

BEING

SERIES

40 days to being more like Jesus

BEING Series Week 3 - [Keystone Habit 3: Prioritize Prayer]

January 28, 2024 - Pastor Rafael Aristy

Habit 1 - Commit to Community

Habit 2 - Study Scripture

Today: Keystone Habit 3 - Prioritize Prayer

- What is your experience with prayer? Are you comfortable praying? How were you raised to pray?

What is Prayer?

Prayer is talking to God! Prayer is the way we communicate with the Lord; it's that simple! In every healthy relationship, *communication is key!* Through communication, we share our feelings, dreams, frustrations, needs, victories, and defeats with those closest to us.

Why Prioritize Prayer?

Because we need to live connected to the source of ALL power...because we need to be directed...convicted...forgiven...encouraged... strengthened...enlightened.

One of Pastor Rafael's friends once said: *"I feel like every failure in my life happens because of a failure to pray."* This statement is not necessarily theologically accurate, but he was learning to recognize that prayer to God in all things is VITAL and needs to be prioritized in our lives because, no matter the outcome of the situation, God is working in and in spite of us.

Being a Christian means you desire to be CHRIST-LIKE, following what He did in order to be like Him. We have been *examining Jesus' Keystone Habits* and challenging ourselves to **DO AS HE DID!** And Jesus made PRAYER a PRIORITY in His life! We pray so that we can become more like Him.

Mark 1:35 NLT *"Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray."*

I believe Jesus' days were so hectic that he had to wake up before everyone else to be able to spend time with God the Father in prayer. As busy as He was, Jesus prioritized prayer!

Luke 5:15-16 NLT 15 "But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer."

He is preaching to vast crowds, healing their diseases, but He STILL found time to pull away to pray. In some translations, verse 16 reads, "YET he often withdrew to deserted places to pray."

- With people always demanding his time...YET He prayed!
- With all the demands of His mission...YET He prayed!
- With the limitations of physical body...YET He prayed!

Why did Jesus Prioritize Prayer?

To Jesus, prayer was the tool He used to accomplish His mission. The Bible says prayer is the way to comfort the brokenhearted, to heal the sick, to set the captives free... Jesus said He didn't speak for Himself, but He spoke only what the Father had told Him (John 12:49-50). He was in the habit of LISTENING.

Why do WE need to Prioritize Prayer? TO DRAW CLOSER TO GOD!

Since prayer is TALKING TO GOD. Talking also requires listening. Through prayer, we begin to HEAR God's heart...His mission, His desires, and understanding His will.

How can you get closer to someone without ever talking?

Think about people in your life who you used to be close to and now you're not.

- How did the distance between you begin to happen?
- Did you stop hanging out? Did you stop talking in person/on the phone?
- Think about those whom you are close to. How did you get as close as you are?

Our relationship with God is NO different! It is A RELATIONSHIP, which GROWS the more we spend time together and talk to and listen to each other.

Sometimes we tend to think of prayer as this mystical or mysterious thing that only the SPIRITUAL ELITE know how to do. That is a lie that keeps you from experiencing the FULLNESS of your relationship with your Creator, your God, your Father.

- Have you ever felt this way?

You may not feel equipped to PRAY and that's ok, I felt that way too...

Some of you would be TERRIFIED if you were asked to pray publicly, or on stage. WHY?! Because you're worried about what you'll sound like to others...WHO CARES!

The only One who really matters doesn't care what you sound like.

He doesn't care if you're eloquent, or sound smart, or if you sound passionate, or if you have a doctorate in theology...**All He cares about is TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

- Do you believe this? That He really wants to hear from you? Why does He want to hear from you?

As we mature in our relationship with God, there are always things we can learn and biblical principles we can apply to our prayer life. We begin to "grow up" in our prayer time. We don't talk to God like we did at first. We not only learn to talk to Him in a more personal way, but we also learn to LISTEN and HEAR.

- How have you seen this growth in your own prayer life?

- What kind of hunger do you have for growth in your prayer life?

We prioritize prayer because our WORLD depends on it!

It is through prayer that we can participate in what God wants to do in our neighborhoods, our state, our nation, and THE nations! God's will is that ALL will come to know Him, and through prayer we get to partner with God on His mission. Through prayer we partner with God to see an end to INJUSTICE, to see HEALINGS, minds SET FREE, and lives TRANSFORMED.

- On page 42 of the *Being Challenge*, Zach Zehnder asked, "If God answered all of your prayers this week, what would be different in the world today?" How would you respond to this question?

Our VISION Statement: We live to see lives transformed through Jesus. Praying (talking to God) is a PRACTICAL way that we live out our vision.

How do we Pray?

Jesus did this so regularly that His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). This is the only thing we hear the disciples ask Jesus to teach them, not to heal the sick, and not to bring the dead to life, but TO PRAY!

Jesus' response... Matthew 6:5-6 NLT 5 "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. 6 But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

We see how personal prayer was to Jesus. He uses phrases like, "When you pray, go away by yourself, close the door, and pray to your Father." This gives you a sense of intimacy. It gives us the picture of an intimate conversation between two people who need privacy. Two people who do not need anyone else listening in on their conversation, but just need each other.

Jesus is not condemning public prayer. Jesus himself prayed publicly. However, **He is condemning those who use prayer as a vehicle to position themselves to be seen.** Those who use prayer to receive the approval or commendation of others...they have their reward and what they are seeking...the approval of man.

Then Jesus connects this instruction with additional guidance on how NOT to talk to the Father...

Matthew 6:7-8 NLT 7 "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!"

Jesus is making a distinction. The Gentiles prayed to created things not the creator, praying to gods who they had no relationship with, whom they had to impress. gods who can't see or hear... Jesus wants them to know they are DIFFERENT because our God is DIFFERENT. He is the ONE and only true God! But not only that, prayer helps us build the *personal relationship* we get to have with Him.

Jesus teaches them the Lord's Prayer as a framework for prayer, not meant to be something we repeat OVER, AND OVER again. You can memorize the words and repeat them over and over again and those words have no effect on you.

- There's nothing wrong with taking Jesus' words here as a guide to talk to God.
- Just don't let it be mindless babbling.

- Have you experienced this before? Reciting prayers that have no true meaning or effect on you?

To PRIORITIZE prayer we MUST be PERSISTENT!

Luke 11:8-9 NLT 8 "But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. 9 "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you."

So many times we give up before the breakthrough and we QUIT too early... I'm personally growing in "SHAMELESS PERSISTENCE" - Ask, seek, knock... KEEP ON

asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking...Never give up! **When you can't hear, feel, or see Him, stay dedicated to drawing closer to the Father.**

- This can be hard. How do you grow in shameless persistence?

The goal is to...BE...MORE...LIKE...JESUS and draw CLOSER to the FATHER!

- How are you inspired to grow in your prioritizing of prayer? How will you do it?

Frameworks for prayer

ACTS - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication

PRAY - Praise, Repent Ask, Yield

- Maybe you could try one of these this week?

Prayer tools

Lectio 365 (APP)

- A daily devotional resource that helps you pray the Bible every day
- You can just listen or read along
- You can do it on the go if you need to (only take 10-15 minutes)
- Guided prayer helps you quiet your mind
- Daily scriptures

Echo Prayer (APP)

- Keep track of all your prayers
- Share prayer requests with others
- Remind yourself to pray
- Pray without distraction
- Notify people when you pray for them

- Maybe you could try one of these this week?

"I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day."

- Abraham Lincoln