



“Divine Dialogue” ***Part Two***

I. PERSEPCTIVE ON PRAYER -- What is it?

A. PRAYER MISUNDERSTOOD & MISUSED

B. PRAYER PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD

As we have emphasized, prayer is simply humble conversation with God both as Sovereign King and Loving Father. Prayer is honest expression of our heart to God’s ear and His heart to ours.

C. PLACE OF PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

II. PURPOSE OF PRAYER -- WHY PRAY?

Pray is talking with God at every level of life. It is talking with God about the same things we would share with any other person of significance in our life.

Words of admiration and encouragement.

Words of gratitude.

Words expressing how we feel about that person.

Words expressing our feelings about ourselves and others.

Communication with God includes some of the same elements; praise, thanksgiving, petition, sharing...

Perceiving and practicing communication with God will continually be both simple and complex.

Understood and yet mysterious. Beside the fact that God commanded it and desires it, there other reasons why we should make dialogue with God a regular habit.

A. PRAYER FACILITATES INTIMACY WITH GOD

Dialogue is to developing intimacy with anyone. There can be no closeness without communication. No Intimacy without interaction. No relationship without relating. No walking together without talking together. No caring without sharing. Communication encompasses two crucial elements--talking and listening. If someone stops talking (honestly sharing of themselves) or someone quits listening, the walls of bitterness and misunderstanding soon arise and the quest toward intimacy hits a wall.

This is true with any relationship. It is also true with our relationship with God. I talk to share myself with God. I listen to learn of Him.

1. I share information about myself

Talking with my Heavenly Father must flow out of the deeper levels of my soul.

I Share my general observations about life and events.

I share my opinions and thoughts and ideas.

I share my deepest feelings

2. I learn information about Him

I learn what He has done. I learn who He is, His character, His likes, His dislikes. I learn of His love for me. I realize His care. I learn of His plans and desires. Much of this comes from His letter to us, the Bible. Some comes through meditation and quietness before Him.

WHEN I NEGLECT PRAYER

The more I neglect honest sharing of myself and humble listening to God, the less intimacy I will experience with God. Prayer degenerates into cold recitation of words without passion. I will rehearse the jargon of prayer without the joy of relationship. I will engage in the exercise of talking without the enthusiasm of sharing. The

reality of intimate relationship with God cannot be experienced without the continual practice of meaningful dialogue. Jesus told the woman at the well how continually seeks for those who will respond to (worship) Him in spirit and in truth.

B. PRAYER FOSTERS HUMBLE DEPENDENCE

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. By designating prayer as the key that unlocks His wonderful heavenly storehouse of blessing, we are ever reminded of our total dependence on God. Some would declare dependence with the mouth but not feel it in the heart. Christ instructed us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The act of coming to God for the daily necessities of life, be they physical or spiritual, forever illustrates my dependence on Him for everything. It is when I become self-sufficient that I become cold toward Him. Independence develops indifference.

God warned Israel several times to beware lest they become arrogant.

Beware lest you forget the Lord your God, lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them and when you herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth. But you shall remember the Lord you God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers.'" Deut 8

God knows that if we are not continually dependent on Him for our daily needs, we will become arrogant and self-sufficient. When we become self-sufficient, we become ungrateful and cold toward God and the things that concern Him sometimes without even realizing it. When we, through prayer, realize how weak we are, and how strong He is, we are better able to recognize our dependence on Him. Why ask if He knows what I need already?

1--The very act of asking demonstrates the vital attitude of humble dependence necessary for Him to answer.

We generally know what our children need and want. Yet we desire their dependent relationship and are delighted when they ask and we can supply in response to those petitions. This builds relationship.

2 – Acknowledgment of helplessness and vulnerability deepens our sense of intimacy.

3--The act of asking builds relationship

The Western mind approaches the issues surrounding prayer through functional eyes. If God will accomplish it anyway, why pray? It gets done! If we arrive at a product who cares about the process? God values the relational aspects of prayer as much as the final product.

To the Western mind--

Since God knows everything anyway, there is nothing I can, or need to tell Him He doesn't already know.

To the Eastern mind--

Since God knows everything already, I can tell Him anything.

Just because God already knows what we need and what is going to happen is no reason to abandon the practice of asking for daily needs and expressing feelings. He delights in the sharing and petitions of His children.

WHEN I NEGLECT PRAYER

The neglect of continual prayer in my life is a sure demonstration of pride in my life. Neglect of prayer illumines the same spirit of independence that bumped Adam and Eve off track in the beginning. Satan enticed them with the promise of independent significance. You will be like God. Prayerlessness indicates that I place

more confidence in my own abilities and talents and systems than in the promise of God's power through prayer. The Spirit of God works in response to the prayers of the saints.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the LORD."

We think that somehow in our day of potent programs and phenomenal organizational skills we can prosper without praying. It is time that we realized that without continual communication with the Lord ...

WE - CAN - DO - NOTHING.

C. PRAYER FURTHERS GOD'S KINGDOM WORK

God accomplishes **His** plan through **our** prayers. This is a definite mystery. Why would the infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing God subject his plan to the involvement of finite, weak, short-sighted creatures?

It is God's absolute power and control over our universe that enables Him to know what is best and to bring it about. It is His compassion for His creatures that draws Him to take our needs and desires into account in that plan. Prayer is an intricate part of God's plan for the universe. God touches eternity through our prayer. Won't God act whether I pray or not? Does God's plan really depend on the prayers of neglectful saints?

What are the implications of this verse in James? *"You have not, because we ask not."*

Some things don't happen due to absence of prayer. We do not receive certain blessings because we fail to pray.

There are many places in Scripture which illustrate the cooperation of the divine and the human in this eternal drama. Samuel said concerning Saul after he had sinned,

Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 1Sam 12:23

Paul said in Philippians 1:19

"For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ..."

The harvest of ready souls and the spread of the Gospel message depend on the prayers of the saints:

"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest."

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word...: Col 4:2-3

Spiritual growth and protection of the saints depend on prayer.

"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf (Paul), that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. Eph 6:18-19

Our intercession for friends moves God's hand.

If any man sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and {God} will give him life for them that sin not unto death.. 1John 5:16

Abraham prayed for Abimelech:

And Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. Genesis 20:17

God spared Job's friends from punishment when Job prayed. God did not bless Job until he prayed for his friends.

WHEN WE NEGLECT PRAYER

When we neglect prayer, we will experience less than what we could, had we prayed. We will lose His peace, His provision, His plan, the joy of seeing others set free, eternal reward. Part of the initial shock of heaven will be to see what could have happened had we prayed. Christ could not do many miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief. Some of God's work in this world rests on our prayers and he has promised to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. If we fail to ask or think, we won't experience what He had in His mind for us. This is not to say that God's overall plan is in jeopardy because His saints neglect to pray. Prayer is His way and He will bring about His glorious product through our prayers. "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything."

D. PRAYER FORTIFIES THE SOUL AGAINST TEMPTATION

Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Mat 26:41

The armor is fortified with prayer. Eph 6 Continual communication with the Father enables us to be alert to the schemes of the enemy. It keeps us connected to the commander and chief and the source of our strength. If we are talking and listening to God, there is little room to hear from the enemy.

WHEN WE NEGLECT PRAYER

When we fail to talk to God, the ideas and promptings of the enemy seem more persuasive. When we neglect regular interaction with God, our focus veers from the eternal and fixates on the temporal. Prayer flourishes intimacy, fosters dependence, furthers Kingdom work and therefore enables an eternal focus which strengthens us to resist temptation.

E. PRAYER FACILITATES PEACE IN THE HEART AND MIND

We explored this already in our Philippians study.

Be anxious for nothing, but let your requests be made known to God in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7

God promises that when we bring out anxiety to Him in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, His peace acts as a guard over our heart and mind.

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7

CONCLUSION

There are probably many more reasons for maintaining a healthy dialogue with the divine, but these should be enough to motivate greater diligence concerning prayer.

Without continual dialogue with God...

- Intimacy suffers

- Pride flourishes

- World impact wanes

- Temptation overpowers

- Worry devastates

Continual dialogue with God...

- Facilitates greater intimacy with God

- Fosters humble dependence upon God

- Furthers God's work in the world

- Fortifies the Soul against temptation

- Facilitates God's supernatural peace in the heart and mind

The most important purpose is fostering intimacy with God.