



Revival and Reformation Lesson 2 3Q 2013

Prayer: The Heartbeat of Revival

SABBATH

Read Memory Text: “ ‘If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will you Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!’ ” (Matthew 7:11 NKJV)

Thoughts? What is the description of God in this text? God is good. Do we ever have other thoughts about God? When it comes to prayer, to going to God, do we go with a certainty that God longs to give us good things?

Does God do good for us only when asked or does God use His resources to give us good things even if not asked? Was Christ given to the human race? Was this a good gift? Did we ask?

What is the purpose of asking?

- It is an acknowledgment on our part of our need, our inability to provide it for ourselves, our understanding that God can provide our need
- It keeps us humble, by waiting to give certain gifts until asked God helps us remember our true situation and condition, mitigate against arrogance, pride, complacency
- Reminds us that the gifts are gifts, which hopefully instills understanding for their use
- Our asking gives God our permission to work in our lives. Why is this necessary? Because He respects us, our individuality, our freedom and won't use force or coercion. He waits to be invited into your life, heart, mind.

Read first paragraph, “God moves powerfully as...” thoughts?

If people don't pray does God move less powerfully?

Does God need people's prayers in order to move powerfully?

- Not in the grander scheme of things, toward bringing an end to the conflict
- But, if we don't pray we limit what God can do for us, in us and through us and thereby we limit our usefulness in His cause

What is prayer?

I read the following from a book, *The Faith I Live By* written more than 100 years ago:

If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. **Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to**



us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet, joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. . . . Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan. {FLB 225.7}

Thoughts?

Yesterday, a friend gave me a gift a devotional book by Sarah Young entitled *Jesus Calling* – has anyone heard of it? In the preface she describes how she came to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Then she tells how her prayer life grew, until she began to not just talk to God, but to sit quietly and listen for Him to speak back to her and would write down what He spoke to her. This daily devotional book are the communications she wrote down from Jesus during her private devotional time, written in the first person where “I” is Jesus speaking. Here is June 29’s devotion:

As You get out of bed in the morning, be aware of My Presence with you. You many not be thinking clearly yet, but I am. You rearly morning thoughts tend to be anxious ones until you get connected with Me. Invite Me into your thoughts by whispering My Name. Suddenly your day brightens and feels more user-friendly. You cannot dread a day that is vibrant with My Presence.

You gain confidence through knowing that I am with you—that you face nothing alone. Anxiety stems from asking the wrong question: “If such and such happens, can I handle it?” The true question is not whether you can cope with whatever happens, but whether you and I together can handle anything that occurs. It is this you-and-I-together factor that gives you confidence to face the day cheerfully. Psalms 5:3; Psalms 63:1; Philippians 4:13

Thoughts?

Do you like the idea of prayer taking the form of conversation with a friend? Do you like the idea of Jesus speaking His mysteries to us personally?

Well I was familiar with this idea and quotation, so when I read the title of an article “Praying to God is like talking to a friend” it caught my attention.

In the article, it cited recent brain research by Uffe Schjodt, who examined with MRI scans the brains of 20 Christians while they prayed. The researcher said, “It’s like talking to another human. We found no evidence of anything mystical.”

Interestingly though, the areas that lit up that are similar to talking with a friend only happened with improvised prayer. When people recited the Lord’s Prayer the same areas lit up as when reciting a nursery rhyme, which are areas associated with rehearsal, repetition and recall. In other words reciting memorized prayers are not the same as talking with a friend. Memorized prayer is done from rote and the heart is not in it. And such prayer won’t bring about the transformational experience, its basically fake and brain scans can see the difference.

But when individuals prayed spontaneously, they activated the same brain regions which activate when we are aware of another intelligent person



activating circuitry that is linked with the theory of mind - an awareness that other individuals have their own independent motivations and intentions (*Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, [DOI: 10.1093/scan/nsn050](https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsn050)).

These areas process desire and contemplate how the other might react to the expressed desire, as well as the prefrontal cortex which anticipates what the other person might do, and memories areas associated with previous encounters filling in context for this encounter. In other words it is relational interaction.

As a comparator, they also had the people make a wish list for Santa Claus, but in this task the prefrontal cortex didn't activate, so the region of the brain that interacts with another was not involved. Thus the individuals viewed Santa as fictional but God as a real individual and brain scans could see the difference.

Further, the prefrontal cortex doesn't activate when people interact with inanimate objects such as a computer, because the brain doesn't expect reciprocity or have the need to think about what the computer wants or intends.

Thoughts? Back to the quote I just read:

If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. **Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally.** Often there will come to us a sweet, joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. . . . Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan. {FLB 225.7}

Notice, if we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and prayer, **then** our prayers will take the form of conversation with God as with a friend. She had this exactly right. We must come to experience God as a real individual being, before our prayers become transformational. If we pray from rote, when we merely do ritualized religious activities our prayers will not be the prayers as with a friend. Our brains will not experience the positive brain changes and we won't be transformed to be ever more like Christ if we merely do proforma prayer.

In other words, bowing five times per day and going through a regimented prayer ritual to tick off one's religious duty fulfilled, will not result in a relationship with God.

Studies show that religiosity is a predictor of abuse against one's family, spouse and child abuse. Why? Because ritualized religious activity does not engage the prefrontal cortex, does not draw out the mind and heart into intimacy with God for actual transformation.

And does prayer make a difference in our lives?

In the aftermath of 9/11/2001 terrorist attack, University of Michigan scientists evaluated the impact of prayer in coping with trauma and discovered that students who prayed in the aftermath of the trauma had better psychological adjustment 1 year later than those who did not pray.



But they also evaluated Muslim refugees of Kosovo and Bosnia and found that many of them also prayed to cope with the stress, 60% of whom had PTSD. Interestingly, they found that 77% of them had “negative” forms of prayer, such as praying their enemies “would pay for what they have done.” In other words, prayers of vengeance.

They found that positive prayers and practices were related to high levels of optimism, hope and healthy adjustment, but justice-seeking and anger-related religious practices that sought vengeance were related to reduced levels of optimism, hope and healthy adjustment. (*Journal of Personality* Volume 73, Issue 3, p 763-792, June 2005)

Thoughts?

What does prayer do for/to those who pray? It changes them – but the kind of prayer and to whom they pray makes the difference.

What does prayer do for/to God?

Examples of prayer?

- Abraham regarding Sodom – what do we learn from this?
 - Did God have to tell Abraham what He was going to do?
 - Why did God tell Abraham?
 - Did God know Abraham’s heart and how Abraham would respond?
 - Why tell Abraham?
 - Could it be that this entire encounter with God was recorded in Scripture for the purpose of disclosing God’s desire not to destroy the cities, but that, like a cancer that needed to be excised, these cities needed to be eliminated, not to punish the people, but to protect the innocent and keep open the channel for the Messiah?
 - So what did Abraham’s prayer accomplish in this case? Communication from God, which informed Abraham of God’s attitude, willingness to be patient, and also that the condition of the people were beyond healing, and there was nothing God could do for them, but God could intervene to protect the rest of humanity.
- Paul and the thorn in the flesh
 - “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2Cor 12:7-10
 - What do we learn from this prayer?
 - That God hears but doesn’t always give us what we ask for
 - Why? Because God is interested in our ultimate good, and is also working out a larger plan. Thus, when we trust Him we are willing to have events go as He would direct



them – Joseph would not at age 17 chosen to be sold into slavery, but at age 30, understood and was at peace with how God permitted events to unfold for a larger good.

- Jesus and prayer to His Father throughout His life
 - What do we learn from Jesus' many prayers?
 - We need daily communication with God
 - Prayer is more than just a needs list, it is relationship
 - Prayer keeps the mind clear on the true nature of reality as we keep in tune with God

SUNDAY

The first paragraph reviews the rapid spread of the gospel in the first century after Christ and asks the question, “What was their secret?”

Thoughts?

What message did they take to the world? Could their secret have been that they had seen past the distortion of Satan and seen God's true character, His true kingdom, methods, motives, law of love?

Was the secret that they knew God, as a being of love, had a personal friendship with God and loved Him and His way of doing things?

Did you notice in the New Testament they didn't require people to go through months of indoctrination, give up habits, change jobs, and attest to believe certain historic figures before they could be baptized?

Could their method of preaching God's love and salvation through the remedy achieved by Jesus with immediate baptism for those who were so convicted have made it easier to come back into a relationship with God?

Could our modern method of saying the sinner's prayer, followed by months of indoctrination, required lifestyle transformation and oaths of loyalty to institutions be obstacles to spreading the gospel?

Read last paragraph, “Pastor R. A. Torrey...” thoughts?

In the bottom green section the lesson points out one obstacle to prayer is that we can get too busy to pray. What other obstacles are there to prayer in addition to being too busy?

- Lack of desire
- Lack of belief that God exists
- Lack of trust in God
- Believing one is too sinful for God to love
- Believing one can handle things on their own



- Believe the issue is too insignificant to trouble God with
- Not realizing one's need of prayer
- Not knowing how to pray
- Other obstacles?

If someone told you they don't know how to pray what would you tell them?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Christ was continually..." thoughts?

What process is being described in this paragraph? Do you see God's law of love in action? Do we learn something about the Father from this? What?

Read bottom green section, "Spend a few moments..." thoughts?

When I was in undergraduate school, pre-med, I was taking full load of classes 15-18 hours a semester, working full time as an ICU nurse, giving Bible studies to a student at the University, was a big brother to a young man, and without intent found that my study time had slipped by and a major physics exam had snuck up on me. It was scheduled for first period the next day and I had to work 3-11 p.m. in the ICU that evening. I prayed that God would allow it to be a quiet evening in the ICU so in between my responsibilities I could find some moments to review the material for my exam. I went to work and discovered there was only 1 patient in the ICU, a man who had chest pain and was on observation status. He was simply to be monitored on the heart monitor through the night. When I did my assessment I told him what I was doing and low and behold, he was a physicist that worked in nuclear power. He told me to bring my book over and gave me a tutorial – and I got an A on my exam the next day.

Christie and I have prayed that God would open avenues to allow us to share this healing message about Him with others, and He has blessed by opening the way for two books to be published. This is a real answer to prayer. When we moved to this area we searched the local churches for some pastor or class that shared this perspective, but found none, so we prayed. He has answered our prayers with this class and this Ministry and all of you who love this message and work with us to share it with others. And our friends around the world who have joined us in sharing this message in their community. And it continues to grow!

Would any of you like to take a moment and share an experience when God answered your prayers?

TUESDAY

Read Matthew 18:19,20:



“And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.”

Then read second paragraph, “The promise...” thoughts?

What does it mean proportionate to the unity of the members? Unity in what way? We are unified in our human condition – we all suffer in sin, we all age, we all die the first death, so what is this unity that empowers our corporate prayers?

Would it mean we have unity of heart, share the same appreciation and love for God, His methods, His kingdom of love, love fore each other and have a unified purpose to share this truth with others? Something else?

What would you like for us to pray for as a united group?

The lesson gives the example of the church 2000 years ago praying for the deliverance of Peter and he was miraculously delivered.

What would you like us to pray for? Let’s do that now.

WEDNESDAY

Read first three paragraphs, “Have you ever...” thoughts?

In prayer we can absolutely do what the lesson describes, freely acknowledge our dependency upon God, but can people pray without acknowledging our dependence upon God? In other words, just because people pray does it mean they have surrendered their lives to God?

I remember a presidential primary in which one of the candidates, whose wife was suffering with cancer, was asked during a debate if he believed in the power of prayer. He said, “No, but I pray for my wife every day.”

I don’t know whether he prayed or not, or simply said this is a political answer, but what is God to do for those who pray out of obligation, out of duty, out of habit, out of form, using prayer wheels, using prayer beads, using computer generated prayers, using memorized prayers, praying without actually believing in God?

Don’t such activities become superstitious? Don’t such activities work to darken the mind? Don’t such prayers actually close the heart to God?

What kind of prayer does God want? Why does God want us to pray?

The lesson asks us to read 2Cor 10:3-5:



For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Thoughts?

What are the weapons we use?

- Truth
- Love
- Freedom
- Prayer
- Praise
- Song
- Meditation
- Study
- Work/discipline
- Service
- Evidence
- Reason
- Experience
- Scripture

What weapons to we not use?

- Lies
- Emotions as a determiner of truth or choice
- “God said it, I believe it, that settles it.”
- Threat, coercion, force
- State authority

In a devotional book, *This Day with God*, after reading Cor 10:3-5, this is the devotion for the day:

In dealing with unreasonable and wicked men, those who believe the truth are to be careful not to bring themselves down to the same level, where they will use the same **Satanic weapons that their enemies use, by giving loose rein to strong personal feelings**, and arousing against themselves and against the work the Lord has given them to do, passion and bitter enmity. Keep Jesus uplifted. We are laborers together with God. We are provided with **spiritual weapons**, mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of the enemy. We must in no case misrepresent our faith by weaving unChristlike attributes into the work. We must exalt the law of God, as binding us up with Jesus Christ and all who love Him and keep His commandments. We are also to **reveal a love** for the souls for whom Christ has died. Our **faith is to be demonstrated as a power of which Christ is the Author**. And the Bible, His word, is to make us wise unto salvation. {TDG 99.2}



Let the righteousness of Christ, with its life-giving influence, into the soul, and then you can sing, He forgiveth all our iniquities. You say, I am full of spiritual disease. The great Physician is calling you to come to Him, that He may heal you. He healeth all our diseases. The worst of these diseases are envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, evil-speaking, a desire to follow plans that counterwork the work of God. The lives of all ought to be holy, but they are full of depravity, and because of this, men are easy subjects for Satan's temptations. **But if Christ abides in your heart, you can say, He redeemeth our life from destruction: He crowneth us with lovingkindness and tender mercy.** [How does he redeem? By healing our characters!!!] Then let songs of praise be upon our lips and in our heart. Meditate upon Christ's sufferings for us. In the place of watching to find something to accuse and condemn in others, thank the Lord that there is forgiveness with Him. **Christ is grieved when we criticize and accuse; for this is the work of Satan.** Let us draw water from the wells of salvation, and praise the Lord. {TDG 99.3}

It is not sermonizing that gives evidence that the soul is born again. An appreciation of Christ's tenderness toward the sheep of His pasture gives evidence of this. {TDG 99.4}

Thoughts?

THURSDAY

Read first three paragraphs, "There are many..." thoughts? What methods have you found effective?

What do you think of the non-formula in the last paragraph:

- Praise and adoration
- Thanking God for his goodness
- Confession of our faults
- Thanking God for forgiveness
- Supplication, presenting our requests and needs
- Submission to His will
- Thanking Him for hearing and doing according to His will

What if you don't follow the procedure?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1 and 3