



A Class on Spiritual Disciplines

pursuing His Presence



Pursuing God Through Prayer

Week 2



Stew's Bookends Approach

- Start with the big picture: Victory in this life involves remaining true to God to the very end while maintaining a mature perspective
 - To find Jesus as our all in all in every situation all day every day
 - Doing so requires an operational & functional union with the Father and Son through the Spirit (Jn 17:21) – a daily, ongoing vine-and-branch relationship
 - Also requires forsaking any competing lovers and our own ‘small stories’ (concepts from *The Sacred Romance*)
- Prayer = transmitting, speaking to God soul to soul
- Silence = receiving, hearing from God in your deepest parts
- We did several weeks on prayer from *Moving Mountains*
 - Not repeating that content
 - Taking an alternate approach
- Focus is not types of prayer but what prayer is and why we don't do it



What is it? So Many Things!

This is like starting a health class with a discussion on breathing!

- Simply put, it is relationship, it's abiding!

"[Prayer is] heart to heart communication between the vine and the branches, between the lover and the one who is loved" – Theresa of Avila

- To abide, you must first be connected – prayer is that basic connection; it's your lifeblood according to John 15:4-6
 - Small connection, small prayer life
- Conversational intimacy – Dallas Willard's 1st book (EJR pg 208)
- A vital, and therefore opposed, habit for Christian sustenance



Categories of Prayer

- A.W. Pink
 - “Giving thanks, confession, petitions for needs, homage of our heart”
 - aka Humiliation, Supplication, Adoration
- Moms in Prayer
 - Praise, Confession, Thanksgiving, Intercession
- Easton Barbour
 - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (ACTS)
- The Apostles (just for contrast)
 - Short, explicit, aimed at huge kingdom concepts; not vague rambling!
 - Contrast to what we ask God to do or to help us do / not from a deep place
 - Focus is God’s big story; not so worried about smaller stories
- The Lord’s Prayer from Jesus as a guide and model



Why Don't We Do It?

- We simply don't understand how it works... Paul Covert's Story – unbearable pain for one vs. unexpected cruise blessings for the other
 - Does it change things or God or does it change me?
 - Thinking we have to “get it right” – some formula that moves the hand
- We've previously felt burned after praying... we tend to hedge our bets
 - It's easy to feel we lack faith; James says we ask w/ wrong motives (Ja 4:3)
- We don't actually believe Jesus when he says, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)
- We don't grasp its immense spiritual power – “bunker busters” in 2Cor 10:4
 - We're too distracted/busy to notice situations that warrant calling in airstrikes
- We don't exercise the authority given to us as adopted daughters/sons
 - Prodigal or older brother syndrome or head knowledge without heart belief
- Our lives are not consecrated to God's Kingdom to begin with
 - The air is not clear between ‘Our Father’ and us; typically sin separates us
 - Agnes Stanford's steam iron analogy – small cord, small power/unplugged, no power



Reason #0: IT IS OPPOSED!

- Satan's primary goal: keep us away from God in any way possible to prevent our relationship from growing once started
- Never lets us develop a prayer habit in the 1st place
- Endless busy-ness crowds out margin (being under Satan's yoke)
- Our own mind endlessly distracts us when the world doesn't
- We're tempted to doubt our identity (Jn 17 union/oneness)
- We doubt God's massive power (Gen 18:14) (Jer 32:17,27)
- We're tempted to ask with fleshly motives (James 4:3)
- We never track the answers to see how frequent they really are!



Many Ways to Do Better...

- Reduce the distractions and build some attention margin to invest
 - Shut off notifications on your phone / don't pick it up until after quiet time
- Stop filling your mind with things that crowd out prayer
 - Internal distraction / “ontological lightness” / living “a small story”
- Begin where you are – just pray how you can, not how you can't
- Chain prayer to a habit you already have, aka “habit stacking”
 - Set an alarm or use an app to pause to pray / realign yourself during the day
- Stretch a little from there
 - Use Stew's one-page consecration guide if you need something written
 - Get the *31 Days of Prayer* book by Warren & Ruth Myers for daily prompts
 - Get beyond praying for self and physical things; get onto Kingdom concepts
- Join with others to pray
 - Spouse or friend / We Pray All Day
 - Homegroup
 - Prayer events @ church
 - Prayer ministry help
 - Multi-church prayer happenings



Radical Parting Thought

Take an opposite approach

- Ponder significance of Jesus interceding for YOU!
 - Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. -- Romans 8:34
- Ask Him what He is praying for you in any situation
- Wait at least 2 minutes in silence to sense what He reveals
- Inject prayer into the process before deciding anything



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