

Dare to Draw Near

RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVITATION

Lesson Four Reflection: Sanctification

Reflection

This week as we look at the Tabernacle as our pattern that shows us how to draw near to God, we come to the narrow door that leads from the courtyard into the actual Tabernacle. This door is not for everyone. This is the door of sanctification. You can't go thru this narrow door if you are carrying a lot of baggage. You won't fit. If you want to draw near to the Lord you are going to have to leave some things behind.

Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us to *"... lay aside every encumbrance (weight) and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...."*

If you read this carefully you will notice that sin entangles us and keeps us from running our race, but so do encumbrances or weights. These are not necessarily sins, but they definitely can hold us back and keep us outside in the courtyard, keep us from drawing near.

Through our years of praying together for people Anne and I have learned about several of these encumbrances or weights that so easily entangle us, and we have learned how to lay them aside ----- we want to talk about four of these this week.

The following is a brief description of each of these "encumbrances", along with the prayer guidelines for coming out of agreement with them. Remember that the enemy is legalistic, so we recommend that you do this "unloading" with a trusted friend who can serve as your witness.

Inner Vows

One of the encumbrances or weights we often carry around is inner vows. These are actually inner convictions that we make about how we are going to handle life. Oftentimes, especially when we are young and faced with circumstances we don't like/and or are out of control, we come up with a strategy for how to handle our lives.

Most vows are strategies on how to avoid pain. Many vows are very good ideas based on good intentions; but when we make an inner vow, we do two things in the spiritual realm:

1. We are in effect telling God that we have this area of our lives under control. We don't need His help here because we have a plan. Our strategy is to rely on ourselves in this area. Because God honors our word, He is shut out of this area of our lives.
2. Inner vows also give the enemy areas he can attack. He is legalistic and always watching to catch us in a technical detail. Whenever we fail to keep an inner vow, the enemy condemns us and slams us with our failure to keep our word in this area of our lives. Just like when we break a contract we have signed, there are consequences.

Since God honors our word when we make an inner vow, He also honors our word when we break them. Spend some time asking the Lord to reveal any inner vows you have made in your life, and then follow these prayer guidelines.

Prayer to break inner vows:

1. Lord, I am sorry for making the vow to ...
2. I break the vow to... And I come out of agreement with it, in the name of Jesus.
3. Lord, I am now willing for You to come into this area of my life and give me Your strategies on how to live.

Idols

We need to make sure that we are not offending the Lord by having an image or artifact or something that honors a false god in our homes, even if we think it is only beautiful art. We want to be careful not to offend the Lord; the first two commandments are about this, and He hasn't changed! False gods include buddhas, pagan symbols, tribal artifacts, shrines or other object from cults. Ask the Lord if there is anything that you need to remove from your home. This is important. Take some time to do this now. Listen to the Lord. If He reminds you of anything, be sure to deal with it today.

However there is another form of idolatry, a subtle form, something or someone that you have put ahead of the Lord. This is something you think you must have in order to be fulfilled, to be happy. It could be a possession, an agenda, a person, a relationship or even a ministry. Often these are legitimate things and the Lord may want you to have them, but in the right order. He knows that we need to keep Him first, and He does not want us putting anything or anyone ahead of Him.

Ask the Lord to search out your heart and see if you have put anyone or anything above Him.

Prayer to lay down Idols:

1. Lord, I am sorry for making an idol out of ...
2. I lay down (name the idol) and I break any power it had over my life in the name of Jesus.
3. Lord, I claim You again as the Lord of my life and submit to You as my King.

Soul Ties

The words "soul ties" are not in the Bible, but the concept is. A soul tie is something that happens between two people who are very close. It is an unseen tie or strong bond. A soul tie can be godly, as when the Lord is in the middle of the close relationship and each person continually points the other to pursuing the Lord. Or a soul tie can be negative when the two people are in a close bond but the Lord is not in the middle (even if both people know the Lord). Their closeness pulls the relationship in a direction that does not always glorify the Lord. Soul ties often develop between a parent and a child and can retain power long after one of the party has died.

Ask the Lord to bring to your mind if you have a soul tie with someone that needs to be broken. Remember that after the tie is broken you may still be very close to this person, but the negative pull of the relationship will be gone.

Prayer to break Soul Ties:

1. Lord, I am sorry for tying my soul to the soul of ... or Lord, I am sorry for agreeing to the soul tie with ...
2. I cut the soul tie with ... in the name of Jesus.
3. Lord, come be the tie that binds me together with ...

Vain Imaginations

In our walk drawing closer to the Lord we want to follow the instructions of II Corinthians 3:5 and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This verse is full of meaning, and one of the things it means is that our thought life needs to be under the Lord's approval.

Paul isn't teaching that every thought we have has to be about the Lord, or that we shouldn't have a great imagination. But he is saying that our thought life needs to be submitted to the Lord for His approval. We can plan a meeting, organize our day, work on a project, visit with a friend; we can be creative and use our imagination to solve problems or simply to relax. But our thoughts need to meet His approval.

Ask the Lord, about your thoughts when your mind wanders. Do your thoughts please the Lord? Do your daydreams meet His approval? Wait and see what the Lord says to you.

Prayer to release Vain Imaginations

1. Lord, I am sorry for my thoughts about ...
2. I come out of agreement with my thoughts on ... in the name of Jesus.
3. Lord, I submit all of my thoughts to you for Your approval.

Take some time this week to work through all of these prayer exercises. Get rid of that extra baggage! You will never know the beauty and wonder of communing with the Lord if you only view if from afar in the outer court. Lay down the encumbrances and weights and enter through the narrow doorway into the inner chambers of the Tabernacle.

Homework

Remember that these “encumbrances” come from a place of wounding in our lives. Be kind to yourself when you find one you’ve made. After you have finished the prayer exercises above, spend some quiet time with the Lord asking Him about the “why” you needed to pick up the weights in this lesson. Ask Him to go with you to the memories where they first seemed necessary. Then wait for Him to bring you His truth and His healing touch. James 4:8 tells us that when we draw near to the Lord, He draws near to us. Dare to draw near!

Lecture Notes:

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