



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

August 10-16, 2020

Sermon by Lead Pastor Pete Moon

Sermon Title: "The Power of Persistence"

Notes from sermon on 8/9:

Things to Pray For This Week:

Family Focus Question:

The Canaanite woman in the story kept talking to Jesus even though she didn't get the answer she wanted at first. Describe a time or a prayer where you just kept asking, even though your request did not seem to elicit any response from God.

Questions for Small Groups

1. Is it enough to just be persistent in prayer or does God desire more from us than simple determination?
2. Have you ever felt like you were "wrestling with God" as did Jacob?
3. What is the difference between this story and this woman's persistence and that of the persistent widow and unjust judge in Luke 18:1-8?

Monday, August 10: Read Matthew 15:21-28

How persistent are we in pursuing what we truly want and need? What do we allow to get in our way? Perhaps it's distraction or laziness on our part, or we become intimidated when told "no." Maybe we don't believe we really deserve a life of full health, happiness, and meaning...or don't believe it actually exists. This week we will study scriptures that demonstrate persistence, and we begin today with a difficult passage. The Jesus we know and love seems so harsh to the poor Canaanite woman desperate to save her child - even comparing her to a dog! While there are many interpretations of Jesus's mindset and intentions in this uncharacteristic behavior, one thing is clear: this Canaanite woman had a need and wasn't quitting until Jesus responded. As a result, she was praised for her faith and granted her request.

What do we do when someone challenges us to stand up for ourselves and persist? Have we ever encountered a teacher, coach, family member, or boss who pushed us to defend our beliefs, speak up, and never give up? Have we ever experienced God doing the same?

Tuesday, August 11: Read Genesis 32:24-30

Today we read the story of how the nation begat by Abraham came to be called Israel, or “one who wrestles with God.” From the time of this ancient story to today, the Jewish people have certainly lived up to this name. Through countless wars, persecution, and attempted genocides, they have persisted in their walk with God – not perfectly or all in the same way, but through sin, victory, anguish, joy, faith, doubt, strength, and weakness. The entire Bible tells this story, as does all of history. Even today, Rabbinical schools are filled with students wrestling with scripture. Families and friends gather around Shabbat tables and debate scripture into the late hours of the night. Can we gain inspiration from our Jewish brothers and sisters and wrestle with the hard questions with God, pursuing our relationship with God even when we feel like giving up, or settling for the easy answers? The late great Rachel Held Evans wrote in her book *Inspired*, “Jews use scripture to start a conversation; Christians use scripture to end one.” Could this be true?

Wednesday, August 12: Read Luke 18:1-6

Both the circumstance and cause of the widow in today’s parable contrast sharply with those of the Canaanite woman in Monday’s gospel reading. The widow was dealing with an unjust and ungodly judge; the Canaanite woman was dealing with Jesus. The widow wanted justice; the Canaanite woman needed mercy. Both women, however, were among the lowest of society yet showed incredible tenacity and faith in demanding what was right. Perhaps we are called to respond to this passage today in two ways. First, we are reminded yet again of the need to persist. However, we are also surrounded today by people demanding justice and pleading for mercy and help. What will be our response?

Thursday, August 13: Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians shows us that we should not only persist in asking for what we want for ourselves, we should persist in prayer and petition for others. “*I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ...may give you....*” Who do we need to be keeping in our prayers more faithfully and earnestly? What habits can we start that will help us become more faithful prayer partners and prayer warriors for others? What might then change in our behavior if we do so? What might change in our world?

Friday, August 14: Read Psalm 119:145-152

The psalms are perhaps the world’s best example of persistence in prayer. Throughout every human emotion, the writers call out to God, sometimes joyful and thankful, often angry and anguished, but always turning to God in faith. Today’s reading comes near the end of the longest psalm in the Bible. We can read it in isolation or test our own focus and persistence and read the psalm in its entirety. Are we up for it? Can we persist in God’s word? What would be the reward?

Saturday, August 15: Scripture Memorization: Psalm 119:148

“My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,
that I may meditate on your promises.”

Sunday, August 16: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Lord we confess that all too often we give up on you. Jacob wrestled all night, fighting for that loving touch of blessing and we say AMEN after a few minutes. The Canaanite woman of whom we speak this week cried out with unceasing desire for your help and we cannot stay the course with you. Forgive us for our chronic short spiritual attention span. As you drew out the best in Jacob and this Canaanite prayer warrior, draw out the best in us and lead us into a deeper place with you. In Jesus’ name we pray, AMEN*