

Week 6 Doing Prayer  
Praying the Bible Starting with the Psalms  
Praying the Bible by Donald Whitney

*If I try to pray for people or events without having my bible in front of me guiding my prayers, then several negative things happen. One is that I tend to be very repetitive...I just pray the same things all the time. Another negative thing is that my mind tends to wander.*                      John Piper

If prayer is continuing a conversation that God began with us, why don't we pray more? Why don't we enjoy prayer more?

As a Christian I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in Eph 1:13. *"In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."* The Spirit creates in us a heart change that causes us to cry "Abba! Father! (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6)  
With this truth we know the Spirit brings a longing for this conversation with God, so the problem must be with the method of prayer. We tend to say the same old things about the same old things.

The problem is not that we pray about the same 5-6 things, of course we do, it is our life; Family, Future, Finances, Work, Christian Concerns, Current Crisis....

The problem is we say the same things about these same things and it gets tiresome and boring and we don't continue with any consistency.

**The Solution: When you pray, pray through a passage of scripture, particularly a Psalm. it will bring new energy to your prayers because there is unlimited variety to pray...about these same 6 things.**

There is no situation or emotion than one can experience that is not reflected somewhere in the Psalms.

Begin by reading a verse of the Psalm you have chosen and then pray whatever comes to mind from reading the verse. This is not the same as interpreting the bible, which involves discovering what God meant in each verse. Praying the bible allows us to pray whatever that verse brings to mind for us to put before God.

Many of the Psalms can be prayed verbatim because they were written as prayers directly from the author to God. Ps 90 is an example.

Other Psalms can be paraphrased and personalized to fit our prayer, (Ps 23)

We can also take a section of a Psalm and respond to the theme as a whole and let that stimulate adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and supplication. (Ps 116)

Some psalms, such as the imprecatory Psalms are a bit more difficult. How do you pray through Ps 137:9 *Blessed shall be he who takes your little one and dashes them against the rock! Or Ps 58:6. O God, break the teeth in their mouths!*

Hard to reconcile these with new covenant teaching of Jesus in the NT, and it seems we should not pray these with specific people in mind. But there is the idea of destroying our sin like this and the fact that at the second coming God will destroy all of His unrepentant enemies and instigate the new heaven and earth at the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Come Lord Jesus" as John prayed.

The main point Whitney makes is that this method of praying the Psalms and in fact all of the bible allows us to pray for our desires, to adore and praise God, to confess our sin and repent, to thank God for what He has and will do, and do this in His words, His inspired words. This will never get boring and tired.

#### **Whitney's method of praying the psalms:**

Start with the day of the month, then add 30 to that day four times to get the numbers of five Psalms to SKIM. Spend 2-3 minutes here, pick one and pray that Psalm. The next day start with a new day of the month and add 30 four more times, repeat each day. Months with 30 days equals 150 Psalms, less days and you leave a few to the next month, months with 31 days use Ps 119 for day 31..it is long.

#### Example

Day of the month	Psalms of the Day are:
23	23;53;83;113;143
24	24;54;84;114;144

Remember that Jesus would have actually sung and prayed the Psalms and it was from the Psalms that he spoke on the cross. When we come to a lament Psalm, we remember not only our suffering but how Jesus suffered for us, and remember that there are a number of Messianic Psalms that give particularly rich views of Jesus.

When praying the other books of the bible remember some, like NT letters have prayers embedded or are very easy to paraphrase. Other narrative passages can be looked at in big brush strokes that capture the thrust of the passage, or just the conclusion at the end.