



Week One: Reliant

"Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." ... But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."
– Mark 9:17b,18,27-29

Day 1: Introduction to Week 1

Reliant: adjective

Dependent on someone or something

The early church was BIG on prayer. It wasn't just a second thought or a nice thing to do every now and then. It was an essential, because they knew they were totally dependent on God's leading and His power. For the early church, prayer was a vital part of the life-changing work that God did in and through His followers from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the world.

Before the 1st church became a church, they prayed. Constantly!

Acts 1:13-14 – When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together **constantly in prayer**, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

After the early church began, they prayed. Constantly!

Acts 2:42 – And they were **continually devoting** them-selves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and **to prayer**.

As the church grew, their leaders prayed. Constantly!

Acts 6:4 – We will **continue steadfastly in prayer**, and in the ministry of the word. (ASV)

When the church faced persecution, they prayed. Constantly!

Acts 12:5 – While Peter was being kept in jail, the church **never stopped praying** to God for him.

Do you see a pattern? The early church prayed about everything. Prayer was their lifeblood. Prayer was foremost in their minds. They knew they could not be the church the Lord intended for them to be

without prayer. They not only believed that, they constantly practiced that. They relied on the One who could do what they could not do, through prayer.

For the early church, prayer was more than just something they should do. It was something they did. Constantly!

God can do what you and I can't. And the key that unlocks God doing what only God can do, is prayer. That belief profoundly influenced A.C. Dixon, popular 19th century Pastor and Evangelist, who said... "When we rely on organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely on education, we get what education can do; when we rely on eloquence, we get what eloquence can do; and so on. I am not disposed to undervalue any of these things in their proper place—But when we rely on prayer, we get what God can do."

That's what we want, isn't it? God doing what we can't. Beyond what we could ask or think. That's possible because nothing is impossible with God.

That breakthrough you need – God can bring it. The closed door you can't open – God can make a way. That relationship that's broken – God can mend it. That disaster that undid years of building and sacrifice – God can restore what has been lost.

How? Reliant prayer.

That breakthrough you need could be just a prayer away.

Group Video Discussion

Watch Video 1 Reliant

Your notes:

Nehemiah relied on prayer:

1. _____ the wall was rebuilt

Nehemiah 1:4 – When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

2. _____ the wall was rebuilt

Nehemiah 4:4a – Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads...

3. _____ the wall was rebuilt

Nehemiah 9:5b-6a – Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the LORD.

Questions for Group Discussion

1. In what ways do you identify with Nehemiah's prayer life?
2. Life is a series of before, during, and after circumstances. In which seasons are you most and least likely to turn to prayer? What does that tell you about your viewpoint on prayer?
3. Prayer for Nehemiah was a non-negotiable. Especially when things were tough (as you can see in Nehemiah 2:4; 4:4-5,9; 5:19; 6:9,14). How did Nehemiah's prayer in the middle of hardship impact his and the wall-builders' attitudes?
4. As was said on page 9, the early church constantly prayed. They relied on prayer, like Nehemiah did, for whatever they faced, whenever they faced it. What can be done to keep this timeless practice central in our lives in the 21st century?
5. How do you hope to be impacted by this 40-day *Only by Prayer* series? What breakthroughs would you like to see happen in your life because of what you learn and practice during this time?

Personal Daily Devotions

Day 2

Even Jesus relied on frequent times of prayer

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Luke 5:16

Think about the things you rely on: coffee, sleep, food, payday, a car, parents, your toothbrush. All too important to do without. That's what prayer was to Jesus. From the start to the finish of His earthly ministry, Jesus relied on prayer. Every word of Luke 5:16 tells us that.

But Jesus, in spite of His growing popularity and the increasing demands being placed on Him, made time for prayer. It remained central in His life and His ministry. Jesus constantly prayed.

Often. Frequently. Intentionally. Like we regularly eat, Jesus regularly prayed. Like any strong relationship, the Father and Son talked a lot. Jesus' day-to-day life was filled with frequent, intentional times when He prayed.

Withdrew to lonely places. Even Jesus needed times of solitude with His Heavenly Father. He intentionally set aside time to step away from everything else to talk to God. No phones, no television, no needy people, no chores. Just Jesus and God the Father. Sometimes He went alone out into the beauty of God's creation. At other times He simply took advantage of the quiet hours of the night or early morning. Simply to be alone with God.

And prayed. Jesus talked to God and listened to God. He held nothing back. He aligned His will to His Father's will. He gave thanks. He prayed for others. He prayed for help. He asked for guidance. He prayed like we need to pray, about everything.

We need to rely on prayer like Jesus did.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

If Jesus relied on prayer, we should too. Think about your attitude toward prayer. In your normal, day-to-day life is it something you literally depend on, or just something you do occasionally?

Jesus took time to pray. Do you have specific time in your days set aside for prayer? If not, when are some times that you could set aside for prayer? What do you need to do to make that happen?

Jesus went to places where He could be alone with God. What lonely places do you have in your life where you can go for times of solitude and prayer? How does thinking about these times make you feel?

When you pray, what do you usually focus on? Are there certain things you always pray about? What more would you pray about if you actually took the time?

Day 3

Abraham was at his best when he relied on God

There Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Genesis 13:4

Many of us rely on our smartphones for pretty much everything! It's our phone, camera, calendar, clock, maps and directions, games, shopping, texts and video chats, rides to the airport... The thought of going without our phone, even for an hour or two, doesn't even cross our minds. We need it every hour!

We need to rely on prayer even more.

Abraham built a lot of altars during his lifetime, where he called on the name of the Lord. He usually built these altars each time God led him to a new place. Like when God relocated him from Haran to Canaan, and *"he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him"* (Genesis 12:7). He built another altar after he moved to Bethel and *"there Abram called on the name of the Lord"* (Genesis 12:8). Later, he came back to the altar that was still standing at Bethel and again *"called on the name of the Lord"* (Genesis 13:4). After a move to Hebron, *"he built an altar to the Lord there"* (Genesis 13:18). It's likely Abraham also built an altar at Beersheba where he *"called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God"* (Genesis 21:33).

It's interesting to note two times when he *didn't* build an altar. In Egypt (Genesis 12) and in Gerar (Genesis 20). Both of those times he ended up relying on deception instead of on God, when he told Sarah to lie for their protection. He relied on his own schemes instead of on God.

Like Abraham, we need to remind ourselves through times of prayer that we can and should rely on God for everything.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Who do you most often rely on for help? How do you usually contact them and how often?

When you look at the current state of your life and your prayers, would you say it reflects a person that is more dependent on God or on yourself? How so?

Why does sin often follow a lack of reliance upon God? How can prayer keep us from falling into sin?

Abraham built altars as a way to demonstrate his reliance on God. What type of “altars” do you, or could you, build in your life for the same purpose?

Day 4

Victory came when King Asa relied on the Lord

Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one besides You to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in You..." So the LORD routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

2 Chronicles 14:11-12

Life has a way of bringing us to our knees, and when it does the best thing we can do is what King Asa did when he faced insurmountable *odds*. He turned to the Lord for help.

Asa enjoyed ten years of peace at the beginning of his 41-year reign as King over Judah. But peace disappeared when General Zerah attacked Asa's half-million-man army with his million-man army. Humanly speaking, the odds of victory weren't on Asa's side. But the Lord supernaturally intervened and gave Asa a never-to-be forgotten victory and lesson – the Lord is capable of doing what you can't. Always seek the Lord's help. Always!

Unfortunately, a quarter of a century later, when Asa was faced with a new military threat and a deadly disease, he forgot that lesson and did not seek help from the Lord (2 Chronicles 16:7,12). Instead, he relied on human ingenuity (a bribe and treaty) and human intervention (physicians). Both were to Asa's undoing in the final five years of his life.

Though we can find help of a kind from man, the blight against Asa was that "*he **did not seek help from the Lord, but **only** from the physicians***" (2 Chronicles 16:12). And just like Asa, we can all make the mistake of relying on man and his wisdom instead of on God.

We need to remember that above all else, our help is from the Lord. We should call out to Him and rely on Him.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

What circumstances have come into your life that would have been to your undoing had you not relied on the Lord?

How have you seen the Lord almighty intervene in your life in ways that showed His greatness?

Have you in the past or present fallen into the “I can take care of this myself” trap before turning to God for help? Why do we often wait and only turn to God as a last resort?

What do you need to remember, or do, to make turning to God for help your first response instead of trying to figure it out for yourself first?

Day 5

Daniel, in the face of death, kept on praying

“Anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions’ den”... Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Daniel 6:7,10

Daniel could have put his prayer life on pause for 30-days, like we might take a break from a diet during the holidays. “Eating healthy is important,” we say, “but not during the holidays.” We know we can enjoy all the special treats and then jump back into the diet after the holidays are over.

If ever there was what seemed like a good reason to take a vacation from prayer – at least from outward postures of prayer that others could see – you’d think the threat of death by lions would be the one. After all, Daniel could still be praying on the inside even though it didn’t look like it on the outside, or he could find a secret place where no one could see him praying.

So, what did Daniel do? Pray one more time that God would understand why he needed to take a 30-day break from his normal routine of prayer? No.

Even in the face of death, Daniel continued praying “*as he had done before*” with windows wide open, down on his knees, praising God and asking for His help (Daniel 6:10-11).

Daniel knew that he needed God’s help, every day. And he wanted everyone to know that his relationship with God was more important than any decree from any earthly king. He knew his very life was in God’s hands alone.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Put yourself in Daniel's shoes. Based on your present commitment to prayer, would you have continued praying in the face of the death threat Daniel faced?

What does the frequency of your prayer life tell you about the depth of your reliance on God?

When it comes to praying in public, do you? What often stands in the way of God's children praying in bold ways?

Some things in life are too important to neglect even for a day or two. What things in your life would be on that list? How can you make sure prayer is one of those things?

Day 6

Paul relied on prayer when he couldn't be there

*Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may
see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.
1 Thessalonians 3:10*

One of the best ways to show your love and concern for someone, especially when you're separated by distance, is to pray for them. You can always rely on prayer when you can't be there. Paul did.

From what we know, Paul didn't spend much time in the thriving city of Thessalonica. Probably less than a month. But during his brief time there he developed a deep love for the believers he met there. So much so that he longed to be with them again. But in spite of his repeated efforts to return and care for these new babes in Christ, he was prevented from making the 150-mile trip.

So Paul did what we can do when we're apart from those we love dearly. He relied on prayer. He prayed night and day for them. Earnestly. He put his heart into frequent, fervent, faithful prayers. Paul's prayer life was the real thing. He prayed for Timothy night and day (2 Timothy 1:3). He constantly prayed for the church at Rome (Romans 1:9). He did what he told others to do: pray at all times (Ephesians 6:18); pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17); be devoted to prayer (Romans 12:12).

Paul relied on prayer when he could not be there. He turned to the One who could do more than he could do even if he was there. In the same way, when we rely on prayer, we rely on the One who can do what we can't, and more.

As we are apart from those that we love, let's lift them up to God regularly and passionately in times of prayer. Let's entrust them to the One who is with them, even when we're not.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Who would you like to be with right now, but you can't?

In what ways have you benefited by the prayers of others who were unable to be personally with you?
How did knowing that others were praying impact you?

When someone fervently prays about someone or something – night and day, constantly – what does that tell you about their beliefs about prayer?

In what ways do you rely on prayer? In what ways is your prayer life like, or unlike, the Apostle Paul?

Day 7

Application Day: Your reliant prayer plan

As we saw this week on Day 5, even in the face of death Daniel did not put his prayer life on hold for 30-days. But instead he continued to pray “...just as he had done before” (Daniel 6:10).

If you were to continue to pray “just as you have done before” over the remaining 33 days of our *Only by Prayer* focus, what would your prayer life look like? (Be specific...)

This would be a good time to stop and ask God what He would have you do that would increase your reliance on Him through prayer. As far as your personal prayers go, what are you currently doing that you’d like to keep doing, and what would you like to add during the remaining 33 days that you are not yet doing?

Think about the people and circumstances in your life right now that you want to bring before God for His help. Write them on the following chart and then use it as a reminder to pray, relying on God to answer.

Record your 33-day prayer plan below

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat