

The Way of Jesus

Week 21

Kingdom Prayer: the Cure for Anxiety

Key Verse

In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait in expectation.

Psalm 5:3 (NIV)

Key Term - Anxiety

Reflection (Celebration.. LG p.48)

A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is listening.

Soren Kierkegaard

Prayer – secret, fervent, believing prayer – lies at the root of all personal godliness.

William Carey

True, whole prayer, is nothing but love.

St Augustine

Prayer

God, of your goodness give me yourself, for you are enough for me. And only in you do I have everything. Amen.

Lady Julian of Norwich

Richard Foster Video: Prayer

Central Truths:

- The life that is pleasing to God does not come by gritting our teeth, but by falling in love.
- Prayer is not about techniques, definitions, or methods. It is about a hilarious, wonderful, head-over-heels love relationship that God longs to have with us.
- The very heart of God is an open wound of love, desirous of relationship.
- Prayer is the primary way of enjoying the "with-God life."
- There are numerous prayer forms in the Christian tradition, but each is grounded in love.
- Prayer is a way of loving other people.
- Intercessory prayer occurs when we love people enough to desire far more for them than we have the power to give, and this desire leads us to prayer.

Notes:

A Conversation With Dallas Willard and Richard Foster on Prayer

RF: Now prayer, would you say, is the more active side?

DW: Well prayer is more active [than meditation] because it takes us into our life. Unfortunately, many people have thought that prayer was talking to yourself, a sort of mood adjustment. It's really presented in that way, and it really does do that, but that's not the type of prayer that Jesus taught and Christians have learned to live in, which is taking God into what we are doing. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, *on earth...*"

RF: Yeah, right.

DW: So the focus of prayer is constantly involving God in what we are doing together, what he and I are doing together. Basically what I pray to God about is what I'm doing. And I don't want to act in any other way than in his name, as I don't want to pray in any other way than in his name. And to pray in his name or to act in his name—both biblical concepts—means that we act in his interests or from his resources. And, really, we pray that way because, as Paul says, no one knows how to pray as [he] ought. So it's in this interactive relationship, where we involve God in what we are doing and always with the attitude that he is going to teach us, he's going to lead us and be part of what we are doing together.

RF: So the work of prayer is brought into the workplace?

DW: Everywhere you go.

RF: So it isn't just in churches, though it needs to be there too.

DW: Oh, we could use a great deal more of it there. The bane of the church is [humans thinking] we are running the show. Unfortunately, God often says, "Well, since you are in charge, go ahead [without me]."

RF: Has there been anything in the last six months or so, maybe an experience of prayer that highlights bringing God into life?

DW: Yes, there has been. Just recently I was dealing with a student who has had psychological problems. And the student knows that I am a person who prays. After discussion with the student in my office at USC, the natural thing to say is, "Shall we pray?" Now, many students come to my office, often very burdened. In this case I prayed for the student, who was really quite depressed. So we just sat for a moment and then prayed in a conversational way, not orating or anything. Then, I said, "Well, do you feel any different? Do you feel any different in your shoulders?" And you go down the particulars. You bring God into it, and you expect him to do something.

I think that was the great secret to John Wimber's teaching on prayer; it was to just be with people and go into the details and say, "Is anything happening?" And then maybe talk about that and pray some more.

RF: It is. For me, getting over the hump of saying, "What's happening?" [is difficult] because, for me, my fear is [nothing has happened].

DW: Yeah, that's right, but that's a great Discipline in itself, to push you out there, and actually, I think that's where it really becomes effective. It's the difference between saying you will pray with someone [and] actually praying for them. You say you will, but sail off into the distance, and no one knows if you actually did or not, and if nothing happens, it's okay. This is the real stuff of the spiritual life. This is where you put yourself, and you go through the Disciplines. You see, prayer is not just a Discipline, but it is a tremendous Discipline because it does change your whole attitude.

RF: Exactly, and that's why one of the accompanying means to prayer is fasting.

DW: Prayer as a conversation with God has two sides to it, and we are talking about interaction here. Some people do have a lot of trouble with knowing whether God is speaking to them in prayer. Is there anything that can be said to help people with this?

RF: You know, there really is. Just like we can come to identify the voice of someone we love, we can come to identify God's voice. And you, of course, have written a wonderful book, *Hearing God*, which is about that and the life [it] brings so there is, as Madame Guyon says, "a familiar friendship with Jesus," where, as Jesus himself, said, "My sheep know my voice."

I remember in the book you referred to the *tone* of the voice and the *quality* of the voice and the *content* of the voice. You know Satan pushes and condemns, whereas God draws and encourages, and there's a difference in that kind of quality.

DW: Yes, that's right.

RF: I remember that it was said of Messiah that he would not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick. Well, God's tenderness—I think one of the great doctrines of the Bible is the Christlikeness of God. God is like Jesus, and we should expect [tenderness] from God.

And then, of course, the content: what God says should always be consistent with what God has said in the past, and, of course, the Bible and supremely the Gospels give us clarity about the character and nature of God.

DW: Right. Yes. So you learn by experience.

RF: You move into it and you learn, and one of the important things for people to really understand is that the fact that God speaks to us is no guarantee that we heard correctly.

DW: Yes, that's right.

RF: So we come at this with humility of heart. We can get it wrong. It's the experience and the process—learning we make some mistakes, just like a little child would make mistakes, but [we] learn from [them], and we grow. And just like a good parent, God brings us along.

Spiritual Tool: Prayer Exercises (‘Celebration’ LG p.61)

Prayer is listening, and prayer is dialogue. To paraphrase Dallas Willard, prayer is talking to God about what we are doing together. For these reasons, ...we can improve our prayer life by doing things that help us ‘stay close’ to God.

Thoughts

Wake up and greet God with a warm ‘Good Morning!’ and listen for his response.

Read favorite portions of scripture as faded love letters – listening for the voice of the author as you read.

Make sure your daily planner has at least one appointment with God that is written in indelible ink. Close the door. Offer him the empty chair. Then... shut up, be patient, and lean in.

Emotions

See each person you meet as a new opportunity to show love to the imago dei (the image of God buried inside him or her).

Allow affection to your spouse or your children to become a sacrament of communicating love to God.

When you turn off the light at night, ask God if he enjoyed your spending the day together, and listen for his response.

Will

Ask God to direct your imagination toward a particular person or context in need of healing, envisioning the restoration that God can bring about. Use this imagery to help guide your prayer.

Behavior

Write John 15.7 and James 4.3 on a card that you can carry with you through the week. Reflect on them often, asking the Spirit to illuminate your understanding of these statements and to open your mind and heart to ways they can enrich your prayer life.

Social Interactions

Frank Laubach said, 'I want to learn how to live so that to see someone is to pray for them'. Experiment with that approach to life for one whole day and record what you learn from the experience.

Definitions of Prayer**Part One: Moving Inward, Seeking the Transformation We Need**

(from 'Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home' - R Foster – Parts Two (Upward) and Three (Outward) will follow in the next weeks)

Simple Prayer

"In Simple Prayer we bring ourselves before God just as we are, warts and all. Like children before a loving Father, we open our hearts and make our requests... We simply and unpretentiously share our concerns and make petitions." (p.9)

Prayer of the Forsaken

The prayer we pray when we sense that we have been abandoned by God. "The biblical metaphor for these experiences of forsakenness is the desert... Saint John of the Cross named it 'the dark night of the soul.'" (p.18)

The Prayer of Examen

"[The Prayer of Examen] has two aspects, like two sides of a door. The first is the *examen of consciousness* through which we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day and how we have responded to his loving presence. The second aspect is an *examen of conscience* in which we uncover those areas that need cleansing, purifying, and healing." (pp. 27,28)

The Prayer of Tears

"What is it, this prayer of tears? It is being 'cut to the heart' over our distance and offense to the goodness of God (Acts 2.37). It is weeping over our sins and the sins of the world."

The Prayer of Relinquishment

The prayer of relinquishment is a "grace filled releasing of our will and a flowing into the will of the Father. It... moves us from the struggle to the releasing." (p. 47)

Formation Prayer

"The primary purpose of prayer is to bring us to such a life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son. The process of transformation is the sole focus of Formation Prayer." (p. 57)

Covenant Prayer

"Covenant Prayer is a profound interior heart call to a God-intoxicated life. It leads us to the crossroad of personal decision. It guides us through the valley of sacred commitment. It beckons us up the alpine pathway of holy obedience." (p. 67)

Spiritual Tool - Midday Prayer

From Celtic Daily Prayer, Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community; Harper 2002, pp 20-21.

Said or sung all together.

+ indicates that you may make the sign of the cross.

**+ In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Opening Sentences

**Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.
Establish Thou the work of our hands;
establish Thou the work of our hands.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen**

Declaration of faith

**We believe and trust in God the Father Almighty.
We believe and trust in Jesus Christ His Son.
We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit.
We believe and trust in the Three in One.**

Canticle

**Teach us, dear Lord, to number our days;
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.
Oh, satisfy us early with Thy mercy,
that we may rejoice and be glad all of our days.
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;
and establish Thou the work of our hands.
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;
and establish Thou the work of our hands, dear Lord.**

Blessing

**Let nothing disturb thee,
nothing affright thee;
all things are passing,
God never changeth!
Patient endurance attaineth to all things;
who God possesseth
in nothing is wanting;
alone God sufficeth.**

**+ In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Readings for Next Week:

Celebration of Discipline, Ch 9