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Deeper Still // Posture of Prayer

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Intro

Transforming our hearts – transforming the way we think

Spiritual disciplines/practices involve remove – a decluttering. **Flipping the tables of my heart**. All of the bad habits and bad thinking.

The sermon on the mount is a shift in thinking – removing old thinking (conformity) and taking on new thinking (transformation)

I have to admit right out of the gate that I do not feel qualified to give this teaching today. A teaching on prayer. Yes, I am a praying man, but I know that I am NOT a prayerful man. I know in my core that I do not turn to God, consider God, run to God, in all aspects of my life…. Big or small – good or bad! But the Bible is quite clear when it comes to this, right?

Proverbs 3:5-6 *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit (acknowledge) to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

In all your ways, in all that you do (as you travel)…. all of the time! Acknowledge Him. Acknowledge His presence. That’s what prayer is…. **communion with God**.

It seems so simple, but yet why then is it so hard to do? Why don’t I fall to my knees and pray in every moment of blessing…. In every moment or trial?

I’m sharing all of this to say that I am no great well of wisdom on this matter. I need to hear this just as much as I suspect some of you need to hear this. I have no authority in me other than the grace of God and the presence of His Spirit within me. So, I’m praying that God brings us a word. A conviction. A stirring of His Spirit inside of us. That we may be transformed. Made new. New understanding. New thought. New perspective.

Let’s pray for our time together.

Prayer is an OPPORTUNITY

* Not an act – hypocrites (Greek word meaning actor)
* Not an obligation
  + Prayer is something we GET to do, not something we HAVE to do

Matthew 6:5-6 - *“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

* PRIDE
  + We either overthink it (can’t get over ourselves) or we think too highly of ourselves
* “The public display of these religious practices, or a concern to use the right formulas in performing them, can easily be motivated by self–absorption and greed.”
  + displays that bring praise to oneself(?)

Prayer is a CONVERSATION

* This may be the hardest aspect of prayer for us to grasp BLANK SLIDE
* It’s important to pause and remember that our ability to even enter into this conversation is only through the grace of God and the justification that we receive in Christ. Justification changes our legal standing before God. God declares us not guilty but righteous because of the finished and complete work of Christ.
* Remember verse 1 of this chapter – Matthew 6:1 *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.”*
* Our prayer life, this opportunity for communion with God exists because of Christ righteousness…. not ours. Prayer is not something that we HAVE to do to be righteous…. It is something we GET to do because He (point up) is righteous.
* So our prayer is directed from a heart of surrender. It can be raw – gritty – messy. It doesn’t have to be an eloquent, polished dialogue.

Matthew 6:7-8 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

* God knows what we’re asking for in the midst of our raw – gritty – messy prayers. He’s not interested in our words… He’s listening to our hearts.
* Elliott
* Guard against rote – repetition – routine (illustration of saying the same words)
* Remember to listen – take time to listen - **alignment of WILLS** – help me understand
* Our empty phrases can turn things into a ONE WAY conversation
* So how does this conversation then look?
* And as we align our hearts with God’s heart… we begin to listen. Or maybe it’s more like there’s less noise and we can hear better. Jesus would retreat, much like He did hear. In the quiet of the morning He prayed.

Prayer is PASSIONATE

Matthew 26:39 - *“And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”*

* In the Gospel of Luke he says that Jesus was in such agony during this prayer that “His sweat became like great drops of bleed falling down to the ground.”
* It is a passion that should be shared by all of us – believers
* I was recently asked what a practical way to be more prayerful was…. I answered – **GET PASSIONATE ABOUT IT**. – Agony / Anguish
* Some passionate prayers in the Bible:
  + What was Nehemiah’s response when he heard that the nation of Jerusalem lay in ruin? 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.”*
  + Psalm 63:1 – *“O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You…”*
  + The prophet Habakkuk cries out – Habakkuk 1:1 - *“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?”*
  + In John 11 Jesus is weeping at the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus when He prays before bringing him back to life.
* David Wilkerson – founder of Time Square Church and Teen Challenge once said this – All true passion is born out of anguish.
* When are we passionate? When we associate…. Identify (take up your cross?). When we FEEL IT! Anguish. Don’t tell me you don’t know how to be passionate for about being a Christian.
* It’s like this… if I called into a sports talk radio show, and I identified as a passionate fan, but I told them I old watch about 50% of the games, then they would absolutely destroy me. (Take up your cross). If we identify as Christians then we should be passionate followers.
* Be passionately praying for you family, for your children, for the church.
* Let your prayers be worship. Let them be a response to who God is and all that He has done. Passion.

How do we have a posture of prayer? I think these three perspectives are helpful.

Prayer is an opportunity

Prayer is a conversation

Prayer is passionate