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thought. The Prayer of Adoration is like the overlooks on the Parkway: they force us to stop, take in the view, and render praise where it is due. The more we take in the view of God, the more reverent and adoring we will become.

The Prayer of Confession forms us into a repentant people. Prayer functions like “muscle memory” – the ability to move in a certain way without thinking about it. One of the hardest words for us to speak as sinners is a word of apology. Just check today’s news, and I am sure you will find a politician or celebrity offering a pathetic excuse for an apology. We are horrible at naming our sins and asking for forgiveness, and the Prayer of Confession not only forces us to do just that at least once per week, but it also builds our “muscle memory” of confession. Pride always threatens to creep in, but repentance keeps us in continual need of God’s grace.

The Prayer of Intercession forms us into a dependent people. This prayer goes by many names: the Pastoral Prayer, the “Great” Prayer, or, as the kids might call it, “The really long one!” No matter what we call it, the aim of this prayer is simple: “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil 4:6) In the eyes of the world, prayer is foolishness. We want things, but instead of doing anything to get them or make things happen, we just speak words into thin air?! How silly! But “God chose what is weak

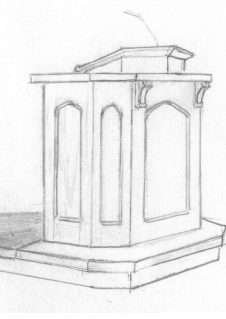
in the world to shame the wise” (1 Cor 1:27) and “my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor 12:9) In this prayer, we admit our helplessness and return to a place of dependence, waiting on and trusting in our gracious Father to act.

The Prayer of Illumination forms us into an expectant people. Before the sermon, we pray for God’s help and learn to expect him to do just that. We pray that he will open eyes, unstop ears, soften hearts, and loosen stiff necks (Ps 119:18; Eph 3:18). Time and time again, we ask God to show us wonderful things in his word, and he does so, time and time again. This rhythm of asking-and-receiving strengthens our confidence and assurance. It is a sad reality that neglected babies often stop crying because they have learned that nobody is coming to help. Healthy babies, on the other hand, continue to cry because they know a loving parent hears and will soon arrive with help. Prayer for help makes us an expectant and hopeful people.

In public prayer we are brought before God’s throne as his united people and taught to pray, and as we do so we become a more reverent, repentant, dependent, and expectant people. And slowly but surely - one prayer at a time; one Sunday at a time – we become like him.

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann



This year’s preaching calendar has lots of moving parts, but they all come together as we head into the fall. We began the year “on mission” with a brief series on the ministry of the church: worship (John 4:24), nurture (Acts 2:42), witness (Acts 1:8). From there we sojourned with Peter through the life of the elect exiles. Our spring season in 1 Peter challenged us to think like pilgrims and encouraged us with the beautiful image of the church as a foretaste of our heavenly home. In the evenings, we worked through the first half of 1 Kings as part of an “on-again, off-again” series through the historical books of the Old Testament (started back in 2018!)

This summer, we have been in Ecclesiastes and have reflected together on the vanity of life and the certainty of death. Despite the pessimistic outlook of the book, I have been blessed by weekly looking to Jesus as the defeater of death and the giver of life beyond the grave. In the evenings we paused the 1 King series to complete the pairing of Peter’s letters with 2 Peter. This brief epistle has challenged us to pursue godliness in the face of false teaching.

In September, we will resume our evening series in 1 Kings at chapter 12 with the era of the divided kingdom. And in the morning, I am excited to announce that we will begin Romans. Why Romans? On a scheduling level, it is my goal to preach the whole council of God to the whole people of God (Acts 20:27). This is why we almost exclusively preach exegetical series, why we move through both Testaments and all the genres, and why the evening series’ balance and complement the mornings. In my first five years of preaching ministry here, I focused on book small (Philippians, Jonah, Titus) and medium (Exodus, Acts), while in my second five years I have shifted the focus to larger books: Genesis, Matthew, Isaiah, and now Romans. The time is ripe.

On a spiritual level, Romans highlights and clarifies the gospel like no other book. Robert Haldane says it best: “It is the only part of scripture which contains a detailed and systematic exhibition of the doctrines of Christianity. The great truths which are embodied and inculcated in every other part of the Bible, are here brought together in a condensed and comprehensive form. More especially, the glorious doctrine of justification by faith is clearly unfolded and exhibited in the strongest light.” The time is ripe, so join us as we return to and marvel at our great salvation.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
Sept 7	Romans 1:1-7	
Sept 14	Romans 1:8-15	1 Kings 12:25-33
Sept 21	Romans 1:16-17	1 Kings 13
Sept 28	Romans 1:18-32	1 Kings 14:1-20
Oct 5	Romans 2:1-11	
Oct 12	Romans 2:12-16	1 Kings 14:21-31
Oct 19	Romans 2:17-24	1 Kings 15:1-24
Oct 26	Romans 2:25-29	Reformation Sunday

Lessons in Prayer

By David Livernois

When does prayer happen? When should prayer happen? What should prayer look like? What should prayer not look like? These questions about prayer, and many more, should be (and are) answered first and foremost by the Bible. They are good questions to ask ourselves, and needed questions every session should ask concerning the corporate nature of prayer in the life of the church. They are questions that need answered by way of information and instruction (hence the cover article in this newsletter and book recommendation in the next column), and they are questions which also must be answered by way of example. In my time at *Covenant Reformed Presbyterian* thus far, I am grateful for answers to these questions that have not only been taught, but have been modeled in a variety of ways which have been both challenging and encouraging.

Challenge and Encouragement

Often I can believe the lie that my prayer requests are not that important. After all, I am not suffering as much as someone else might be or living in a place where my faith endangers my life. At times, I also believe the lie that prayer should always be convenient; it is not. When I buy into the first lie, I do not share prayer requests with brothers and sisters in Christ. When I buy into the second lie, I make self the center of my Christian orbit. In both instances, I deny others and myself the opportunity to apply an important application of the Scripture’s call to bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2). To help me combat these lies and remember these truths, our mid-week prayer gathering has been a strong antidote. There, I am wonderfully challenged and encouraged to rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, and be constant in prayer (Rom 12:2).

I am also learning to pray through times of prayer I am privy to due to my internship: weekly prayer with the pastoral staff praying through our church directory, monthly prayer at session meetings likewise praying for the congregation, and Sunday morning pre-service prayer with the elders praying for the worship service and all in attendance. These times continue to teach me at least two valuable lessons every Christian can easily forget: The more we seek to know a person, the more this will shape how we pray for them, and the more the words of Scripture shape our prayers, the better we can pray for those we know, those we are still getting to know, and even those we do not.

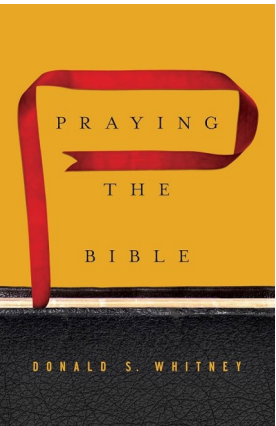
A Praying Church

As a pastoral intern, every ministry activity I am involved in prompts within me the question, “I wonder what said ministry activity will look like in my future ministry context?” Of course, part of that answer will largely be shaped by that context itself. But, it will also be shaped by my current experience in our context as I take what I am learning with me. Among many other things, when it comes to the life of prayer in the church, my hope is for a great deal of congruity between both contexts; Lord, please let me always be part of a praying church.

Praying the Bible —Book Review

By Micaiah Liner

Turn the Bible into prayer...This is the best way of knowing the meaning of the Bible and, and of learning to pray – Robert Murray M’Cheyne



Have you ever set aside time to pray, only to struggle to know what to pray for? Or, perhaps you have a long list, but your prayer time is frequently interrupted by wandering thoughts. For many of us, the discipline of prayer ranks high on our list of spiritual priorities — we know we are called to be a people who “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17). And yet we often find ourselves discouraged when we honestly evaluate our prayer life. There is a great chasm between where we are and where we would like to be.

In his book, *Praying the Bible*, Donald Whitney seeks to help Christians grow in the area of prayer. He proposes that for the majority of Christians, the problem is not a lack of desire to pray. Indeed, most of us would openly confess that we wished we prayed more. Rather, Whitney suggests that many Christians face problems in their methodology. He concludes that most often people find themselves praying for the same things using the same words. Basically, they find themselves in a prayer rut—and unfortunately many grow discouraged.

As one might anticipate from the title, the proposed solution is simple: pray the Bible. Whitney argues that one of the best ways for us to add fuel to the fire of our prayers is to let the Word of God shape and guide them. And while this can be done using any book of the Bible, the most natural and helpful place to begin is in the Psalms. As he writes, “God gave the Psalms to us so that we would give the Psalms back to God.” The book lays out a model for prayer that focuses on praying a Psalm a day. Far from being rigid and dry, Whitney shows how this practice can breathe fresh life into our prayers and give a greater degree of confidence that we are praying according to God’s will.

Two encouragements in closing:

1. Read this book. It is short but very practical, and it lays out simple helps which you can immediately begin incorporating into your prayer life. (You can find a copy of *Praying the Bible* on the book table in the lobby.)

2. Join us on Wednesday nights. Our Wednesday evening prayer gatherings are centered around a Psalm. This is a wonderful place to come together with the people of God and begin to grow in the practice of praying God’s Word back to him.

THE SALTSHAKER

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Formed By Praying

By Rev. Sean McCann

On the campus of Harvard University sits a statue of John Harvard. Like several statues around the world, this one is famous for its claim to bring good luck to all who rub the benefactor’s feet. Over the years, superstitious students (and tourists) have burnished the feet into a bright sheen! One brief rub by one passing student seems powerless to alter solid bronze, but that one act, repeated countless times over the decades, has had an undeniable effect. Those bronze feet bear witness to the fact that small actions repeated over time affect enduring change. With that in mind, we approach our third element of worship to consider how it forms us. The act of prayer, though small and with imperceptible effect, when repeated over time, will form our hearts and minds to be like Jesus. To see the impact of public prayer, we must consider two key questions.

How Does the Element of Public Prayer Change Us?

Private prayer is central to our spiritual lives and worthy of consideration, yet it does not serve the same purpose as public prayer. Ligon Duncan explains: “Namely, public prayer must edify the public. Prayers offered in public are audible, not silent, and must be intelligible because they aim at not personal but public edification. Their purpose is to bless both God and the congregation. There are two audiences, one on earth and one in heaven.” Consider a few ways the congregation is edified and changed by public prayer.

First, *public prayer brings us before the throne of grace*. Who can say that they pray enough? We all struggle to carve out time to pray during the week, and to stay focused when we do make time. Public prayer helps us by scheduling prayer for us. It demands that we follow the liturgy to the throne, and it holds us there until we are done. For many of us, public prayer is the most consistent time of prayer in our week, and thus it affects change by consistent repetition.

Second, *public prayer unites us to one another*. Jesus teaches us to pray not “My Father, who art in heaven...” but “Our Father.” We are one body, and as one we come together in corporate prayer. The earliest accounts of the

church focus on the disciples together in prayer: “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer,” (Acts 1:14) and “When they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God.” (Acts 4:24) In prayer, we maintain our unity in Christ.

Third, *public prayer teaches us how to pray*. Prayer is hard work. Though it is our first language, it does not come easily. The repetition of scriptural references and phrases in prayer gives us models for prayer. As a young believer I heard a friend ask God to “wash me whiter than snow.” I was struck by the image and adopted it for my own prayers, unaware until much later that it came from Psalm 51. Do you want to learn how to pray? Come and hear others pray!

Finally, *public prayer forms our heart and mind*. Go back to the statue: how many rubs does it take to alter visibly the bronze patina? A lot! And we can ask the same question of prayer: how many minutes together in public prayer does it take to change us? A lot of prayers! So, keep it up.

Who Does the Element of Prayer Form Us Into?

There are four major prayers in the worship service (five if you count the Benediction as a prayer), and each one plays a role in forming us after the image of Christ. Consider them with me in “order of appearance.”

The Prayer of Adoration forms us into a reverent people. Worship begins with God’s word calling us to praise him, and we respond in adoration as we stand in song and prayer. Tim Keller advises ministers on this opening prayer: “The invocation builds energy quickly. It is not quiet and pedantic, but it gathers momentum and is usually done in only two breaths. It must be filled with longing and delight at the riches before us.” When my family moved to Asheville, we were awe-struck by the mountain views and paused regularly to admire them and thank God for bringing us here. Now we are so accustomed to them that we can go days, if not weeks, without giving them a passing

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September – October

Upcoming Events

For additional information about any of these events, please refer to our website (covenantreformed.net), or contact the church office at 828-253-6578; office@covenantreformed.net.

The Lord’s Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

Morning Worship:

September 7, 21: October 5, 19

Fellowship Meal

October 5

Youth Events

September 9, Joint Field Day

Second Breakfast

September 13, October 11

Weekly Events

Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am	
Morning Worship	10:45 am	
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except on 1st Sunday

Wednesday Nights

6:00 pm

Bible Study

For Men:

ROMEOS	7:30 am	Every Thursday
(Retired Old Men Eating Out)		
at Cornerstone Restaurant		
Norm Bomer’s Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

For Women:

Gail Albee’s Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
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Watering Seeds Podcast

Be sure to check out our church’s weekly podcast, *Watering Seeds*. Each week our pastors review, discuss, and apply the previous Sunday’s sermon. You can find the podcast on any major podcast platform, such as Anchor, Spotify, or Apple Podcast, by searching for our church name or the title, “Watering Seeds,” or by scanning the following QR code:

