

# Hear Our Prayers

AC ANGLICAN CHURCH OF PAPHOS

Lent Course 2026 Hear Our Prayers

Week 5 DANIEL Constant Prayer

24 March 2026 - Ven Paul A. Carr

Imagine your life were in mortal danger. Imagine you were a passenger on a hijacked plane, or a prisoner of conscience, or part of a persecuted church. What would that do to your life of prayer? I suspect it would go one of two ways. You may just be too terrified to pray and would have to rely on the prayers of others. Or fear might motivate you to get on your knees and pray with real fervency. I remember listening to an interview with Terry Waite, a Christian who spent four years as a hostage in Lebanon. He said he couldn't trust himself to pray in his heart because he would sink into self-pity. So he prayed the prayers he remembered from being a choir boy: psalms and hymns and the prayers of the BCP. Terry Waite had a pattern of prayer that was well established, and so in danger he had something he could fall back on, which is the experience of Daniel.

The prophet Daniel lived during the years when many of the Jews were held as captives in Babylon following the fall of the City of Jerusalem in 597 BC and his skills and intelligence meant he rose to a powerful position at the heart of the life of the state. That placed him in danger and constantly he was in situations where it would have been much easier for him to renounce his faith and the practices it entailed. A particularly good example comes in Chapter 6 which is all about the god one should pray to. **Daniel 6:10-22**

The subjects of King Darius grow jealous of Daniel's superior skills and abilities and set a trap by persuading the king to pass a law that stated that the only person anyone should pray to was the King himself. Anyone who prayed to a god other than the King would be thrown into a den of lions. Daniel prayed only to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and so this cunning law placed him mortal danger.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Daniel kept on praying even when he knew it would lead to his execution?
2. What impact does Daniel's constancy in prayer have on the King Darius?
3. What does Daniel's story teach us about prayer?

Daniel could of course simply have stopped praying, or prayed in secret. But not Daniel. He is proud of his faith and continues to pray openly and publicly three times a day. He maintains the routines and disciplines of his spiritual life by praying constantly.

And it is that constant prayer that saves him. Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, but instead of being torn apart by the wild animals, he is saved by the action of God. Daniel was faithful to God in prayer and so God was faithful to Daniel. It was those who plotted against him who found themselves eaten by the beasts. Daniel teaches us about the power of constant and disciplined prayer under all circumstances, and that when you have a pattern of prayer, it will be robust enough to see you through any of life's changes or dangers. And in the same way Jesus offers plenty of teaching about the need for constancy in prayer.

There is a good example of this in Luke Chapter 18. I sometimes think that we read the scriptures with such serious voices and long faces that we lose the humour that Jesus uses to make serious points, and this chapter features characters who could have been lifted straight from a comedy sketch. Jesus summons up in our imaginations a judge who has no respect for God or for people. But he meets his match in a determined widow who simply will not be silenced. She keeps going back again and again to this miserable judge who eventually backs down and grants her what she wishes. If an unjust judge relents, Jesus says, how much more will the God who loves you listen when you pray? Then he concludes, when the Son of Man comes will he find any faith on earth? Be persistent, pray with faith, don't give up Jesus is saying.

All prayer is good and powerful and effective. But there are massive benefits in constancy in prayer, in persistent prayer, and carrying on praying whatever the odds. I use the church's Office of Morning and Evening Prayer as the heart of my prayer life. I know I am just going to say it, whatever happens. There are times when, to be honest that prayer feels dry and unrewarding, when God feels miles away, and there are times when it is a total and complete delight. I just carry on and get it prayed, and the more I do so the more I am aware that it is when prayer feels hardest that God often uses us most powerfully as prophets of hope. The word 'discipline' is one that has a poor reputation these days. But discipline comes from the same word as 'disciple' and a disciple is one who learns through prayer. So discipline in the life of prayer is not something to be afraid of. Rather it is the vehicle by which we can pray constantly and persistently as Jesus asks us to do.

Throughout history the Christian church has been jolted out of complacency into spiritual revival, sometimes because of a traumatic event, sometimes because someone recognised the voice of God. Every single one of them has been hallmarked by small groups of Christians bringing persistence and determination to the life of prayer. The massive fourth century expansion of the church was the time when many Christians went into the desert, alone or in community to offer their whole lives to prayer. In the middle ages the Franciscans and then the Dominicans brought tremendous revival by giving people new ways to pray, especially the poor. The renewals brought by Methodism, the Oxford Movement and the Evangelical Revival were characterised by huge commitment to spiritual discipline and constant prayer.

One such revival began in 1904 when a young Welshman named Evan Roberts had been praying for 13 years for the Holy Spirit to control his life. He often awoke at 1:00 am and prayed until 5:00 am. That was the beginning of the Welsh Revival which swept through Britain, Scandinavia, Europe, North America, the mission fields of India and the Orient, Africa, and Latin America. By all accounts, the Welsh Revival drastically changed churches, homes, and even the workplace. People fell on their knees on the street in repentance.

Coal miners wrote out Bible verses and fastened them on the doors of the coal mines. Blasphemy and drunkenness stopped. The horses in the mines became confused when the miners stopped kicking and cursing them.

I visited the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Florida in 1998 – you can read about my experiences here <https://revpacman.com/2019/10/14/the-brownsville-revival/>

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How 'constantly' do you pray? Is your praying ad hoc or do you have a routine or pattern?
2. What things stop you from praying constantly?
3. When you have endured hard or challenging times in your life, how easy have you found it to pray? Feel free to share some stories.
4. After teaching about the need to pray constantly in Luke 18, Jesus asks, 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?' What does Jesus mean by asking that question?
5. What steps do you need to take to be more persistent and disciplined in your life of prayer.

#### Rhythm Of Prayer

Rhythms define our lives. The habits we adopt and the patterns we repeat form our daily existence, direct our decisions and feed our motivations. The rhythms of life bring normalcy to unforeseen disasters and our highest celebrations. This is true of our physical and emotional lives and also true of our spirituality. We were created for a loving relationship with our Creator that is renewed and strengthened by the rhythm of prayer. By rhythm of prayer, we mean regular, fixed times of the day. The Bible teaches us to pray:

**Always:** The New Testament encourages us to pray always (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

**Alone:** Go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father (Matthew 6:6).

**With others:** Jesus said, Matthew 18:19: "... if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

**Regularly:** I think it's helpful to have set times to pray. I always find that whatever thoughts are on my mind in the morning tend to stay with me all day. And to start the day with prayer is a wonderful way to start the day. Psalm 5:1.

I recognise that prayer doesn't always come naturally; there are often times when you have to make a choice whether to pray. Sometimes, prayer can be hard work. Sometimes you have other things on your mind; sometimes you feel a million miles away from God. But getting into a rhythm of prayer can be helpful.

Those of you who attended the Lent Course last year will remember this – but it seems to fit our final session for this year.

The rhythm of prayer that you set for yourself will be unique to you. It will depend on your other commitments, on the nature of your family life, on whether you work or are retired and on the state of your health. It will also depend on personality and character. The way men pray can be very different from the way women pray. Your rhythm of prayer will be yours and not someone else's. This is not a competition to see who can be the most holy! I've produced a very simple template that you might like to use to set a rhythm for constant prayer. But before you fill it in, let me go through what it will ask you to consider.

First, when will you pray communally? Remember attendance at a weekly act of worship, for most people on Sunday, is the very heart of the Christian life. This is where loads of the praying is going to get done in company with others, and it is virtually impossible to maintain patterns of personal prayer without worship at the heart of your life. So this goes first into a rhythm of prayer. Likewise under communal prayer, being part of a prayer group or small group would fit in to your rhythm at this point.

Second, when will your times of personal prayer be? Morning? Midday? Evening? Late at night? In the monastic tradition the times of prayer are the fixed point around which everything else is built. It is a way of hallowing the day and setting all time apart as sacred to God. Most of you are not monks and nuns. However, there is rich wisdom in setting apart a time each day to pray, even if you can't always stick with it. So when will it be? I was talking with someone the other day who lived in a Muslim country and they said they prayed every time the call to prayer was called. His view was that if it's good enough for them it's good enough for me.

Third, what structure are you going to use in those times of prayer? Remember there is huge choice and whilst you shouldn't change constantly, there is nothing wrong with keeping it fresh. You might use some of the wonderful apps that are available. You might set your own pattern of prayer. Look around and find what is best for you.

Take time to complete the **Rhythm of Prayer** handout.

So as this course reaches its conclusion, I want to invite you to reflect on what it would mean in your own life to pray constantly. When this session ends, you could of course resume your life exactly as it was five weeks ago. Or this could be the start of a fuller and much richer life of prayer, one that will change not just your life but the lives of those around you. If we had any idea at all of the power we unleash when we pray, we would never get off our knees! You might be rich or powerful or influential, but whatever role you occupy, nothing you can ever achieve in this life can compare with what you do when you pray. Our prayers shakes the world to its foundations and brings heaven to earth. So get praying. Enjoy it. Pray persistently, pray expectantly. And see how God uses your life to bring joy and hope breaking into his world.



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