



One Prayer – Week 1

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We've joined with over two million believers last year for One Prayer. It was a time when all the churches came together regardless of their convictions, regardless of their denomination. They joined together to share, to serve and to give and out of that, 600 churches were started and great things happened. It was an incredible thing. We pray to God all the time but the question was asked, *"What if we answered God's one prayer?"* And his one prayer according to John 17 was that all the believers would come together and that they would know that we were Christians by the love that we had for one another. So we dropped all those barriers last year and it was a great month and this year we are doing it again. We're going to join with churches all over the world and it will be even bigger this year and the theme this year is "God Is". So the challenge this year to all the pastors was to begin the series with a sermon about God is and take that from your perspective. Next week you're going to hear Craig Groshel and he is going to talk about God is love and the week after that you're going to hear Perry Noble talk about God is here. I was looking at what I could share with you, is it hope, refuge, grace, mercy; what do I want to share today with you about what God is. I came to the conclusion that God is and that is basically it. God is. Now, I don't know what you're experiencing today, I don't know what is going on in your life. I would expect there are people in here today that are having trouble. I would expect there are people in here today that are in dark times. Maybe you've lost your job. Maybe you've lost your house. Maybe you have a family member or yourself who is dealing with a life threatening disease. Maybe you have children that are rebelling. I don't know what's going on in your life today; it may be some dark times in your life, but I do know this...in all of the struggles, in everything that goes on...God is. God is at work around you. God is at work doing things even if you don't see it. So the question today is can you have faith and believe if you see none of God's activity in your life? Can you have faith and believe if you see none of God's activity in your church? What if you don't see the activity of God in your country or your world? Can you still believe? Can you still have faith even though you go through a time that seems like every prayer you pray just hits the ceiling and it's not even worthwhile to pray; that there is nothing out there? Can you still have faith? Can you have faith when there are 963 million people starving? Get that number...nine hundred sixty three million today are starving to death, but I want you to understand that God still is. A third of our world struggles today because they don't have clean water to drink, but God still is. Sixteen

thousand children a day die because they don't have food. That's one every four seconds but God still is. Thirty three million people are infected with the AIDS virus and eighteen million children in this next year, just in Africa, are going to be orphaned because of that epidemic, but God still is. Since 1973 America has murdered forty nine unborn children. You multiply that by the hurt in the hearts of the women who are carrying that emotional pain around and God still is.

Today as we look at the Word of God, I want to tell you one of the most exciting things about it. One of the most exciting things about this book is that it is written by God but it is written through people who were experiencing dark times. It's written through people who were suffering; it's written for real people. It's not a fairy tale book written about a bunch of rich people. Aren't you glad it doesn't read that someone got a job on Monday; got a promotion on Tuesday; a bonus on Wednesday and all their kids went to medical school on athletic scholarships? That's not what this says. This book is about real people with real problems with real doubts, with real pain and at the end of all of the trouble that they see in the Word of God, God is. Today I want you to see that no matter what circumstance you find yourself in. That sometimes when it's the darkest; sometimes when God doesn't appear to be listening; sometimes when you think that God is not active; that is when he is absolutely doing the most. I want to turn to a passage today which is probably one of the most confusing times; one of the most difficult times in the life of men we see in the Bible. It's in Mark the fourteenth chapter, open your Bible and let's look at this dark event. This is an event in the men's life that gave up everything to follow the Messiah. You see, these twelve disciples had been following Jesus for three years. They gave up their livelihood, their income; they gave up their homes, they gave up their families; they gave up everything to follow this Messiah. And their idea of this Messiah was that he was going to throw off the Roman government and he was going to set up a kingdom and to sit up on a throne and they were going to be on his right and left hand side; that's what they were following. That's what they believed was going to happen with this Christ. Let me tell you when it started out, it was exciting. They're following this guy who was doing some incredible things; he is feeding five thousand people with bread and a fish. He is walking on the water; he is bringing people sight that was blind; he's making the lame to walk...I'm telling you for the first period of Jesus' ministry he is a rock star. People gathered around him; they were excited about him coming to town; they flooded into the town; people were pushing on him to try to touch him just to get close to him. He was unbelievable; he was the most popular character in the entire area. Everybody knew Jesus. Everybody wanted a piece of Jesus. Everybody wanted to hear about his guy; and here were the apostles; the disciples that were the key men. They were standing around Jesus like body guards. They're like I'll take the message, we are tight. I'm with him. They are walking proud and they are excited about what God is doing and they can't wait to see what is going to happen. But then Jesus turns his eyes to Jerusalem and as he does he begins to tell his disciples that he was going to go into Jerusalem and be handed over the Chief Priest and they are going to put him to death. Excuse me? Did you say that if you go to Jerusalem you're going to die? I've got this great idea...let's don't go to Jerusalem. But Jesus is narrow minded and focused and says no, we're going to Jerusalem. Jesus started having trouble because he started butting heads with the religious leaders and heads and telling them that they were snakes. Not the most positive

thing to do. These people had power and they were looking at Jesus and began to see him as a problem so while the crowds were still following him, the religious leaders were looking for a way to trap him. They were looking for anything they could do and so what they decided is that they would have to get him away from the crowds because if they attacked him and came at him when he was in the crowd, the crowd might turn against them. So they were looking for a time that they would be alone and Jesus was going into Jerusalem. The disciples are worried; they know that the officials are out to get him; they know that his life is in danger and it's not as cool to be hanging around Jesus now. He's not that popular rock star. And so as they enter into it they are getting ready to have the Passover Meal and they've had Passover Meals before together and boy they were proud of that because that's a time where you bring your closest friends, your family together and you're celebrating. If you don't know what Passover is, it's an Old Testament tradition thing that happened to the children of Israel. If you remember, the children of Israel went into Egypt as a family and they grew so incredibly large that the Egyptians enslaved them and their lives were hard; they were crying out to this God and let me tell you something...they were crying out to God the bible says for four hundred years. Four hundred years they didn't see the activity of God. Four hundred years they didn't see the hand of God. We have four days without seeing the activity of God and we wonder if he's there. They had generation after generation praying for a deliverer and nothing had happened; but God was at work. Moses came and begins to lead the children of Israel out and this Passover was the last supper they had in Egypt and Moses gave them instructions from God. He said eat with haste, gather your family and your friends together, kill a Passover lamb and take the blood from that lamb and put it on the door post because tonight the angel of death will come here and the first born will die unless you have this blood on the door post of your home and if that blood is on the door post of the home then the angel of death will pass over that house. So, the Jews celebrated the Passover meal and here fourteen hundred years later, Jesus is preparing another last supper with his disciples, but he's keeping it real quiet because the officials are trying to get him and he's got a lot to do. We pick up there in verse 12 chapter 14 of Mark. *"On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover? So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you."* Now that's incredible to me...how did Jesus know that kind of stuff? It's a good thing that I wasn't a disciple because Jesus would have said that and I would have asked him where and exactly what kind of water is it? Is it Osarka water? God, I've got to have more information before I go into town. No, just go into town, a man carrying a thing of water and ask him to take you. *"Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."* Here they are getting ready to go into this dangerous situation, into Jerusalem alone and celebrate the Passover. And so as they are gathering together in this intimate setting, they're waiting for Jesus to come and say okay guys, everything is going according to plan, this is perfect. After the Passover I'm going to stand up and claim that I'm the Messiah and everybody will gather around me, we're going to throw off the Roman oppressors; I'm going to set up the Throne of David, it's cool...I've got this. That's what they're hoping. But as they're sitting in this room and their afraid for their lives, after sitting in this

room and everything they know about God is being shaken. Jesus looks at them and he basically says hey guys, you think this is bad? It's about to get worse. Pick up with me again. *"While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"* Now here they are with their closest friends; it's an intimate setting. People come into your house into a meal; they're your friends, they are close to you. The Passover meal especially and Jesus is saying you think this is bad? One of you is a traitor. He goes on to say *"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."* Then that's bad enough right? Jesus takes it a whole other level. *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it."* He's saying, I'm going to die. The disciples are blown away. These men have given up their jobs, their families, their homes and they're following Jesus expecting him to throw off the Roman government so that they could rule with him. And he says, you know what, this bread represents my broken body, this wine represents my blood that I am going to spill out and I want you to hear today every passage of scripture in the Word of God is dealing with a bad situation. These disciples are sitting here this night and the news could not be worse. You've got to know, everything they thought about God was being thrown out the door. God was abandoning him; he was leaving them and it gets worse! He says every one of you is going to desert me. Peter, you are not only going to desert me; you're going to claim you never knew me and by the end of the night you're going to curse my name. It's a pretty dark spot to be in isn't it? Every passage in the bible; every Proverb you ever read is from men and women who are dealing with pain; who are dealing with sorrow; who are dealing with struggle. You get Joseph in the Old Testament; I mean you've had sibling problems right? You all had problems with your brother's and sister's right? We've all that tension with Christmas and other holidays with our siblings. Well, let me ask you...have you ever been thrown down in the bottom of the well with your brothers and sisters trying to decide if they are going to kill you or sell you; because that's where Joseph was. They took Joseph and threw him down into a well and the conversation at the top of the well, while he's laying there all busted up and hurting, is let's kill him. And then the good brother is like let's just sell him instead. That's a rough spot to be in. I'm guaranteeing you that Joseph is crying out to God because he has had these dreams that he's going to be this great ruler. He's had these dreams that he's going to be above his mother and father and he expects God to do great things in his life and now he's at the bottom of the well wondering if he's getting sold or killed. You think he saw God's activity in that? When he was in the worst time in his life he had no idea that God was working to bring him into Egypt so that he could save his family and those dreams that he had could come true. How about David? David's a man of trouble isn't he? Some of you have had trouble with kids before right? Rebellious teenagers...have they ever gathered an army and come to want to dethrone you? Anybody ever had that happen? Gather an army and come to kill you...that's what David had. And you know that David was crying out to God and he was running from his own son and had no idea that God was in control moving this for the best. We talked about Moses; picture his mom for a moment. A lot of you moms in here...can you imagine getting word that all of the boys under two years old were going to be put to death because there are just too many? You

have this precious boy and you are looking at him knowing that they are going to come and hack him up with a sword and you want everything in your life to protect him. So you risk putting him in a basket and floating him out to the Nile River because you would rather that the alligators get him than the swordsmen from Egypt cut him up. Can you imagine the pain? Don't you know she was crying out to God and this was a dark time in her life; she had no idea that God was moving in this and that years and years later it would be a picture of what happened to Jesus. As Herod was going to do the same thing and destroy all of the children under the age of two and an angel came and Mary and Joseph ran down to where...Egypt to protect Jesus. In the darkest times, God still is. In the times that you are struggling...God still is. In the times that you don't see the activity of God in your life, the times that you don't see the activities of God in your church, in your country, in your world...He is still in control. You ask those disciples what was the worst night of their lives; the night that we had Passover with Jesus; the night that he was led off and beaten; the night that I ran like a coward; the night that I cursed his name and said that I did not know him. The worst night of my life; the darkest night of my existence they would tell you. But then you ask them on what night God do the most? And they would say that night of the last supper when my savior went to the cross to pay the penalty for my sins; when he went to the cross to pay the penalty for not just my sins, but the sins of the entire world and at my darkest moment as a disciple, God was doing everything he could to save generation after generation and God was working the most when we couldn't see the hand of God at all in our lives. That's my challenge to you today...I don't know where you are and you know I'm not going home with you; I'm not getting in your car; I'm not having to pay your bills; I'm not having to find a new job; I'm not worried about losing my house, but I want you to know today where ever you are; even if God is quiet in your life; he is still in control and in your worst moments he may be more active than he has ever been in your whole life. I want to take you to Ephesians real quickly because there are three things that you need to know and remember when you're in that dark spot. Three things I want you to hold on to know that God is in control. It's found in Ephesians 1. The first thing to remember even when times are rough; you need to remember that God has chosen you. Listen to this verse...*"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."* Ephesians 1:4-5. That verse has been argued about for centuries but I want you to see one thing...you're adopted as his son's and daughter's in Christ. When you are at your worst you need to know that God has a plan for you; he has chosen you; he has adopted you. This is mind blowing...he loves you as much as he loves Jesus. Does that blow you away? Have any of you been adopted into a home? I adopted a little boy eight years ago and I brought him into my home and if you would have asked me ten years ago if I would love an adopted child as my own I wouldn't have known how to answer. But I can tell you today, that adopted child of mine; that child from another culture; that child from hurt and pain; that child that has problems that he is going to deal with all his life...do I love him like I love my biological children? Do I love him like I love the children who were born from me and my wife? You better believe it; every bit as much; there is no difference for my love for him and my love for my other four. In fact, at times, I love him more than I love my biological children because they're my fault. When I see the love that I have for that boy, I realize the love that Jesus has for me. I realize that he took me and adopted me; he chose me and he loves me with all of his heart and he

loves you with all of his heart; it's mind boggling. The difference between us and Malachi...is that baby deserved to be adopted; he deserved to be given a chance and deserved to have a family that would love him, encourage and support him. Me and you...not so much; that's why Jesus said even while you were a sinner; even while you were against God; an enemy of God; he died for you because he chose you. He not only chose you; the verse goes on to say that he has a plan for you. *"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,"* Ephesians 1:11 God not only chose you but he has a plan for you. In Jeremiah we read that he has a plan to prosper you and take care of you even in your darkest times; even when things are going wrong, God is active and has a plan and he is in control and when you can't see his activity in your life, he is still there because he has a plan. He not only chose you and has a plan; he has guaranteed a future for you. *"Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."* Ephesians 1:14. We have an inheritance from God; we have eternal life from God; we have a heavenly home in God; we have every right to all of the blessings and all the riches of Jesus. He loves you just like he loves Jesus. It's amazing isn't it? But I have to quickly point out something because I don't preach feel good sermons; I preach biblical sermons and I know there are people here today who come and like the music that we do and you like watch me say stupid things from the pulpit that you can laugh at and you hear this and today you may be in a dark place and you're thinking, "Wow, that's great." I have to warn you...an inheritance is only for children. You see one day when I die my five children are going to get the bills from my funeral. You won't have to pay them. Anything I have will be passed down to my five kids and you have no right to an inheritance from me. You're not mine. Today when I tell you that you have an inheritance from God, you have no right to that inheritance from God unless you belong to him. These promises; these are family promises. These are promises that he is making to his family and his family alone. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28. If you have not surrendered your life to God; if you have not become part of the family of God, everything I said this morning does not apply to you what so ever. You have no promises; you're not part of the family. Now here is the good news...when the Holy Spirit begins to work in your heart and you begin to hear these things; that means God has chosen you to be part of the family. When you feel that call to come to church and listen and the Holy Spirit is working in your life, that is God calling you, God saying I've chosen you; God saying I have a plan for you; God saying I have a future for you but at this moment when he calls you have to answer. Revelations says I stand at the door and knock...folks you've got to open the door. You can't come to God through church attendance; you can't come to God because your parents were good parents; you can't come to God because you hang around Christian people; you can't come to God because you give. You can only come to God with a broken heart saying God, I am a sinner; God I have walked away from you; God I am not living for you and today I want to be broken before you; forgive me. At that point you become a child of God; from that day forward and all of these promises; even when you don't see the activity of God you can rest assured that God is.