

this week's walk

A Five Day Devotional Journey

October 1-7, 2006



Why we do what we do

Prayer

Five Day Devotional

1

Read: *Matthew 6:5-13*

When you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this: *Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are. Set the world right; Do what's best— as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty! Yes!*

Think:

- How's your prayer life lately? Is your primary experience of prayer one of joy and peace or frustration and guilt? Why? How does Jesus' teaching on prayer impact your view and practice of prayer?

Pray:

"Abba, lead me into deeper paths of the intimate art of conversation and prayer with you. Set me free to pray."

Live:

Meditate and pray the "Lord's prayer" through the day.

God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child... with complete access to the inheritance.

Galatians 4:6-7

The Art of Prayer

Prayer is an invitation to explore the "many-splendored" heart of God. Our need is not so much for definitions of prayer or terminology for prayer or arguments about prayer, though all of these have their place. What we need is a love relationship: an enduring, continuing, growing love relationship with the great God of the universe. Love is the syntax of prayer. To be effective pray-ers, we need to be effective lovers. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Samuel Coleridge declares, "He prayeth well that loveth well."

One day a friend of mine was walking through a shopping mall with his two-year-old son. The child was in a particularly cantankerous mood, fussing and fuming. The frustrated father tried everything to quiet his son, but nothing seemed to help. The child simply would not obey. Then, under some special inspiration, the father scooped up his son and, holding him close to his chest, began singing an impromptu love song. None of the words rhymed. He sang off key. And yet, as best he could, this father began sharing his heart. "I love you," he sang. "I'm so glad you're my boy. You make me happy. I like the way you laugh." On they went from one store to the next. Quietly the father continued singing off key and making up words that did not rhyme. The child relaxed and became still, listening to this strange and wonderful song. Finally, they finished shopping and went to the car. As the father opened the door and prepared to buckle his son into the car seat, the child lifted his head and said simply, "Sing it to me again, Daddy! Sing it to me again!"

Richard Foster *Prayer*

Four Daily Devotional Steps

Read

Meditatively read a verse/passage.

Think

Ponder its meaning.

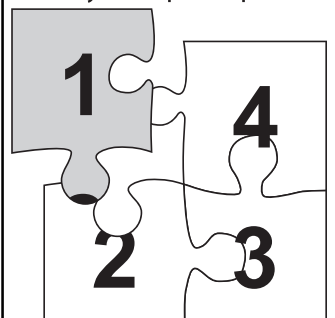
Pray

Talk it over with God.

Live

Pursue life response.

Weekly Discipleship Track



2 **Read:** *Luke 11:5-9*
Imagine what would happen if you went to a friend in the middle of the night and said, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread. An old friend traveling through just showed up, and I don't have a thing on hand.' The friend answers from his bed, 'Don't bother me. The door's locked; my children are all down for the night; I can't get up to give you anything.' But let me tell you, even if he won't get up because he's a friend, if you stand your ground, knocking and waking all the neighbors, he'll finally get up and get you whatever you need. Here's what I'm saying: Ask and you'll get; Seek and you'll find; Knock and the door will open.

Think:

- What lesson does this parable teach you about the nature of prayer?
- How often do you feel like you are inconveniencing God when you pray? Why?
- Where are there "empty cupboards" in your life right now?

Pray:

"Father, thank you for hearing when I call, for answering when I knock. Give me eyes of faith to see this, to see you, even when the door seems closed."

Live:

Identify one specific need in your life or another's, and make this your specific, passionate prayer focus through the day.

4 **Read:** *Luke 18:9-14*
He told his next story to some who were complacently pleased with themselves over their moral performance and looked down their noses at the common people: "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax man. The Pharisee posed and prayed like this: 'Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like this tax man. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income. "Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, 'God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.'" Jesus commented, "This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face, but if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself."

Think:

- To what extent do you feel unworthy to come before God in prayer or to 'bother him' with your needs? How does this parable of Jesus speak to this issue? According to this parable, what "passes muster" before God in prayer?

Pray:

"Savior, deliver me from religiosity and pretentiousness in prayer. Never let me cease being broken before you in prayer, that you may mend me; being humbled in prayer, that you may exalt me."

Live:

Pray the seven word prayer of the tax man periodically through the day: "God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner."

3 **Read:** *Psalms 3*
God! Look! Enemies past counting! Enemies sprouting like mushrooms,
Mobs of them all around me, roaring their mockery:
"Hah! No help for him from God!"

But you, God, shield me on all sides;
You ground my feet, you lift my head high;
With all my might I shout up to God,
His answers thunder from the holy mountain.

I stretch myself out. I sleep.
Then I'm up again—rested, tall and steady,
Fearless before the enemy mobs
Coming at me from all sides.

Up, God! My God, help me!
Slap their faces,
First this cheek, then the other,
Your fist hard in their teeth!

Real help comes from God.
Your blessing clothes your people!

Think / Pray / Live:

The psalms aren't so much to be studied and analyzed as they are to be experienced. They are ancient "climbing companions" for believers pursuing God's heart in prayer. Pray this psalm through your day.

5 **Read:** *Philippians 4:4-7*
Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute! Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Think:

- What connection do you see here between celebrating God all day and prayer?
- How well have you mastered the art of "shaping your worries into prayer"? What would you say is the root cause of worry? What is it about prayer that so effectively addresses the issue of worry? How can you move closer to experiencing a worry-free, peace-filled life?

Pray:

"Lord, I surrender each weight of worry, each burden of anxiety into your hands. Give me the grace to release into your hands the loads I was never designed to carry. Thank you for daily bearing my burdens."

Live:

When you find yourself fretting over something today, stop and verbally, out loud, turn that worry into a prayer. Repeat as necessary.