

Prayer

1. Begins with God.

Genesis 1, Romans sinner chapter 5: 6 and 8: 26-27

“Prayer is never the first word; it is always the second word. God has the first word. Prayer is answering speech; it is not primarily “address” but “response.” . . . Prayer is a human word and is never the first word, never the primary word, never the initiating and shaping word simply because we are never first, never primary . . . the first word is everywhere and always God’s word to us, not ours to him.”- Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles*

Importance of this Belief cannot be stressed enough . . . allows for the possibility of having at least ONE relationship in my life where the focus is not all about me.

I can’t control God . . . we spend a lot of time controlling relationships, managing our relationships. Hide . . . (wall) . . . Impress (impression, like me, respect me, remember me) . .

God – I can surrender that whole managerial side of the relationship. . . I can’t hide from God . . . so the notion that I’m going to put up a front for God is not an option. I can’t impress God . . . so any notion that I have to earn attention or draw attention to myself is foolishness.

No fake Deric – complete, 100% honest . . . leave my perfectionism at the door, no earning God’s approval or acceptance . . . when I take away all those avenues of management – I begin to have freedom, all that emotional and intellectual energy is freed up.

In many ways, having a relationship with God teaches me how to relate to others, but think about what it says about Prayer . . . You can Pray at ANY time. My favorite saying about prayer – Anthony Bloom . . . Prayer Begins with God, no incantation or level of holiness required.

2. The Foundations of Prayer found in Psalm 1

- a willingness to follow God is foundational in Prayer.

God still hears your prayer when you sin, if Prayer is possible in Hell, I believe God will hear those prayers . . . but if you pray to God, and there is no willingness to live for God – eventually you may be wasting your time.

To pray without any recognition of sin, is like telling your child how much you love them and then striking them across the face. That is a sick form of love. Prayer without any recognition of our sinfulness and the need for a change of life – can be a sick form of religion.

In our relationship with God, one of the things we have to take seriously is our sinfulness. If you are having difficulty in prayer – maybe it is because your mouth spends a lot of time gossiping about other people, if you wonder about why you have no motivation for prayer – it may be that you are consuming too many sin-filled avenues of entertainment.

We must see prayer as something that we walk in, we walk in the Spirit, we walk in the footsteps of Christ. In order to be a prayer warrior, you have to begin seeing not only your words, but your life as prayer.

- God's Word provides the best stepping stones and language for Prayer.

Right for Life example – Daniel 9: 20. Scripture will free your prayer life from the pithy little sayings of small minded preachers to great depths . . . MORE freedom, not less. No preacher is going to teach you to pray thru anger, hatred and doubt like the Psalms.

“The Psalms are personal answers to the personal revelation, prayers conditioned by God's word, not by the soul's moods.” - Eugene Peterson.

3. Pray God's Word

Before we speak, we speak God's word. One of the greatest teachers of Christian Prayer that we have is God's word. Pray thru the Psalms, and you may be struck with several things –

1. How often it teaches us to cry out for help . . . prayer should remind us of our dependency upon God every time.
2. SIN – interesting to record all the prayers we say publically. Record all our hymnals that we sing – I guarantee you one thing – our prayers, our hymns, our worship services – do NOT deal with sin at the same level as the prayers in Scripture do. Interesting question is what difference does it make?
3. Your View of God will Get BIGGER – nothing is taken for granted . . . BIG God. According your mercy (other things going on within God), God's Love is Big. God's Holiness is BIG. God's Wrath is BIG.

4. Pray the Prayers of Others

The whole idea of praying scripture and praying historical prayers declares that we do not know best. Allowing yourself to be led in prayer proclaims that you firmly believe you do not have the answers . . . we believe that we are not our own masters . . . our emotions and thoughts are just as much a hindrance and a deception as they are tools to be used for God's glory. Praying the prayers of others, allow us to be led and not anxiously driven.

5. Rehearse in Your Heart a growing number of Short Prayers.

Can you pray while you drive safely?

Can you pray while you work?

Can you pray while you even talk to someone?

Can you pray while facing daily anxieties and frustrations?