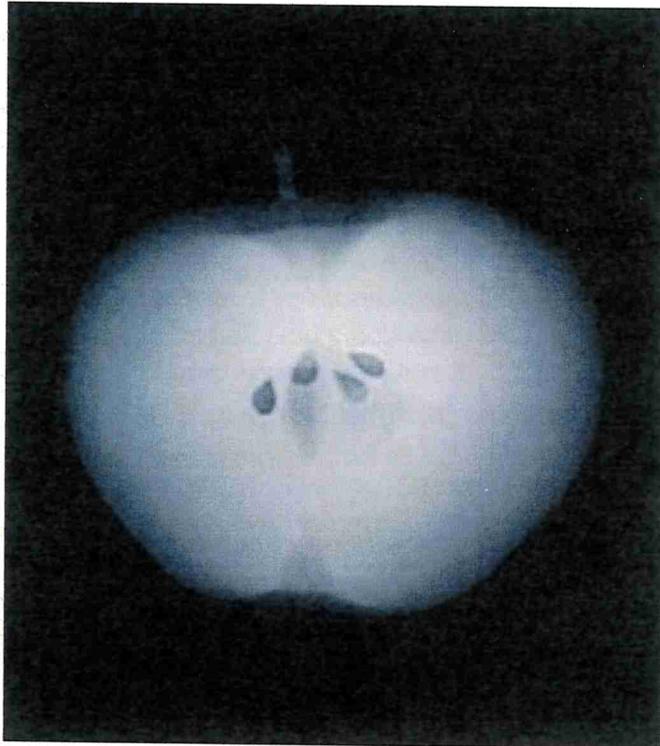


*Persistence
In
Prayer*



Apple Seed Sunday
September 28, 2014

Jovita Baptist Church
Edgewood, WA

Persistence in Prayer: Apple Seed Praying

One of our traditions at Jovita is praying for our apple seeds. These are not actual seeds, but each seed represents a person who does not know Christ. We commit to praying for each person's salvation. Each year we write a list of five people that we will pray for during the year. Over the years we have seen many people come to faith in Christ through this simple approach. You might hear someone introduce a friend at church by saying, "This was one of my apple seeds!"

This pamphlet is designed to help us be effective in our ministry of Intercession for our apple seeds. Intercession literally means "to stand between", an advocate. We are standing in for our friends, neighbors and relatives who don't know Jesus. We reach out to a Holy God in prayer that He would accomplish the work of conviction of sin in their hearts and would reveal Himself to those for whom we are praying.

While the results of the apple seed approach have been outstanding, often it takes years for someone to come to faith in Christ. We as intercessors, need to be patient, alert and persistent. Charles Spurgeon once remarked;

"By persistence the snail reached the ark!" Sometimes it seems our prayers are moving at a snail's pace. At those times we need to remember that our prayers are moving forward and they will accomplish what God has in mind for them.

In Hebrew the word for intercession is *paga*. It means



"meeting." When we intercede we are meeting with God. It is literally a prayer meeting. We are meeting with God for the purpose of introducing our "pre-saved" friends to Him.

When we have a burden to pray and we are fervently praying for others, it can be discouraging when we don't see immediate answers to those prayers. Here are some questions most intercessors will face at sometime in their lives. This booklet is designed to briefly answer these questions:

If God is not willing any should perish, why do they still perish? Isn't He God?

Do we keep asking God to save a person or just ask Him once and thank Him in believing faith?

Why does God seem to need me to help save someone, when I can't save anyone?

Why does it seem to take so long to get prayer answered?

What is the relationship between persistence and prayer answered?

What is the role of spiritual warfare in intercession? Do we need to bind satan or does God do it?

How can we be more effective in praying for the lost?

If God is not willing any should perish (II Peter 3:9) Why do they still perish? Isn't He God?

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. When He created mankind He gave man free will, the opportunity to make decisions. After the fall of Adam, man has the choice to refuse and reject Him or to repent and be reconciled to his Maker. God did not make man into submissive robots but gave him the power to make choices and decisions.

In the passage from 11 Peter it says: "The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." God is

waiting patiently for us to repent, to change our hearts and minds and to come to Himself.

Because "God so loved the world" He not only gave His only son to save the world from sin, but He allows men to make their own decisions. He does not will them to perish, but He allows them ample time (and witness) to receive Him as Savior and Lord.

Do we keep asking God to save a person or just ask Him once and thank Him in believing faith?

While it sounds very spiritual to ask God one time to save a person and then leave the results with Him, the Bible seems to indicate that persistence and prevailing prayer are necessary for the child to God to see results from prayer. It is not that God is begrudgingly giving us what we ask for, or that we have to convince Him to do what we are requesting. Our role is to continue in believing prayer until we see God's work revealed. It is also helpful to keep a prayer journal as a reminder of God's faithfulness.

Why does God seem to need me to help save someone, when I can't save anyone?

Men are God's agents on the earth. Since the time of Adam, God has chosen to work through humans to accomplish His purposes. Christian men and women become God's suit of working clothes. Everything that is done is done by God and for God. But He has willingly chosen and ordained that mankind should share in this work as His representatives. Our job is to make the connection between God's will and power and a lost and dying humanity that needs His tender touch.

Pastor Jack Hayford wrote: "Prayer is essentially a partnership of the redeemed child of God working hand in hand with God toward the realization of His redemptive purposes on earth." We are literally His ambassadors, His agents to accomplish the work of reconciliation that

He has already made available to all people.

Why does it seem to take so long to get prayer answered?

Sometimes it seems an answer arrives quickly, sometime it comes after years of faithful prayer. We really don't know if one prayer or the next prayer is sufficient to accomplish the work God has intended, we are simply encouraged to keep on and prevail in prayer. We are to come boldly before the throne of grace. Hebrews 4:16 Sometimes we are looking for a specific answer, result or response to our prayer and we miss the subtle ways in which God is working all things together for good. Martin Luther wrote; "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness." We need to persevere in prayer, "whatever it takes" and leave the results and the timing in the loving and sovereign hands of God.

What is the relationship between persistence and prayer answered?

In Psalm 55:17, David writes, "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice..." Kind David knew the power of prevailing prayer. He prayed often and continually. We see our Lord Jesus also getting away to pray on many occasions. We are to pray for God's will to be done. God answers all of our prayers with a "Yes" or "I have another plan."

When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed long and hard that the cup of death that He was about to take would be removed, but He also insisted that whatever the Father had planned, He was willing to accept.

What is the role of spiritual warfare in intercession? Do we need to bind satan or does God do it?

In one sense, all prayer is spiritual warfare. When we intercede, we are breaking strongholds and setting prison-

ers free. There are many ways we can pray for those who need Christ. Maybe they are caught in some addiction and need to be set free, or perhaps they need some other touch from God. In Ephesians 6:18 Paul reminds us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. He goes on to encourage us to be alert and always keep on praying.

God has given us a great opportunity to be able to pray effectively according to His will. When we pray to bind satan, we are not doing the binding, only God is strong enough to do that, we are simply His messengers, affirming that God is able and willing to restrain the evil one from his quest to "steal, kill and destroy."

How can we be more effective in praying for the lost?

It may be helpful as we pray for the salvation of our apple seeds, to imagine the bowls in heaven in which are kept the prayers of the saints. (See Revelation 8:3-4) Picture that when the bowl is full, God's power is able to be unleashed and our prayers are answered. Each time we come before the Lord and every time we pray, we are adding to the substance or incense in the bowl. We are to pray and not lose heart or give up. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much!" James 5:16. Thank you for your commitment to pray for your apple seeds this year. May God richly reward your prayer efforts and stamina this year.

Anyone can count the number of seeds in an apple,



But only God can count the number of apples in a seed.

My Apple Seeds

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I commit to pray faithfully for my apple seeds, that each one may come to know Christ as Savior and Lord.

I pray that they may one day become mature disciples of Jesus who will also bear fruit.

