pray! As we shall see, the outcome of this is going to be exactly what Zechariah has been speaking about: building! Building in our lives, in our church, and in our world! That is why we are going to suspend our study in Zechariah and move on to this study on prayer. As Zechariah taught us in chapter 4, it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord.” Prayer is the key to building, not in our own strength, but in the strength and direction of God. So let's move forward into this divine moment by faith. And most of all – let's pray!