

Love One Another Through Prayer

Follow Me series #3

by Chris Famisaran

Are you blessed? I'm just, this was not going to be part of my sermon. I'm just sitting here with a heart of gratitude for our kids and especially our teachers. It is not easy to be a Sabbath School teacher. Amen. How many of you have gone through the trenches of being a Sabbath School teacher for our children? Bless you. I don't want to take them for granted. Thank you for all of your hard work. As well, Ethan, you continue to astound me. All of our children's storytellers. Let's give them a hand as well. I truly, truly appreciate their ingenuity. I thought I was a pretty decent storyteller, but they beat me every time. So I appreciate you all. I've said it before, long before I came to Downey Church, I was stealing your children's stories and telling them in my previous churches.

By the way, on another note of gratitude, how do you like that new parking lot out there? Well, let me rephrase. It's not a new parking lot. It's a new top coat. We deemed fit that it needed to be addressed. And so we wanted to make sure before it gets worse, we would treat it before so that way we could avoid problems. So thank you, everyone. Please, thank you all for continuing to donate to our building fund and continuing to make sure that God's house, God's campus is well-maintained for the future. We have a few more projects that are coming up pretty soon, as you will probably see. We're working on those. So hopefully in the next month or so, those will be completed as well.

Okay, let's go ahead and dive into the word. Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to come together and to Lord just talk about discipleship. Be with us in Jesus' name, amen.

I believe it was in 1908, a man by the name of James Frazier, who had what was considered a promising lucrative career, gave it all up to become a missionary to a little place called China. Back in 1908, he had to learn the language, he had to learn the culture, and it was not an easy task, but his heart was bent on serving Jesus in a place called, forgive me if I mispronounce this, Lisuland in the foothills of the Himalayas. And he would regularly travel from village to village,

evangelizing, sharing Jesus with the people and the converts of each village. And then during the winter months, unfortunately, it would make travel very difficult, pretty much almost impossible. And oftentimes James would get frustrated because in fact, he was even sometimes blaming God. God, how could you allow this hindrance to get in the way? It is your work. Let me do my job. Sometimes it would take him three to five days just to travel into the Highland villages, to lead services and then come back home. And at times, because it was impossible to travel, all he could do was pray. When spring would arrive, the snow would melt. And Frasier was eagerly anticipating, I wanna go and see my friends. I wanna see those who have decided to follow Jesus. And so he would go into the villages. And as he checked on the disciples, he was quote, amazed. Through the winter, they had continued to pray through the winter with their Bibles, reading them. He discovered that they grown far more in faith than even his own disciples in the lowlands. He later wrote, If I were to think after the manner of men, I would be anxious about my Lisu converts, afraid for their falling back into demon worship. But God is enabling me to cast all of my care upon Him. I'm not anxious, not nervous. If I hugged my care to myself instead of casting it upon Him, I would never have persevered in the work so long. Perhaps never even started it. But it has begun in Him and it must be continued in Him. Continued in Jesus. So James Fraser realized that of himself, he could do nothing. But through prayer, caring for, loving his new converts from a distance at times because the snow did not allow him to visit them, he had to trust that God would lead them. And by doing so, the people were also still very faithful, reading their Bibles, praying with one another. slowly but surely being changed and formed by the Holy Spirit.

When we talk about discipleship, ultimately what is discipleship? Making followers of Jesus. One of the things that Jesus taught us to do, and especially we can find in John 17, is that Jesus prayed for the disciples. In John chapter 13 through 17, Jesus meets with the disciples by beginning to wash their feet, a sign of humility. and sharing the last lessons to the disciples who would form the core leadership of the new church that was about to begin. He comforted their hearts, even though he was basically telling them, I'm about to leave you now. Some of them, it struck fear in their hearts. But he ends this dinner table with a prayer. Pray for protection, to sanctify them, to pray for unity, to be with them, to give them wisdom, to give them courage, to give them clarity. If you look at other examples in the Bible when it comes to praying for others.

One story that automatically stands out is that of Abraham praying for Sodom and especially his nephew Lot. And they continue to pray, Lord, please, if there be 50, don't destroy this. 40, 30, 20, and finally even 10, but not even 10 faithful were in Sodom. And yet still at least his nephew Lot, his family was saved. I also think of Moses, who when God wanted to destroy all of the all of the Israelites because they chose not to worship Him. Moses basically said, no, you're not gonna do that. Daniel in chapter 9 pleaded, he begged for God's people. And Daniel, he prays this passionate, this strong prayer. He says, oh Lord, hear, oh Lord, forgive, oh Lord, listen and act, do not delay for your own sake, my God, for your city and your people are called by your name. We also have the example of Peter who prays for who? Dorcas. And God even raises her from the dead. How many times did Jesus pray and raise people from the dead or the sickness? And finally, the apostle Paul also regularly prayed with the believers everywhere he went. When he left the station that he had stayed in time for maybe a couple months to a couple of years, he always left with a prayer blessing for the people.

Now, there's a couple of verses that I want to go through. We may not be able to get through all of them, but just if you're watching this, go ahead and take a screenshot, write these down. If you're joining us online, but if you're here as well, let's look to a couple of these. Let's go to the first verse, 1 Timothy chapter two, verses one through six. This is a plea from Paul to his young mentee, Timothy. 1 Timothy chapter two verses one through six. We all there? Amen, okay. I urge you, so not just, hey, I wanna recommend, no, I urge you, there's an urgency in his voice. First of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving may be made for who? For all, meaning we should be praying for everyone. for kings and all those in authority, that they may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our savior. Verse four, who wants all people to be what? To be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for how many people? All people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. So Paul starts off in this chapter here by saying, I urge, I plead with you urgently, pray for everyone in petitions and prayers, intercession. Praying on behalf of is what intercessory prayer is. But also make sure that you have a sense of gratitude when you pray. praying for others. Why? Because ultimately, what is at the heart of God's whole character? Love. And if we're to follow God, should we not also love others? Is that always easy? No, it's not. But yet, Paul encouraged us, he

exhorts us to in all pray for the people that they may be saved, that they have a great life, that they may know who God is, that they may have a relationship with God. And so as we're followers of disciples, we should pray for the people you love, okay? Pray for the people you love, because why? We care about them. And what can we pray for? Pray for their daily needs, pray for their dreams, pray for their goals, pray for their, whatever they're having to do with the challenges.

Now, who are the people that we love? If you're new here, we did a small group series, probably maybe a year or two ago, on the 12 people you should love. Y'all remember that? I only hear, uh-huh, from Gustavo. Okay, I didn't work hard enough if that's the case. Who are the 12 people we should love? What are the people groups? Your family, your friends, your fellow believers, your church peoples, and your unchurched peoples, okay? Pray for your family, pray for your friends, pray for your fellow believer and those who were unchurched. If you remember correctly, these four groups we chose three people for each group and pray for them. And just because we did it back then doesn't mean you have to stop. Please continue to pray. How many of you are still praying for these 12 people? I've actually, I haven't changed mine. I haven't updated mine. I just added more people. Please continue to pray for the 12 people you love. These are the 12 people who are closest to you, who you can not only have an impact, but because you genuinely care and love them. Some of you are saying, well, I don't know 12 people. Well, choose me because I need a lot of prayer.

And actually pray for those who are in leadership. This is another group that we need to pray. Now, Paul is talking about the church here too, but this also applies to everywhere, everyone, everything in your life. Pray for the leadership, for instance, in your job. Pray for our local leaders, our city council members, our mayor, how about our governor, our senators, our Congress people, our president. Pray for the global leaders. Is the world in a really great place right now? It's not. Could they use some prayer? Could they use some influence? Healthy influence? Amen. Pray for those, but pray especially as well for our church and leadership. We need it.

And lastly, pray for those who are in need. It seems like, you know, natural disasters, they just seem to be coming upon us more consistently and more regularly. But there are many who are in need. You don't have to walk very far to realize that there are people who are struggling. There are people who are

walking the streets because they have no home. But even if they do have a home, people are just barely getting by.

Earlier this week, I was informed that my insurance was going to go up. Big price hike on our car and our home insurance. I thought, well, I don't know if I can see with this company. So what did I do? I checked around to see if there was anything cheaper. And it just goes to show that insurance alone, which we're supposed to have if you want to drive, you want health insurance. All of these things are rising, but it's not just that. Medicine is increasing. Food is increasing. Gas is increasing. Sometimes it goes up and then they'll just kind of make us feel a little comfortable by going down and then guess what? It comes back up again, right? And it provides, or no, it doesn't provide, it creates a sense of panic and security, anxiety. How many of you feel anxious a little bit more compared to last year? Don't raise your hand, that's okay. People are worried. Is there gonna be, what's the next hammer that's gonna fall? Are we gonna end up in World War III? What's the next threat? And despite all of that, all of these things, though all of these things are happening, we still have a God who loves us and will care for us, protect us and provide for us. But what can we do for our fellow brothers and sisters? Maybe we don't have money to give, but we can give a lending ear and we can pray for our fellow brothers. and sisters.

James, let's actually go to James chapter five, James chapter five verses 13 through 16. You know, sometimes our friends and our family, we get sick. James chapter five verses 13 to 16. Okay. Is anyone among you in what? Trouble. What should they do? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in what? In faith, in belief, not, well, maybe will it happen? No, we firmly believe that God will answer our prayer. Maybe not the way that we expect it sometimes, but it will be answered. We'll make the sick person well. The Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be what? You may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. You know, one of the things that happened when Lisa and I first came to this church early on, we had three anointings in a row every week. Do you remember that, Lourdes? Didn't we pray for you? Yeah. She forgot we anointed her. But I remember, and it was one of the things that I first remember, it just immediately

drew us in. And it was a turning point in this church because we cared for each other. We prayed for, I remember sitting here, you were sitting here and we stood over and we prayed for you. And that's what church is called to do. And let's not wait till the very end when it's the last parting shot. No, if something happens in your life and you get sick, let's start to pray before it gets worse. We're there as family, as friends, and we're there to help us grow. We're there to provide support. We're called to do life together. So what can we pray for? Obviously, when we pray though, we have to pray with sincerity, something from our heart. It's deep. Pray regularly. Whether you're praying the Lord's Prayer, the ACTS Prayer, give our needs to God, but also that of others. And pray in detail. What is it we're praying for? Pray knowing that God is faithful, and we'll answer our prayers. and to have the courage and the willingness and the patience to receive that answer, whatever it may be. But pray for others that we love and pray with passion. Pray with zeal, as Scripture says.

The last one, this is the most challenging. Pray for your enemies. How many of you have an enemy? Don't raise your hands. Now may not be a true enemy, but it may be that difficult co-worker who just is always getting on your case. Maybe that shift leader who just, uh, you ask for your holidays and then they deny them. Hmm. Even though it's like six months in advance or maybe you're actually on vacation and they call you, okay, can you make this Zoom call? Because we really need you to pitch this and you're on vacation. Right? Enemies though can come from unexpected places. Jesus says in Matthew 5, 43 through 44, you have heard it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I tell you, love your enemies and what? Pray for those who what? Persecute you. Now we live in a simple world, not everybody gets along. But God has called us to be what? Peacekeepers. To bring peace, to bring calmness. Bring balance in a world that is going crazy. Being thoughtful, being balanced, providing care and love is not what people sometimes expect, especially when you're their enemy. What's the fastest way to be able to upset somebody but to eventually win them over? Not just pray, but kill them with kindness. Be kind, even when they're being rude. And sometimes though, we have strained relationships. Have you ever had a friend or a family member that you just stopped talking to them? Still not talking to them? Sometimes it could be a week, sometimes it could be 10 years. And that hurts, because you love that person. But maybe they're on the end of the day, I want to have nothing to do. with you or maybe you have to separate yourself because it's not safe. Doesn't mean you stop loving. Ultimately, what does God want though?

God wants reconciliation. And with that, I want to have a story told to you. Not by me, but from you.

Jovanna, would you mind coming up here? Jovanna was listening to, it was Bill or I preaching, and we left a challenge, and she took it to heart. And I want her to share what happened. Come on up.

Happy Sabbath, everyone. My testimony starts from when Bill was preaching on relationships about a couple of Saturdays ago. And I was sitting and I was listening to him and all of a sudden I heard another voice on this side. Bill was in this ear and the voice was telling me to forgive my sister. Now my sister and I haven't spoke since June of last year. So that's about 10 months. And she got angry at me. I couldn't understand the reason why. She didn't want to talk to me. I tried to approach her and apologize to her for whatever it is that I'd done to her to make her angry at me. But she still wouldn't accept my apology. And I tried two more times. So she turned her back on me three times. So we come back to California. And I said, oh, well. Let her go. And so that Saturday when Bill was preaching, I was telling myself, okay, I'm a forgiver, but the Holy Spirit kept telling me to go to my sister. And I was like, I don't wanna go. And Bill said, you have to forgive. And that's the hardest things for us to do to say, I'm sorry. But I felt I didn't have anything to say I'm sorry for. But anyway, so I told the other voice, I said, okay, I'm gonna go. So when we got out of church and I'm on my way home, for some strange reason, I was on the 710, I got on the 91, and I found myself in front of her house. So I'm like, hmm. So I sit there, I said, you know what, let me pray. Please Lord, please hold my tongue. So I go in and knock on the door and I let the screen door close because she's very stubborn and I thought she wasn't going to let me in. But she opened the door and she was smiling. She said, come on in sister. And I'm looking around. I said, okay. All right. So I came in and I just, the spirit told me just to tell her, I am there to say, I'm sorry. Forgive me. And my sister turned around and said, oh, I forgive you because you know, I went to a Bible study and they said that if we don't forgive our enemies or our loved ones or whoever hurt us, then we can't go to heaven. And I said, all right. So we hugged and we kissed. And then pastor was preaching on about moving forward. And I was saying to myself, how do I move forward from this? Because I was still hurt and confused. And she carried on like nothing happened after she said that she forgave me. So today is her birthday. I'm going to go buy her a birthday card, put a little money in there, buy her some flowers, and I'm going to take it to her

to just genuinely show her that she is my sister. I do love her no matter what. I forgive her as she forgive me. And we just have to keep moving forward. each and every day, no matter what problems we face or what happened to us, we just have to remind ourselves we can't stay in one spot and just keep over and over in our heart. Because if we keep building this anger in our heart, then we will become anger and then we will shut out the voice of God. And I want to take this time and say thank you, Pastor, for all your hard work. Thank you, Bill, wherever you may be at. But yeah, I want to thank you because coming to church, I'm eager to get here. And I'm happy to be with my brothers and sisters. And not all the time what they preach about concerns me. But sometimes I find that I hear the word, and it's for someone else, and I'm able to go and carry that word to them. So I am just blessed. I'm growing. becoming a better person, a better sister, a better friend, due to listening, being here, and being among you guys. Thank you.

Thank you, Jovanna. I should have just let her preach. Real life, when she told me that story, number one, I was grateful that God is working in your lives. Several of you have shared stories, some the same, some different. And one of the things I wanna encourage us, if you have something that happens in your life that God has blessed you or worked in your life, I want to give you an opportunity from time to time as well to share that because I can preach. You hear me every week for the most part. But real, I think a lot of real faith development happens when you see your fellow brother and sister, when faith becomes real. I know Javonna, that was very hard, but yet in spite of that, she prayed, Lord, help me. And it's reconciliation is finding you, and that's awesome. There's so many other stories I could share, but it's not my story to tell. I want you to tell those stories, okay? So if you have a story, please. Reach out to myself or Bill, and we want you to be able to share. Because if we don't tell these stories, and if we don't tell these testimonies, it's going to get lost. And these are faith building stories that will build up this community. Amen. So don't be afraid. And we're not going to bite you. This family loves you. We want to support you.

So with that, let's pray. Father in heaven. Today, Lord, as we go forth, lead and guide us, give us wisdom and strength. Lord, help us to continue to love the 12 people that are in our hearts and in our minds that are close to us. In all that we do, may we be true to you. Help us, Lord, to be the faithful ambassadors you've called us to be. In Jesus' name, amen.

Before we go, I forgot to mention reflection. I want you to continue as well to pray, but who are the 12 people that you are praying for? And finally, this week, continue to pray for the 12 people you love and take the courageous step to pray for your enemies and seek reconciliation.

All right, grace and peace, everybody.