

**BCF-17 Parenting-3 “Parental Praying”**

**Our Lesson Tonight:** The Unlimited Power of Unhindered Prayer in A Godly Life & Marriage I Peter 3:1-12

**Our Foundation: The Doctrine of Prayer** (our personal communication with God), which teaches us among other things that “Prayer changes the way God acts”. James 4:2; Luke 11:9-10; Ex. 32:9-14. *Prayer is personal communication with God.* God wants us to pray is that in prayer God allows us as creatures to be involved in activities that are eternally important. When we pray, the work of the kingdom is advanced. In this way, prayer gives us opportunity to be involved in a significant way in the work of the kingdom and thus gives expression to our greatness as creatures made in God’s image. If we were really convinced that prayer changes the way God acts, and that God does bring about remarkable changes in the world in response to prayer, as Scripture repeatedly teaches that he does, then we would pray much more than we do. If we pray little, it is probably because we do not really believe that prayer accomplishes much at all.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Unlimited Power of Unhindered Prayer in A Godly Life & Marriage I Peter 3:1-12**

As we open to I Peter 3, may I challenge each of you to one of Christ's greatest promises to us as believers? Jesus said, “If you pray in faith you can see even that mountain moved” (Mt. 17:20); and, “If any two of you agree as touching anything, I will do it” (Mt. 18:19); and again, “Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7; Lk. 11:9).

The unlimited power of unhindered prayer in life & marriage is explained by Peter in chapter 3 to be in the context of a submissive, servant-hearted couple, living together in a harmonious, godly marriage. For us today we should remember that the majority of all adults in America are married. So our study today touches on most of us here. Either you will be married, were married, are currently married, or will be someday be married, so this message from God's Word is for YOU!

God designed for marriage to be delightful. When you add two believers who commit to a godly, Word-filled marriage there is an incredibly high degree of delight plus incredible power for spiritual ministry added to that marriage, that others do not have.

Today God's Word challenges us to see the power God offers to couples who pray together with a shared faith and walk with the Lord. As we’ll see in a moment, Peter commends the amazing power of unhindered prayers.

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<sup>1</sup> Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 377). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

# 1. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Marriage: God offers us the Greatest Partnership

One<sup>2</sup> of my favorite moments in ministry is when a bride and groom, with trembling hearts, are standing with me at a wedding ceremony. The Holy Covenant of marriage offers to them if they are in Christ, access to the greatest power of all—total agreement in prayer to ask for God’s blessing. May I remind you of what couples agree to be at just one portion of the ceremony? It is usually called the lighting of the Unity Candle:

The two outside candles have been lighted to represent your lives to this moment. They are two distinct lights, each capable of going its separate way. To bring joy and radiance into your home, there must be the merging of these two flames into one. From this time onward may your thoughts be for each other rather than for your individual selves; may your plans be mutual, your joys and sorrows shared.

Wow, every time I say that it gives me shivers of joy to think that is what our marriages are all about. The Lord has offered to each of us a choice. We can either choose to follow His plan or ours through life. If we follow His plan we get to merge our life completely with another believer; and share the promised power that comes if we walk together in God’s Spirit. As a believing couple, we can have unhindered access to God’s Throne, in powerful prayers, agreeing with the one person of earth we can be closer to than anyone else. Is that what your marriage is like? And, is that what you want it to be if you aren’t yet married? One of the most visible of all our choices is the person we marry. The choice we make will determine so much of the rest of our days on earth. We will either pursue a partner who is merely our choice, or one who is most importantly, the one God has made just for us to complete our life and give us that closest friend and partner to share all of life with, enjoying God’s blessing. The resulting years of marriage will be either delightful or disastrous. The lesson to heed for each of you not yet married is that:

## 2. The Truth that God’s Best is Worth the \_\_\_\_\_

Remember you only get one chance in life to start out with a wonderful, Biblical marriage. It is worth the wait. Don’t squander one of the greatest areas of life by doing your own thing instead of God’s! Remember, where you are headed in your marriage, and as a family is your choice. You will never get to anywhere in the future, that you are not headed in the present! If careful, Biblical choices aren’t made, what is the other option? It is called unhappiness, unfaithfulness, hardness, and divorce.

Please listen as we see from Peter the absolute joy and power that is offered in godly marriages, lived out as God intended them to be, as we hear His voice through I Peter 3:1-12

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<sup>2</sup> GDGW-31 020915AM

*Wives, likewise, be **submissive** to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,*

*<sup>7</sup> **Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.***

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, **all of you** be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; <sup>9</sup> not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For*

*“He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. <sup>11</sup> Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and **His ears are open to their prayers;** But the face of **the LORD is against those** who do evil.”*

### 3. An Illustration of God's \_\_\_\_\_

The Ephesians 5:21-6:9 Model of Roles God has instituted:

Husbands  
Wives  
Children

The 1 Cor 11:1-3 Doctrine of order and submission:

God  
Christ  
Husband  
Wife  
Child

When God's roles and order is neglected, ignored, resisted or refused the result is confusion, conflict, disobedience, lack of power and blessing, and a loss of testimony and usefulness in the world and in Christ's Church.

### 4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God

God has made three promises to us about what we get for investing with Him some of our time we live on Earth.

1. In our **marriages** He says there is *no greater spiritual* \_\_\_\_\_ than the unhindered prayers of a godly marriage lived out in spiritual harmony.
2. In our **families** He says that there is *no greater* \_\_\_\_\_ than that which comes from seeing your children following God as His servants.
3. In our **personal investment of our time** He says that there is *no greater* \_\_\_\_\_ in life possible than that which He gives to those who go through life making disciples for Him.

Most of us today are part of the over 111 million<sup>3</sup> married people in America. That is the majority or 56% of all over 18-year-old adults. But even though we may be married today, most of us who are born again Christians only faintly realize the dangers we face every day of our married lives. The atmosphere our minds and hearts have to endure is deadly enough to destroy the most precious commodity we have as married believers—our incredible power of praying as one in heart, mind, and body in Christ. You and I today are:

## 5. Living in a \_\_\_\_\_ of Divorce

The atmosphere that is so dangerous surrounds us every day. It is our American culture, soaked with the stain of divorce that has penetrated to the depths of all our institutions.

Listen to these observations from a book called ***The Divorce Culture***<sup>4</sup>. "Divorce is now part of everyday American life. It is embedded in our laws and institutions, our manners and mores, our movies and television shows, our novels and children's storybooks, and our closest and most important relationships. Indeed, divorce has become so pervasive that many people naturally assume it has seeped into the social and cultural mainstream over a long period of time. Yet this is not the case. Divorce has become an American way of life only as the result of recent and revolutionary change. For most of the nation's history, divorce was a rare occurrence and an insignificant feature of family and social relationships. In the first sixty years of the twentieth century, divorce became more common, but it was hardly commonplace. ***In 1960, the divorce rate stood at a still relatively modest level of nine per one thousand married couples.*** [emphasis added] After 1960, however, the rate accelerated at a dazzling pace. It doubled in roughly a decade and continued its upward climb until the early 1980s, when it stabilized at the highest level among advanced Western societies. As a consequence of this sharp and sustained rise, divorce moved from the margins to the mainstream of American life in the space of three decades. Beginning in the late 1950s, Americans began to change their ideas about the individual's obligations to family and society. Broadly described, this change was away from an ethic of obligation to others and toward an obligation to self. I do not mean that people suddenly abandoned all responsibilities to others, but rather that they became more acutely conscious of their responsibility to attend to their own individual

<sup>3</sup> Latest Census figures also reflect an average of 950,000 divorces per year, an average of 2.3 million marriages per year and at present 10% of the population of adults in the US are divorced and not remarried.

<sup>4</sup> THE DIVORCE CULTURE: *Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and Family*, by Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc. New York 1998 [408 words]

needs and interests. At least as important as the moral obligation to look after others, ***the new thinking suggested, was the moral obligation to look after oneself.*** [emphasis added] People began to judge the strength and "health" of family bonds according to their capacity to promote individual fulfillment and personal growth. The family began to lose its separate place and distinctive identity as the realm of duty, service, and sacrifice. The conception of divorce as both an individual right and an inner experience merged with and reinforced the new ethic of obligation to the self. In family relationships, one had an obligation to be attentive to one's own feelings and to work toward improving the quality of one's inner life. This conception of divorce strongly argued for removing the social, legal, and moral impediments to the free exercise of the individual right to divorce.

So the basic fabric of society, the strong culture of family, the necessity of honest character, the expectation of moral duty, and **the personal habits of sacrifice have all slowly evaporated in America.** But amazingly this has not merely taken place in secular society, it is equally common among believers, so that we find many:

## 6. Godly People in Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_ Homes

**God designed the convictions and \_\_\_\_\_** of godly believers to primarily be taught within the framework of a vibrant, functioning Word filled home (Deuteronomy 6). His plan was that husbands nurture their wives in the Word, and that wives respond to their godly husbands and overflow into a sacrificial investment in their children.

**God designed a plan in His Word for \_\_\_\_\_ to lead the way** in family devotions, for moms to support and supplement that plan—and for children to grow up in a home where the Word was just as much a part of life as meals, work, and recreation.

But all that has slowly changed. **The American culture of personal expression and self centeredness has allowed families to slowly grow apart.** The family meals that used to be the center of the day, the meeting of the family to talk, grow closer and to care for one another has been replaced by life on the run between athletic, academics, and recreation. It is time for Christ's church to:

## 7. Get \_\_\_\_\_ to the Basics: Word Filled Lives, Marriages, and Families

Now, go back to where we started. God has made three promises to us about what we get for investing with Him some of our time we live on Earth.

1. **There is No Greater \_\_\_\_\_ than having a Word Filled Marriage<sup>5</sup>.** In our **marriages** He says there is no greater spiritual power than the unhindered prayers of a godly marriage lived out in spiritual harmony. What type of power is there in a marriage? Prayer offered to God in complete agreement with the one person we can be closest to on Earth—our partner and closest friend for all of life. **And here is that greatest offer for prayer as a married couple in Christ: shared prayed in absolute agreement with your wife means– No Greater Power!** 1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, **that your prayers may not be hindered.**
  
2. **There is No Greater \_\_\_\_\_ than having a Word Filled Family.** In our **families** He says that there is no greater joy than that which comes from seeing your children following God as His servants. 3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
  
3. **There is No Greater \_\_\_\_\_ than having a Word Filled Life<sup>6</sup>.** In our **personal investment of our time** He says that there is no greater reward in life possible than that which He gives to those who go through life making disciples for Him. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

A Word filled family is a family that takes its tone and direction from God's Word. That means that there is consistent time spent by moms and dads seeking to know what God wants done, and by His grace, doing it. Since prayer is such a commanded and powerful tool, we must learn to develop a constant habit of praying for our children. God's Word explains how to pray for our children if we are parents; and how to we direct the lives of our young people. God has written down His expectations for us as we live together in marriage and the home. God's Word also describes what we look for if we are single and waiting for His timing and plans for our marriage someday.

## 8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Key

God has told us and His servants have shown us that prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. We all should be in a personal, long-term plan to learn how to better and better pray for our children. Here are the four key areas God's Word has described for us to focus our prayers as a couple. We are to be sure that we consistently pray for reality in their spiritual lives, integrity in their personal

<sup>5</sup> **We must agree:** Matthew 18:19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. **We must ask:** Luke 11:9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. **We must heed the examples:** Acts 6:4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **We must not neglect:** James 4:2b Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

<sup>6</sup> **We know what the test will be – Fire.** 1 Corinthians 3:9-15; **We know how to live – pleasing Him.** 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; **We know what to live for – people.** 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20.

lives, stability in their relational lives, and eternity in their earthly life. Let me just summarize what I mean. Ten years ago, I spent an entire year preaching through every verse in God's Word about marriage and family. Unknown to me a dear friend took my notes that I posted online every week from my messages and edited them down into a book. Then they came to me with the manuscript for that book and asked if they could make that material available for missionaries to translate for Russian, Arabic, and Spanish speaking areas. After the Russian version was published, we got an English version. This book called the **Word Filled Family**, is the entire 464 page Bible study, and represents two thousand hours invested in prayerful study in the Bible of all that God has said to His people about how to allow His Word fill and overflow our marriages, homes, families, and lives. But the key to all that He has for us is that we learn that the greatest power we have is prayer. If we are not praying regularly, and earnestly as a couple for our marriage and family—we are not following His Divine plan laid down for us in His Word. I could summarize the guidelines for parents to pray as:

## **9. A Four-Part \_\_\_\_\_ For Every Godly Person & Couple**

There are four elements in the lives of our children that we must be sure we ask, seek, and knock for at the Throne of grace and mercy. Those prayers invite the Hand of God to be at work in their lives to stir them to R-I-S-E. That is an acronym for:

- **Reality in their Spiritual Life**
- **Integrity in their Personal Life**
- **Stability in their Relational Life**
- **Eternity during their temporal/Earthly Life**

These truths are all summed up with the Scripture passage that teaches them, on a small card that I carry around in my wallet, that corresponds to and summarizes the Word Filled family book.

We must pray in complete agreement as a couple, about our responsibility to cultivate \_\_\_\_\_ **in their spiritual life:**

1. Seeing them genuinely saved. Acts 26:18
2. Seeing them loving God's Word. Job 23:12
3. Seeing them living in victory. John 8:32, 36
4. Seeing them thinking of heaven. Colossians 3:1-2
5. Seeing them finding sin repulsive. Psalm 38:18
6. Seeing them responding to God. Psalm 51:17

We must pray in complete agreement as a couple, about our responsibility to cultivate  
\_\_\_\_\_ **in their personal life:**

1. Seeing them maintaining a clear conscience (I Timothy 1:5).
2. Seeing them learning to stand alone (Daniel 1:8).
3. Seeing them seeking to stay pure (I Peter 2:11).
4. Seeing them cultivating a servant's heart (Mark 10:44-45).
5. Seeing them avoiding bitterness in trials (Ephesians 4:30-32).

We must pray in complete agreement as a couple, about our responsibility to cultivate  
\_\_\_\_\_ **in their relational life:**

1. Seeing them loving their brothers and sisters (I John 4:7-8).
2. Seeing them trusting God with hard situations and not rebelling I Samuel 15:23a).
3. Seeing them loving the way God made them as men and women (Psalm 27:11).
4. Seeing them waiting to meet God's chosen life partner for them II Corinthians 6:14).

We must pray in complete agreement as a couple, about our responsibility to cultivate  
\_\_\_\_\_ **during their temporal/earthly life.**

1. Seeing them choosing a life of contentment<sup>7</sup>. Philippians 4:11
2. Seeing them choosing a life of personally knowing, serving, loving and obeying the Lord. 1 Chronicles 28:9
3. This them choosing a life of consecration. 1 Timothy 6:9-12

## **Choosing to Get Back to the Basics: Word Filled Lives, Marriages, and Families**

Remember, God has made three promises to us about what we get for investing with Him some of our time we live on Earth.

1. In our **marriages** He says there is no greater spiritual power than the unhindered prayers of a godly marriage lived out in spiritual harmony.
2. In our **families** He says that there is no greater joy than that which comes from seeing your children following God as His servants.
3. In our **personal investment of our time** He says that there is no greater reward in life possible than that which He gives to those who go through life making disciples for Him.

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<sup>7</sup> CONTENTMENT is a habit of life that helps us avoid things that deeply offend and grieve our Heavenly Father. Some of these are: The desire for things more than God; The desire for pleasure more than godliness; The desire for satisfaction through things more than to be satisfied by God; The desire for better things and other things that others have more than thanking God for what we have; The desire for the rewards of the physical world more than a desire for eternal rewards.