

**BLUEPRINTS: Power Tools: Power of Praying Parents
(and Grandparents)ⁱ
Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 7:24-27**

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, church family. I want to say a special welcome to those of you that are guests with us today. Thank you for entrusting us with your Sunday. It is our prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

We love to connect with our guests. We would ask you to text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. Just follow the instructions from there.

Or you can stop by Guest Connect located in the lobby. We have a team that would like to meet you and give you a gift as a way of saying thank you for being with us this morning. I will make my way there as well and I look forward to shaking your hand this morning.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Last Sunday we began a teaching series called Blueprints: Building Families by God's Design. God's Word is our blueprint, our design plan, to build healthy families that ultimately lead to healthy societies. We looked at the foundation last week. Today we turn to a message I've entitled, "Power Tools: The Power of Praying Parents (and grandparents)."

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Power Tools

About a year and a half ago, I saw where Harbor Freight was selling an electric chainsaw for \$50. Having lived in East Texas, now, for 9 years, I figured that having a chainsaw is a good idea. So, I purchased what is a 14" electric saw.

As many of you also know, chainsaws comes in handy, especially during storm season. In the last couple of years, we've had some storms that have caused limbs and trees in our yard to fall and need to be cut up.

Well, last year, we had a pretty significant limb fall in our backyard. So, I got the extension cords and our saw out. The problem was that the limb that fell was larger than the chainsaw I had. It was also in a position that if not handled properly would crush our chain-link fence. So, what do you do when you don't have the right tools for a job? You call your good friend, Jed Hefner.

I called Jed up and he came over with his giant gas chainsaw, cranked it up, and went to town. In no time that limb was completely down and cut up. Now, Jed laughed at my little chainsaw, and he still laughs at this story and shares it every chance he gets.

You know, it can be very frustrating when you don't have the right tools at your disposal. Or, when you don't make use of the tools you have. I read this week, an interesting quote that, "rust ruins more tools than overuse."ⁱⁱ

When it comes to our families, we have an amazing tool. Prayer is a power tool available to believers to help build their family according to God's design. The problem is, if we are honest, we don't utilize this tool often enough. Perhaps you are like me and would say that your prayer life has some rust.

Last week I mentioned that the battle we face for our families is spiritual in nature. As a result, we must fight for our family in a spiritual way. Well, one of our greatest spiritual weapons is prayer.

And today we are going to look at an amazing story in Matthew, chapter 15. It is a story about the incredible faith and prayer of a mother. It illustrates the power of praying parents and grandparents. And her faith will serve as an example to us to make use of the power tool of prayer for our families. We are going to see the person of a praying parent, the persistence of a praying parent, and the payoff of a praying parent. Then we are going to look at 5 ways to pray for your children and your grandchildren. That is where we are headed this morning.

MESSAGE:

So, let's begin our study of the faith of this mother by looking at the context of our passage. Matthew, chapter 15, verse 21. The Scripture reads, *"²¹And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon [Si-Don]."*

Jesus, needing to retreat and leave the hostility that was building against Him, left Israel and went to Tyre and Sidon. These are coastal cities about 35 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee in Phoenicia [Fa-knee-sha], which is modern day Lebanon.ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus spent most of his time ministering in Israel. And while we have record of Him ministering in non-Jewish regions, this is the farthest he traveled,^{iv} outside of the birth narrative when His family fled to Egypt. So, Jesus was truly wanting to get away.

But as we are going to see, when it comes to Jesus, everything is a divine appointment. Now, the news about Jesus had traveled far distances. People were hearing about His teaching and healing people.^v As a result, folks traveled from all over to gather around Him. Even in a faraway city, Jesus encounters a lady, a mother, that knows who He is; who has heard of His power. And this is where we see, number 1, ...

1) The Person of a praying parent.

Let's pick the story back up in verse 22 of Matthew 15. *22And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."* Here we see the person of a praying parent. And by saying parent, I am including grandparents.

Let me mention what I mean by that. When it comes to this story, there are two people that our attention zooms in on; the person praying, and the person of Jesus hearing the prayer. Let's look at those two perspectives.

We are told that the woman that approaches Jesus is a Canaanite woman. This is important information for several reasons as it plays into the faith of this lady. First, the Canaanites were a condemned people in the Old Testament.^{vi} In fact, when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the Canaanites occupied that land. God told them to completely wipe them out. The Israelites didn't carry out that command, and as a result, there was great tension between the Jews and the Canaanites. Tension that exists today.

So, this lady is a Canaanite, also known as a Gentile. This meant that she grew up not worshiping the Jewish God, The God of the Bible. In fact, the religion of the Canaanites was a very pagan religion.^{vii} We would understand it as a cult that practiced disgusting things. And, most likely, this is why her daughter is demon-possessed. Cultic activity opens the door to demonic spirits.

Parents, let me just mention something here. We must be very careful what we allow because if we are not, we open our families up to spiritual attack. We have to protect our kids from evil influences. The enemy is on the prowl. Set TV and movies standards. Guard internet practices. Limit access to things that might negatively influence your kids. Be involved with your kids and who they are texting. We have a practice in our family that our kids don't take their phones with them into their rooms. They leave them in the living room each

night. And our kids have balked at that. "What about an alarm?! I need my phone for an alarm." So, we got them an old-fashioned alarm clock.

You don't have to do the same things we have done in our family, but you do need to protect your family from evil influences they face.

Now, notice the desperation of this mother. Verse 22 says that she, "*came out and was crying.*" Meaning she, left her home^{viii} and she was crying out in a loud voice.^{ix} That's the literal translation. And she says, "*Have mercy on me!*" In other words, "Please, see my pitiful state and show me mercy."^x

I want you to feel the weight of this mother. I picture a woman, exhausted from dealing with a difficult child, getting word of Jesus being in town, dropping what she's doing, runs out of her house, and comes begging Jesus for help. You see the desperation. Maybe you, as a parent, you've been there, or are in that place now. She is in desperate need of God's intervention with her child.

She obviously loves her daughter. She wants the best for her daughter. But despite all attempts of her own, her daughter is still a mess. Do you feel it? What do you do when you find yourself in that situation? You start using power tools. Even before then. Pray. And that's what she does. And that is where we see the second person of a praying parent, Jesus.

This mother calls Jesus two things, "Lord," and "Son of David." This is amazing because by saying these things she's acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews. So, somewhere along the line, she developed some good theology. She probably heard about Jesus and that He is able to heal people and cast out demons. So, she appeals to Jesus on the basis of who He is. Lord.

This is important for us to understand as well. **Before Jesus can be our deliverer, He must be our Lord.** This Canaanite woman had turned to Jesus as Lord, Master, and Savior. We often tend to think that Jesus can be our deliverer apart from Him being the Lord, Boss, of our lives. We can, treat Him like a genie in a bottle, turning to Him in our time of need, but not being led by Him in our times of success. But this lady, in Matthew 15, turning from her pagan ways to Jesus as Lord.

And the last thing I want to point out in verse 22 is the dire situation of the daughter. She is, "*severely oppressed by a demon.*" The word translated,

“severely,” carries the meaning of experiencing grievous harm.^{xi} What we have here is a brokenhearted and burdened mother because her precious daughter is afflicted and tormented. And coming to the end of herself, she turns to Jesus and begs Him.

So, we see the person of the praying parents. Secondly, in this lady, we see...

2) The Persistence of a praying parent.

Look what happens after this mother cries out to Jesus. Verse 23. ***“23But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she is crying out after us.’ 24He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ 25But she came and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ 26And he answered, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ 27She said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’*** Do you see the persistence of this mother? I want to point out 5 obstacles^{xii} she faced, which demonstrate her persistence in prayer, and the power of a praying parent.

First, she was **alone**. Her husband never enters this story. Now, maybe he was working. Or maybe he had died. Or perhaps he left the entire situation. We don’t know, but here we have a single mother, feeling the weight of the world, praying desperately for her child. Single moms in the room, I hope this speaks to you in an especially powerful way. This lady boldly approaches 13 men, Jesus and his 12 disciples, crying out on behalf of her child. Her daughter needs a touch from Jesus. So, she overcomes the obstacle of being alone.

Secondly, she shows persistence by overcoming Jesus’ **silence**. Verse 23 says, “Jesus didn’t *answer her a word*.” Seemingly doesn’t even acknowledge her. Doesn’t say one word. Would you have been put off by that? I don’t want to bother Jesus, so I’ll stop praying. But she keeps persisting.

The third obstacle she overcomes is **discouragement**, rejection. Embarrassed by the situation, the disciples go to Jesus and, look at it, they beg Him to *send her away*. This lady is causing a scene, Jesus. She is a nuisance. Don’t waste our time, send her away. Would this have discouraged you? She continues.

The fourth obstacle she faces is her **condition**. Jesus says in verse 24, ***‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’*** Finally, Jesus speaks to her and He essentially said, I came for the Jew first. Jesus is eventually going

to break down racial barriers and offer salvation to the world. But at this point, His mission was to share the gospel with the Jews. And what this woman hears is prejudice. But even this doesn’t stop her. She continues persisting.

In verse 25, she takes a posture of desperation. She, ***“knelt before”*** Jesus. The literal translation here is that she prostrates herself in front of Jesus. She falls to her knees in worship.^{xiii}

And then the fifth obstacle, **challenge**. She asks Jesus to help her to which He says, ***“It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”*** Did Jesus just call her a dog? That’s what the Jews would call Gentiles. Wait a minute, I thought Jesus was loving and kind and compassionate. This seems completely out of character for Jesus.

Well, in the original language of the Bible, there are two words translated dogs. One refers to the wild, vicious and scavenger type of dogs. That’s the word most Jews used to refer to non-Jewish people. But the word Jesus uses here for dogs refers to a household pet.^{xiv} So, Jesus is saying, again, I came to show the Jews that I am the Messiah. It wouldn’t be good to give to you what is meant for the Jews. And the lady even agrees. In verse 27, she says, “Yeah, but even little puppies *eat the crumbs that fall from* the table. I’ll settle for a crumb, Jesus!” She continues to appeal to Jesus in the face of 5 obstacles.

What is happening here? Why is Jesus being rude? Has Jesus lost it here? None of those things. Listen, Jesus, in presenting obstacles, is drawing out her faith. He’s revealing the depths of her faith in God. Jesus, by creating this moment, to be recorded in Holy Writ for all of eternity, is showing the need for the persistence of praying parents. This story has been preserved for us to read and be encouraged.

And by Jesus drawing out the woman’s faith, he is getting to, number 3, ...

3) The Payoff of a praying parent.

This is good. Look at verse 28. ***28Then Jesus answered her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly.*** Oh man! Overcoming the obstacles was worth hearing Jesus say, “Great is your faith!” And the word translated, “great,” is the word “megas.” Literally translated means “great in the wildest sense.”^{xv} This lady’s faith was mega, massive, gigantic. The obstacles she overcame proved her faith great.

Did you know that Jesus only said of 2 people that they had great faith? This woman, and the centurion who believed Jesus could heal his servant. Think about that for a moment.

When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, he called out to Him and said, “Lord, if that’s You, call me out and I’ll walk on water.” Remember this? So, Peter gets out of the boat and starts walking on water. Then he starts to sink, and do you remember what Jesus said to him? Jesus said, “O you of little faith.”^{xvi} Peter, who had more faith than the other jokers in the boat, the other disciples, had little faith.

But the Canaanite woman? She had great faith. She leveraged the power tool of prayer for her child. Her approaching the person, and her persistence, led to her payoff. Her prayer was like a heat seeking missile^{xvii}, touching the Lord’s heart, and bringing about change for her daughter. The lady’s daughter was healed.

Now, I think it is important to point out that God answers prayer according to His will and His timing. We understand that. But the urging is still the same. There is power in a praying parent and grandparent. But we also must realize that in our persistence that we may not see the answer we desire in our lifetime, but you keep asking, seeking, and knocking on behalf of your family.

The person, the persistence, and the payoff of a praying parent. Now, in the time we have left, I want to make mention of...

4) 5 ways to pray for your kids.

I’m going to give you a resource on specific prayers you can pray and then we are going to actually began practicing that this morning. But I want to mention 5 approaches, 5 ways to pray in general. You can apply your specific practices to these approaches.

1) Pray for yourself.

Don’t forget that God is using you to shape your kids. And He is shaping your heart all while you are shaping your kids and grandkids hearts. How is God leading You? What is He teaching you? How can you lead and guide your children? And ask God to remind you that your kids are a blessing from Him. James 1:5 says, if anyone lacks wisdom, he should ask God who will give generously without finding fault. Parenting requires wisdom. Pray for yourself.

2) Pray for their hearts.

Above all things, God is most interested in our hearts. That’s true of your kids and grandkids as well. Pray for a changed heart; salvation. Ask God to replace their heart of stone with a heart of flesh. Beg God that they would be surrounded by godly friends. Pray for their protection. Pray for yourself and pray for their hearts.

3) Pray Scripture over them.

God’s Word is powerful and active. Pray His Word back to Him. I have a resource that we have put together to get you started doing this. I’m going to have our deacons pass that out in just a moment. But a practical way you can pray Scripture over your kids is to read a Psalm a day. Find a verse or two that you can pray over your kids and grandkids, and personalize that verse for them. Pray for yourself. Pray for your kids’ hearts. Pray Scripture over them.

4) Pray specifically.

Ask God to work in specific ways. God, my daughter is taking a test today. Help them recall all the work they’ve put into studying. God, provide for my son. God bring my prodigal to rock bottom so he can turn back to you and come home. Pray bold and specific prayers.

Finally, ...

5) Never stop praying.

In multiple places The Bible urges us to pray without ceasing. Don’t get discouraged by the obstacles. Press through. Which obstacle can you identify with? Does Jesus seem silent? Keep praying. Are you discouraged by others? Keep pressing into the heart of God. Is your condition so overwhelming that it seems impossible? Don’t stop praying. Do you keep running into challenges? Be like Jacob at Peniel. Don’t let go of God until He touches you.

CONCLUSION:

Here’s how I want to end today. The band is going to start making their way up on stage. Deacons, go ahead and start passing out those prayer sheets. The band is going to play instrumentally. But I want you to gather with your family. Maybe you need to gather with some friends. That’s fine. But I want you to pray the Psalms over your kids that are on that sheet. Pray out loud if you’d like. Fill in the blank with your child’s name. Take time to pray these and continue to do that throughout the week. After a time, I’ll close us and our time together.

BULLPEN:

I want to close today with a story I came across in my study this week. A story about a lady named Monica who lived 1,600 years ago. She was in an arranged marriage. While she was a strong Christian, her husband was an unbeliever. She had three children. Two of her kids walked closely with The Lord. But the other one was a prodigal. He lived a reckless life.

Monica prayed for her wayward son. She would weep when she prayed. One day she went to her pastor who knew how much she prayed. Her pastor said what would become very famous words, "It is not possible that a son of so many tears would perish."

A few years before Monica died, her son was saved. It is believed that her husband also came to faith. But what she didn't know when she died was that wayward son would become famous in church history. In fact, that son had more impact on Christianity than any man who ever lived, apart from Jesus and the apostle Paul. His name was Augustine. Some pronounce it Augusteen.

Augustine is still widely read in theological circles. He is known for defending the Christian faith in profound ways. His proofs for Christianity are still mentioned in debates with atheists today.

Later, Augustine wrote his most famous book entitled, *The Confessions*. In that book, he talks about his struggle with sin. But I love what he said of his mother. He said, quote, "My mother watered the earth with her tears."

The power of a praying parent. Whether it's a Canaanite woman of 2,000 years ago, Monica 1,600 years ago, or you and me today. God is looking to answer the prayers of parents with great faith. Don't stop praying for your kids and grandkids. You never know what God will spring up from the ground soaked with your tears.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: David Platt, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, Holman: Nashville, 2013; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15*, Moody: Chicago, 1987; David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary, "Matthew 15 – Jesus Corrects the Pharisees and Ministers to Gentiles,"* accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-15/>; Erwin Lutzer, *The Power of Praying Parents*, published by The Moody Church, July 28, 2013, accessed online: <https://www.moodymedia.org/sermons/fighting-your-family/power-praying-parents/>; Jack Graham, *The Faith of a Praying Mother*, published by PowerPoint Ministries, May 10, 2019, accessed online: <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/powerpoint/listen/the-faith-of-a-praying-mother-755416.html>; Adrian Rogers, *When Parents Pray*, published by Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2022; Jeff Atherton, *Put the Work In: The Power of a Praying Family*, article published by Pipeline Church, September 20, 2023, accessed online: <https://pipeline.church/blog/2023/09/20/put-the-work-in-the-power-of-a-praying-family>; Mark Batterson, *Power of a Praying Parent*, article published by Christian Parenting, August 24, 2021, accessed online: <https://www.christianparenting.org/articles/power-of-a-praying-parent/>; Skip Heitzig, *Expound: Matthew 15*, message delivered Wednesday, March 28, 2012, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/55/sermon/811>; Woodside Bible Church Podcast, *The Link: Season 4, Episode 14, "A Practical Guide for Praying Parents,"* published 2023, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUvWhRqqxOo>; Ray Fowler, *A Savior for All*, published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/matthew/a-savior-for-all/>.

ⁱⁱ Author unknown, Access Inspiration, accessed online: <https://accessinspiration.org/library/2359/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur, pages 466-467.

^{iv} Fowler.

^v MacArthur, page 467.

^{vi} Pointed out by Heitzig.

^{vii} Lutzer.

^{viii} Strong's Concordance, 1831, exerchomai.

^{ix} Strong's Concordance, 2896, krazó.

^x Strong's Concordance, 1653, eleeó.

^{xi} Strong's Concordance, 2560, kakós.

^{xii} Pointed out by Erwin Lutzer.

^{xiii} Strong's Concordance, 4352, proskuneó.

^{xiv} MacArthur, page, 473.

^{xv} Strong's Concordance, 3173, megas.

^{xvi} Matthew 14:31, ESV.

^{xvii} Quip taken from Jack Graham.
