



Intimacy with God – Restoring the Relationship

Spiritual Exercise

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21

Prayer

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, I pray that You would grant us, according to the riches of Your glory, to be strengthened with might through Your Spirit in our inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts heart through faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—to know Christ's love which passes knowledge; that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Father, I pray knowing that You are able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that I can ask or think, according to the power that works in us. To You be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

God lost three things when mankind rebelled in the Garden: His reign, His habitation and His relationship with man. The Bible – His story – contains His plan for restoring what was lost. In this module, we will discuss the restoration of His relationship with man through prayer. There has never been a more critical time for the followers of Christ to search out this matter.

Call my people to repentance. Yea, call them to their knees for prayer and fasting, for confession and vigilance. For this is a strategic hour. The enemy is rejoicing already over his anticipated victories. Ye can disappoint him and thwart his evil designs if ye lay hold upon the throne of God in steadfast, believing prayer. (*Come Away My Beloved*, Francis Roberts)

This is a strategic hour – perhaps the most strategic hour in the history of the church. Something must be done. But what? “Only God knows” may have jumped into your mind. So why don’t we ask Him? I believe that is exactly what He intends for us to do.

Every Christian knows that the “effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Prayer is powerful (at least it’s supposed to be), and nothing of heavenly value is possible without prayer. So why

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do we struggle to pray, both individually and corporately? Why are we so unsure about the effectiveness of our prayers? And why does it seem that so many of our prayers go unanswered? Why is our prayer life so ineffective, difficult and dissatisfying?

The first strategic move in every war is to cut off communications between the forces on the ground and the central command center. Consequently, much force and intelligence is focused on keeping the lines of communication open. The situation is no different in the war we are fighting against our greatest enemy. And we must be as diligent to defend what we have been given: The means for effective communication – and relationship – with God.

It is no coincidence that God has made prayer man's most powerful weapon in the battle for the kingdom. This is the place where God is most intimate in revealing His plans and encouraging His children. As we battle with Him in prayer, He establishes His relationship with us. There is no more important thing we can do in our search for joyful, Spirit-filled ministry.

Definition

Prayer (*deēsis*): need, indigence, want, privation, extreme poverty; a seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty to God or to man. From *deōmai*: to want, lack; to desire, long for; to ask, beg; the thing asked for; to pray, make supplications.
Outline of Biblical Usage, BlueLetterBible.org

Effective (*energeō*): to be operative, be at work, put forth power; to effect; to display one's activity, show one's self operative.
Outline of Biblical Usage, BlueLetterBible.org

Scripture

(All but those noted are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
John 17:3

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

James 5:13-18

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Searching Out the Matter

Promise of Prayer

Jeremiah 33:3

Jeremiah 29:12, 13

Philippians 4:6, 7

Luke 11:13

Effective Prayer Requires Hearing from God

Matthew 21:21-22

1 John 3:22-23

1 John 5:14-15

Effective Prayer Begins with Knowing God

Our common ideas regarding prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer simply as a means of getting things for ourselves, but the biblical purpose of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself. It is the only way we can get in touch with the truth and the reality of God Himself.

To say that "prayer changes things" is not as close to the truth as saying, "Prayer changes *me* and then I change things." God has established things so that prayer, on the basis of redemption, changes the way a person looks at things. Prayer is not a matter of changing things externally, but one of working miracles in a person's inner nature.

Oswald Chambers (My Utmost for His Highest)

Practicing the PAPA Prayer

Present yourself to God – Hebrews 4:16

Attend to how you are thinking of God – Matthew 6:9

Purge yourself of anything that blocks your relationship with God – Matthew 6:10; Psalm 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9

Approach God as the "first thing" in your life – Matthew 6:32-33

A Few Additional Thoughts

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Matthew 6:33

Matthew 11:28-30

John 15:7

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Assignment

Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. Share the ones that are most meaningful to someone you are discipling.

Practice the four day PAPA Prayer exercise, from the practical helps beginning on page 169.

Evaluate your prayer life – how *strong is your prayer life relative to each of the following categories (1=don't have a clue, 10=perfect)? Explain the extreme ratings (3 and below; 8 and above).*

- a) Disciplined
- b) Relational
- c) Fervent
- d) Effective
- e) Persistent
- f) Self-transformational
- g) Expectant

Develop a prayer plan – what are some immediate steps you can take to improve your prayer life?

Reduce your plan to a written covenant with God.

Begin a prayer journal – reflections on your experiences in prayer.

John Eldredge Devotion

Tuesday, August 16, 2011

Sin and Culture

Guys are unanimously embarrassed by their emptiness and woundedness; it is for most of us a tremendous source of shame, as I've said. But it need not be. From the very beginning, back before the Fall and the assault, ours was meant to be a desperately dependent existence. It's like a tree and its branches, explains Christ. You are the branches, I am the trunk. From me you draw your life; that's how it was meant to be. In fact, he goes on to say, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). He's not berating us or mocking us or even saying it with a sigh, all the while thinking, I wish they'd pull it together and stop needing me so much. Not at all. We are made to depend on God; we are made for union with him, and nothing about us works right without it. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other."

This is where our sin and our culture have come together to keep us in bondage and brokenness, to prevent the healing of our wound. Our sin is that stubborn part inside that wants, above all else, to be independent. There's a part of us fiercely committed to living in a way where we do not have to depend on anyone—especially God. Then culture comes along with figures like John Wayne and James Bond and all those other "real men," and the one thing they have in common is that they are loners; they don't need anyone. We come to believe deep in our hearts that needing anyone for anything is a sort of weakness, a handicap.

(*Wild at Heart*, 121-122)