

Agur's Prayer

Cody Ford

Given 20-Jun-26; Sermon #1881s

With this year just flying by us, hunting season is already around the corner. And as some of you may already know, I am an aspiring hunter. Emphasis on *aspiring*. I creep out to the woods before sunrise, and once I finally get nestled in my tree, I am expecting a deer to walk out in those first five minutes. But of course that does not happen. I then have hours and hours of squirrels playing and other random animals passing through the woods—everything except deer. I have seen bobcats, wild dogs, mink, snakes, heron, and foxes. The list goes on and on.

As I am sitting there for those hours, I have a lot of time to think and meditate and reflect on my life. And something I often do is pray. Now I like to think my prayers are pretty balanced, but a few self-centered ones have been known to slip in there from time to time. I may or may not have offered my allegiance to God in exchange for the right size buck.

I know that God hears that prayer, maybe even chuckles to Himself, but it is not exactly on His list of priorities. And there is a reason for that. Possibly by only giving me what I need, it causes me to continue praying, something He desires from us.

Today I want to talk about a specific prayer found in Proverbs and it is one my dad repeated daily. In fact, this is the last topic he was working on before his death.

So, in light of Father's Day tomorrow, I would like to share his topic with you and there are many things from this prayer we can learn and apply in our daily lives. Now, I do not want to step on my best friend's toes here, but I want to shed some light on a lesser known biblical figure of my own. I am speaking of Agur from Proverbs. For the purposes of this sermonette, we are going to pronounce his name Aye-gur. I have heard Ah-gur also. There is no wrong answers. You can say it in your head however you would like.

So who was Agur? Unfortunately, not much is known about him. However, his wisdom is on par with Solomon's. We do know he lived during Solomon's reign, but essentially he is one of the most mysterious characters in the entire Bible. Please turn to Proverbs 30. The Bible gives no details whatsoever on his occupation, where he lived, or family members beyond briefly mentioning his father.

Let us go ahead and read the first six verses of Proverbs 30, and after that, I will have some commentary for you. The heading of my Bible says The Wisdom of Agur.

Proverbs 30:1-6 The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal: Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know? Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

So the chapter starts as Agur, the son of Jakeh, is speaking to Ithiel and Ucal, possibly students or maybe his friends. But Agur's identity is not as important as the character that he displays. He insists that he has no great wisdom or understanding and in verse 2 says, "Surely I am more stupid than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." The humility continues in verse 3, "I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the Holy One."

He is clearly humble and wise despite his claims, and he goes on in verse 4, which sounds a lot like God's conversation with Job. "Who has ascended into heaven, and descended? . . . What is His name and what is His Son's name, if you know?" John 3:13 reveals that to be Jesus Christ, of course. And in verses 5 and 6, He instructs us to trust in God's pure words. Not to add or take away from them, and He will be a shield to us. David echoes this in Psalm 23:1.

So after establishing his humility and complete dependence on God, Agur does something impressive. He records a very personal prayer. The prayer is found in verses 7 through 9 of Proverbs 30, and it is the only prayer in the book of Proverbs. In just a few verses, Agur covers all the bases. Let us read that now.

Proverbs 30:7-9 Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.

Notice Agur only asked for two things: truthfulness and balance. Agur is acutely aware of his human nature and is asking God to help him avoid sin by not allowing his life to go into one extreme or another. He is humbly submitting before God. As the Good News Bible translation says in the beginning of verse 8, "keep me from lying." Agur is asking God to remove even the possibility of bending the truth. I am sure he was not a liar, but did not want to be tempted to take any verbal shortcuts. Prevent me from lying, in other words.

Pride and misplaced trust in financial gain creep in when we succeed in this world, causing us to forget that we should be striving instead to be accepted into the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, constantly being short on money causes us to lose faith, take shortcuts, and resent God and men for our troubles. Agur just wants the right amount of physical and spiritual food from God to avoid extremes.

This is admirable since we all pray for success. No one prays for a mediocre financial budget. But do we pray for the minimum as Agur did? Or do we tend to pray for more self-centered reasons? Paul writes that God will supply all our needs in Philippians 4:19. It is normal for us to pray for a safe and successful day for ourselves and loved ones. There is nothing wrong with that, per se.

However, Agur only wants to be right with God. He knows that everything will fall into place if we put Him first, and that is documented in Matthew 6:

33. He does not want to be starving and homeless, nor does he want to be filthy rich. I have observed that God seems to want everything in our lives balanced. And He will issue a course correction if it is not. Sometimes it benefits you and sometimes it does not.

Satan's world is constantly pushing materials at us via TV, social media, radio, podcasts, etc. New cars, clothing, and electronics are paraded in front of us at a breakneck speed. It is not wrong to want or own any of these things, but Christ warns against covetousness in Luke 12:15, which says,

Luke 12:15 (ISV) Then He [Jesus Christ] said to them, "Be careful to guard yourselves against every kind of greed, for a person's life doesn't consist of the amount of possessions he has."

You cannot take it with you when you die, in other words. Perhaps this is why Agur asked for just the right amount of blessings. Too many riches and he will forget God. Too little and he will seek to gain what he does not have. It is difficult to maintain that balance with human nature.

God, in fact, blesses us by not giving us wealth and riches. We would surely drift away from Him and miss out on being His firstfruits. Excess wealth and possessions could and often does breed pride and forgetfulness as God drifts to the background as we forget how we acquired the blessings in the first place. I have often wondered if God puts us all through situations that cause us to pray to Him. He wants to hear from us. God wants to be involved in our daily lives.

When things go well in our lives, we tend to forget about our Creator and happily go about our day. However, when trouble comes, the first thing we do is ask for help. If it is serious, we fall to our knees and plead with Him. Short, to the point, prayers like Agur's are acceptable to God. The Bible is full of them. When my daughter Audrey was younger, she left me a short note so that I would find it as I got into my truck leaving for work. I did not judge the length of the note. I was just happy that she thought to communicate with me.

I am sure God feels the same way. Any contact with Him is building our relationship with Him. The more you know someone, the more they can

know your heart. Recently, a family member told me that praying on my knees in the morning was important, but an all-day conversation with God was even better. I could not agree more. Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:17 to pray without ceasing.

Take the time to give God a quick thanks when things are going your way and ask for discernment when you are getting lost on something. If we put God first and not our own welfare and material success, everything will fall into place as it is supposed to. Communicating with God, involving Him in our every move, asking for guidance and clarity of mind will make your day more productive and spiritually rewarding. If you are in a constant conversation with God, you will be far less likely to slip up. We will also have the opportunity to ask for forgiveness many times a day when we do. Asking Him to speak through you before important conversations. Thanking Him for even seemingly minor things like beautiful weather, a good running car, a successful day, are all important in strengthening our bond with Him. If you had a neighbor that only comes over when he wants to borrow something, it is unlikely you will invest time in getting to know him, since he is clearly using you for his tools.

I believe it is the same thing with God. If you only pray when you want something, He is going to wonder where you have been the last two weeks. Constant contact is key. It should not be viewed as a chore. Calling someone on the phone is not.

If Agur shows us the importance of prayer, James shows us how powerful it can be. Please turn to James chapter 5, verse 13. Since we have not been here in a little while, maybe just two weeks or so, I feel like this fits perfectly today. I will read down to verse 18. The heading in my Bible says, Meeting Specific Needs.

James 5:13-18 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The

effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

It is clear in this passage that God will hear the effective and fervent prayer no matter the length. Agur's prayer fits that criteria. It teaches us to seek God's truth, contentment, and a closer relationship with God. Whether our prayers are long or short, what matters most is we are talking to our Father. Something tells me He wants to hear from us.