

## LESSON 5: PRAYER LIFE- MEDITATING AND HEARING FROM GOD

Scripture points out two important principles concerning prayer and hearing from God.

1. We must go to a place of solitude and quietness.
2. We must be able to meditate on God's Word.

**Read *Philippians 4:7*** *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In order to hear the soft quiet voice of God, we must find a way to be sensitive to hear His voice. It is necessary for Christians to develop sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit in their life. Although this can be difficult and requires practice, we do have examples in the Bible to look at. The first example we are going to look at is the Perfect Example, Jesus Christ.

**Read *Matthew 3:13-17***

- ▶ What does baptism represent?

Some people believe that baptism is a picture of a person being cleansed from his sins. This cannot be because Jesus was baptized. He was without sin. Instead, baptism is actually a picture of death. It is a picture of a person drowning to who they are in the flesh and coming out of the water to the new life in Jesus. The old man is drowned, and a new life in Christ has begun. Baptism is the symbol of Holy Spirit indwelling and guiding the new believer just like we see the Holy Spirit guiding Jesus.

- ▶ How did this relate to how Jesus lived after baptism and how we should live after salvation?

When Jesus was baptized:

1. He did not say He had quit being God.
2. We know that He drowned to His reliance on being God.
3. Jesus comes up out of the water and relies on same two things we do.
  - a. He relies on the **Holy Spirit** in His life.
  - b. He relies on the spoken **Word of God** – His Father.

Likewise, we as Christians should rely on the same two things in our Christian walk. Just like Jesus, there are two things we need to be driven by:

1. We must **hear His Spirit**.
2. We must **understand His Word**.

To do these two things we must:

1. Have **silence** as part of our day.

2. We must be able to **meditate**.

If those two things are not a part of your life, you are never going to achieve what you need to achieve as a Christian.

PRAY TO RECEIVE DIRECTION

**Read Luke 6:12**

- ▶ What are the two things we are told about how Jesus prayed?
  1. Jesus went to a desolate place. (a place of solitude and silence)
  2. Jesus prayed all night even though He was in perfect communion with the Father.
- ▶ Why did Jesus need to go to a desolate place?

Jesus knew that He needed to go to a place so that He did not have any distractions. We see Jesus on many different occasions getting away from the people so that He could be alone with God.

- ▶ Why did Jesus pray all night?

Jesus prayed all night because that is how long it took for Him to receive the complete directions from His Father. If He quit praying early, then He would not receive the complete directions from God. Jesus' relationship with His Father was perfect, and Jesus did not have any sin in His life.

- ▶ Why does Jesus not get the directions automatically and quickly?

That is not how God works! In this example of Jesus we see Him going to God to receive direction. ***Therefore one reason we should pray is to get direction from God in our lives.***

PRAY IN TIMES OF GRIEF

**Read Matthew 14:10-13**

- ▶ How does Jesus respond to the grief in His life?

When Jesus heard about what had happened to John, Jesus again went to a desolate place where He sought the Father alone because of the grief in His life.

***Times of grief are another time when we need to get alone with God.***

**Read Matthew 26:36-44**

Jesus once again went to a desolate place and prayed because of His need to be sure there was no other way to secure our redemption. If there was another way, Jesus would not have gone to the cross because He knew what it was going to cost Him. This is the most desolate hour in Jesus' life.

*Chris's theory — During this time with Jesus in the garden, Satan was fighting for his very life. Satan did not put Jesus on the cross. Satan did everything he could to keep Jesus from going to the cross. Satan understood that he would be judged under the cross, and his judgment would be secured. All of the demons were surrounding Jesus during this time to attack Him and to do their best to get Jesus to fail.*

Jesus took His disciples with Him and picked three of them to go with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane and He asked them to pray **for** Him. He did not ask them to pray **with** Him, but to pray **for** Him. When Jesus faced the most desolate hour of His earthly life, He went to a place of solitude to be alone with God.

## SUMMARY

We see Jesus going to a place of solitude to get alone with God when:

1. He needed **instruction** from the Father.
2. He **suffered grief** from the loss of a friend.
3. He faced the most **difficult time** in His earthly life as He faced the attack of all the demons and Satan.

Jesus felt the need to be alone and quiet at His most trying time.

## NEED-DRIVEN PRAYER LIFE

When we look at Jesus's life, we see that He had a need-driven prayer life and not rule-driven prayer life. This means that what drove Jesus' prayer life is His own personal need and not preset rules or regulations on when and how to pray.

Some principles we can learn from Jesus' prayer life:

1. It was not at a preset time of day.
2. The time spent in prayer varies by His Father's direction and not His own direction.
3. Jesus did not follow a prescribed ritual.
4. Jesus did not follow an agenda or rules, but it was based on need.

Women often want other people besides themselves to help pray as they seek answers from God. It is critical that you get alone with God so that you can hear His voice.

To have a need driven prayer life, a person will need to be broken so that they see how they need Jesus as the focus of every area of their life. (We will have a whole lesson on brokenness later) When a person is truly broken in Christ, he does not have a single day that he doesn't need to hear from God for something.

A person can pray while driving, washing clothes, making dinner, or anytime throughout the day. Night or day and anywhere you happen to be, you can pray. But you cannot have your attention on doing other things while effectively focusing on prayer with the Father and hearing His voice. You will be distracted by other things and not totally focused on listening and talking to Christ. It is okay to pray in this manner, but this type of prayer does not take the place for your need to get away and be quiet and pray to God.

In order to maximize who you are in Christ you need to get away, be alone, and focus on God. You must find a place where you can be absolutely alone with Him without the distractions of the world. This place can be anywhere you feel alone with God. Use that place when you are in need and when you are seeking a time of renewal.

In summary, our prayer life should not be rule-driven but need-driven. As God breaks you, you will find that need for God in your life on a daily basis, and your prayer life will increase. You may have noticed that when you have a need in your life, you tend to pray better. You will also pray better when you hit difficult times in your life as long as you are relying on the Lord. Part of the difficulty of those times is for God to bring us to a place of being broken so that we are exactly like Jesus Christ. If Jesus as the Perfect Example was need-driven in His prayer life, then we too should be need-driven in our prayer lives.

HOW DOES JESUS PRAY?

**Read *Matthew 14:23***

- ▶ What time of day did Jesus pray?

**Read *Mark 1:35***

- ▶ What time of day did Jesus pray in this verse?

We see Jesus praying in the evening and in the morning. God does not care when you pray. He just cares that you do pray. Some pray better in morning, and some pray better at night. At times it will change when it is better for you to pray. The Bible does not stress when to pray; but it does stress being alone, and that we have a need to pray. Pick the best time for you as individual. Do not be rule or ritual driven.

**Read *Isaiah 30:15-16***

<sup>15</sup> For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In **quietness** and **trust** is your strength." But you were not willing,<sup>16</sup> And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses," Therefore you shall flee! "And we will ride on swift horses," Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.

- ▶ Where do we find strength when praying in the desolate place?

- a. You must have a **quiet time alone with God**. Get in a desolate, quiet place. This will be key to being able to **hear** God.
- b. Truly trusting God is a difficult thing when we have a need, and we sit alone with God. If we are not truly **trusting God**, then we will end up *talking* to God rather than *listening* to Him.

## PROMISES IN THE BIBLE

There are promises in Scripture that handle many of the issues in our lives. What the enemy will do is make you pray over issues that the Bible has already promised will be handled. When that happens, you are not operating out of trust. You are bringing God your list and not trusting Him to handle His list in your life. When you are done, you are exhausted, and then you leave. You will never hear Him unless you are dead quiet and depend on the promises of God and let Him handle the issues in your life.

*Example: In the Bible, **Matthew 6:33** says: "If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things will be added unto you."*

*My response should be... I have no need to lay all of my financial needs in front of Him if I am seeking His kingdom first and I'm living out that promise. I need to trust Him to honor His Word in my life. I don't have to ask for something that God has already promised to give me. Unfortunately, we waste a lot of our prayer time doing this very thing.*

- ▶ How can we learn to know and trust God's promises to us?

One way is to get the book, **All the Promises of the Bible** by Herbert Lockyer. With the book in hand, take a piece of paper and make two columns on it. In the first column, put the things you stress over. In the second column, put the corresponding promise of God that covers that area of stress. Once you have made the list, claim the promises of God that pertain to your stress areas, and give them to God. Make the decision that you will not talk to God about these issues but will find peace in God's promises as you learn to trust Him. Often times, when your needs are great, it is very hard to live this decision out. But it is in quietness and in trust that you will find the strength for this to work.

When Jesus spent time with the Father, He could have easily just complained about how bad the disciples were and spent the entire night telling God how stupid they were. But He was not a whiner. Come, get quiet, and ask God to tell you what He wants you to pray for today.

You must bring your Bible with you in your time of desolation before God. You don't need anything else. You need to hear what God says not what a man says that God says. There may be times when you open your Bible, and then feel the need to shut it and pray. Other times, you will spend more time in Scripture and not as much time in prayer. In a need-driven prayer life, there will be times when you need the Bible more and other times when you need prayer more. To know what you need will be orchestrated by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You must

make sure you are sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit that you let Him direct you in the way He wants you to go. When you come out of your quiet time, your need will have been met as directed by God.

## MEDITATION

Meditation requires practice. It does not happen overnight. It requires looking at small sections of Scripture to meditate upon instead of whole chapters.

### **Joshua 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> *This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.*

### **Psalms 1:2**

<sup>2</sup> *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he **meditates** day and night.*

### **Psalms 49:3**

<sup>3</sup> *My mouth will speak wisdom, And the **meditation** of my heart will be understanding.*

These verses talk about meditation, which is a key component of understanding Scripture.

## **Two types of Scripture:**

- 1. Didactic: doctrine or teaching—i.e. Paul's teaching in NT**
- 2. Narrative: story of people's lives-i.e. The Gospels and a lot of OT**

You need to meditate on both types. In order to meditate, you must look at the forest (The main point) and the trees (the details) in the passages.

In a narrative you will look at the details and those details will lead to the main point. In a didactic passage you will look at the teaching inside the passage, and the teaching will lead to the main point. There is a main point in each passage. What we need to do is to look for the details. If you do not get the details then you will miss the main point.

### **Example: Read Matthew 2:1-12**

*This passage tells of the birth of Jesus. Some of the details that you will see are:*

- a. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.*
- b. Herod was king—jerk.*
- c. Wise men came- astrologers.*
- d. Star showed the way.*
- e. Came to worship Him.*
- f. Troubled wise men.*

- g. All of Jerusalem troubled === KEY.**
- h. Herod seeks to find child.
- i. Come and worship Jesus.
- j. Go back another way.

*Question: Who goes to see Jesus? Matthew was written to the Jews. See the details of wise men. They will stand out from the locals in Jerusalem. All the people in Jerusalem are troubled. It is only 5 miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Word is out to the chief priests that these different people have come and they said that the King of the Jews had been born. This news troubled all of Jerusalem yet not one Jew went to Bethlehem. It is the Gentiles that sought out this new King. Matthew understood from the narrative that the Jews will spit on the King, and they do not care enough to go see if the Messiah is born. They did not seek Jesus even though they were troubled. It is the Gentiles that sought Jesus. Matthew wrote this after Paul dies. He had already seen how the Gospel had been rejected by the Jews and had been taken to the Gentiles. He puts this in there so the Jews can look at this letter and see exactly what they did. These details teach us what the real point of the story is this: If you do not meditate on these details or think about them, then you will only read the story, and you will come away with superficial information and miss the main point. We must meditate on the Bible.*

The same process works with didactic passages. You will list the supporting teachings in a passage (the trees), and then see how they make one main point (forest).

God may use a passage of Scripture to speak to you in different ways based on your need at the time.

### **Read Joshua 1:8**

You may read this passage and God might speak to you in the promise that God will never leave you. Another time God may speak to you about the importance of meditation on the Word. The Holy Spirit may apply the Word differently at different times and in different ways.

There is no shortcut to hearing the voice of God. If you do not meditate in a quiet place, then you will not walk like Jesus Christ did and in the manner He wants you to walk.

We do not direct God, He directs us in our prayers!