

 **Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer #1**

Lesson 20: Wednesday, February 16, 2022

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**1 Timothy 4:7** …discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (NASB)

This year our Midweek focus is on the Spiritual Disciplines.

The spiritual disciplines are practices that we as Christians perform.

They are not just something we learn about, but something we actually do and carry out. We find in Holy Scripture that these practices honor God and promote spiritual growth among believers.

Spiritual disciplines are practices or habits that Christians prioritize because they help us grow in Christlikeness and remind us of our dependence upon Christ.

Spiritual disciplines are things we do regularly and they require practice to grow in them.

Tonight we turn in part one of a two part focus on the Spiritual Discipline of Prayer.

I am excited for these two lessons and pray they are a great help you to all.

With lots to cover let’s jump right in..

**1. Introduction to Prayer**

**What is prayer?**

Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God in praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, and expressing our requests to Him while submitting to His sovereign will. - **WOTC Q102.**

**When it comes to prayer I have found that…**

1. **Most people are very interested in improving their prayer life.**
2. **Many people are often very timed about prayer.**

There are varying ways we can approach prayer, See if you resonate with any of these?

<> Some feel obligated to pray out of tradition or religious duty– so you really only pray at meals & before bed or times like these.

<> Some are Intimidated by thought of talking to God so they do not often approach Him in prayer

<> Some are so concerned with how others think they do not pray often for fear of judgement or feeling lame.

<> Some really only ever go to God in prayer when they want something

<> Some really love God and recognize all things exist from Him through him and for him and so they seek his face regularly, they speak freely and speak from your heart and rest in his will.

**My Hope** for our time tonight is that you **do not feel guilty** because your prayer life is not where you want it but that you feel encouraged because you are discovering ways to improve your prayer life and engage our Great God who loves us and wants us to spend more time with Him in this way.

**One of the most critical first steps to prayer is understanding who we are talking to.**

**2. Trinitarian Prayer**

**The God of the Bible is a triune God, which means three distinct persons (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) who are one GOD!**

**-Prayer is Communication with the triune God.**

We do not call any other form of communication with people, prayer. **WHY?**

Because it belongs to God and to do this would be to profane prayer by putting it on something else.

**We pray to God.** Not to other people or other created material.

Prayer is communicating with the one true God!! That is it.

**When we pray, the Triune God is intimately involved.**

**As Christians, our prayers are Trinitarian.**

Our **prayers are to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.**

It’s important we see the intimate and vital involvement of the Trinity in our prayers.

For example, Without Jesus, our prayers to the Father, would not go farther than the ceiling.

**1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

This is important so let’s take a moment to better understand the vital role of …

**Jesus the Mediator**

The Active and ongoing ministry of Jesus after ascending to the right hand of the Father is to mediate for us with the Father. Whether that is to mediate our prayers or his standing in mediation for us on judgment day.

**Q75 in the WOTC speaks to one of the vital roles Christ plays and that is the role of Priest.**

**How is Christ our Priest?**

Christ is our Priest because He gave Himself as a sacrifice in our place to satisfy the wrath of God, and He is in continual intercession to God the Father on our behalf.

In the OT, the mediator between God and the people was **the high priest.**

The High Priest was appointed to enter the holy place and offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:34).

It was here that he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat “because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins” (Lev. 16:16). This he did year after year after year under the Old Covenant as God’s appointed mediator until Christ would come to ultimately fill this vital role.

In contrast, Christ, as our Mediator and High Priest, not only *offered* the sacrifice (once and for all), but He *is* the sacrifice. Like the high priest of old, Christ entered the holy place, but unlike the high priest, He entered to offer Himself. He had to enter only one time for He sprinkled His own blood on the mercy seat. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us:

***Heb. 9:11–14*** *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

**Church, the truth is, we are so absolutely desperate for Christ to be our Priest.**

**WHY?** Because is Holy and we are not. And therefore we needed a representative to go before the Holy God to represent us, to intercede for us and to mediate for us!!

Without Christ as Priest we have not hope and not ongoing life with God.

Without Christ as Priest we have not one to mediate between us and the Father.

Without Christ as Priest we have not one to mediate our prayers between us and the Father.

Do you realize that the mediation of Christ as Priest is the very promise of God in the **protoevangelium?**

That’s a big word. The word is derived from the Greek prefix *proto* meaning "first" and *euangelion* meaning "gospel" or "good news." It’s the first gospel pronouncement in human history.

In holy scripture, we find this in Genesis 3:15.

**Genesis 3:15** I will put enmity between you and the woman, he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel

**Where does mankind learn of our absolute need for a Mediator?**

Our sin separated us from the Holy God. This means to have a restored relationship with God we needed a mediator God promised in Genesis 3:15 that this is what he would provide for His people in the messiah !!!!

Local Gospel partner, Pastor Richard Barcellos says it this way:

The gospel is the good news of a Mediator ordained by God who takes care of our sin problem, which includes our guilt (i.e., liability to punishment) and lack of righteousness (i.e., lack of obedience to the law of God) unto eternal life.

It was shadowed or typified by the sacrificial system and other ceremonies in the Old Testament.

And finally, it was accomplished by our Lord. **The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith** says something similar to this. In section 7.3, it says, ***“This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament.”***

Beloved, the fact that Christ alone is our all sufficient Priest is a game changing reality for those who are saved by Christ. My prayer is that it is truly good news to your soul for there is no prayer to the Holy God without the all sufficient mediator, Jesus Christ!!.

Jesus ongoing work to mediate our prayers is a special loving, vital role he does every day.

He faithfully connects the line between us and the Father.

**Understand, we are never put on hold and the line is never busy.**

Jesus faithfully mediates all of our prayers to the Father!

Without His atonement in our place we would have not reconciliation or connection to God.

So, Jesus Christ is the intercessor and mediator. There is no other way. No other medium.

Jesus alone is the mediator of our prayers.

 Let’s also take a moment to better understand the vital role of …

**The Power of the Holy Spirit in our Prayers**

Without the Holy Spirit we would not have the power to pray to God.

**Romans 8:15-16** you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

**In this the Holy Spirit comes along side of our spirit and testifies with it.**

**How do we know the God of the universe will listen to little ol me.**

**How do we know he hears what we are saying?**

The Holy Spirit is one with the Father **and is the one at work within you as you Pray**. Trust in Him!

Paul says in Ephesians 6 **that we are to pray at all times in the SPIRIT!!**

 **(Ephesians 6:18** praying at all times in the Spirit)

Pastor Sinclair Ferguson brings some important clarity to this when he says..

Praying in the Spirit means ***relying on His power and wisdom, not on our own.*** This means submitting our mind, thoughts, will, and desires to be influenced and mastered by God’s word. We thus began “to think God’s thoughts after him,” develop instincts that are aligned to His will, and ask for those things that He has revealed please Him and that He promises to do. It is the expression of a life lived out in the presence of God… Prayer is the overflow of how we live (in the presence of God). In essence, prayer involves bringing God’s promises back to Him, in the context of all that He has told us about Himself, His character, and His will, and saying, “Father, you are all that you have revealed yourself to be; you will keep all the promises you have made. . .Therefore I come to you to ask for. . .”

Another layer of what the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives means is the presence of true faith in God.

Church, we must have ***true faith*** when we pray to God.

If we do not believe in the one whom we are praying to (God the Father)

or the one whom we are praying through (the mediator Jesus Christ)

and the one by whom we are able to Pray (the Holy Spirit) **then we are not praying at all**

**but doing something else entirely.**

There is no true prayer without true faith because ***without true faith, who are you talking to?***

True prayer requires true faith in the triune God!

We only have true faith if the Spirit has given us new birth and has come on board to will and to work out our faith in God in all things.

The Faith that is exercised in prayer is a faith or ***a trust in God*** that He will accomplish his perfect will every time. **It is the Spirit’s work to empower this faith to truly trust in God in prayer**

**As Christians, our prayers are Trinitarian.**

Our **prayers are to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.**

Now, that said, this doesn’t mean we can’t petition Jesus or the Holy Spirit in prayer. The Christian can surely call out to Christ and or the Holy Spirit in our prayers. We see this in places like, Acts 7:59 when Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit”. We also, often, ask the Holy Spirit to do His mighty work in a given situation or to show us the way according to the word.
The point I am majoring on is that we need to be careful to not adopt a modalistic mindset whereby the God we pray to is only one person and we interact with him to the exclusion of the other two eternal persons of the Godhead. “*God exists eternally as one God, three Persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.” -WOTC Q3*

My hope is that we better understand the roles the three persons of the Godhead play in our prayers so that our prayer life is fuller and richer and deeper than it has been in the past.

**2. Praying All The Time**

There is something else we see in Paul’s words in Ephesians 6:18 that are foundational in our prayer life and that is the emphasis that we would pray at all times. Listen to it in its fullness.

**Ephesians 6:18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Church: **God’s word regularly tells us to pray all the time.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** …pray without ceasing,

**Romans 12:12** …be constant in prayer.

**Why is there so much emphasis to pray all the time?**

Because **when you finally have access to the one true almighty, all glorious, all satisfying, all powerful God, why would you not talk and walk with Him all the time?**

I know many Christians who say they would like to be more constant in prayer but they can’t seem to figure out how to actually do it. I think one of the reasons why many people get tripped up there is because they are only thinking of “prayer closet” prayer.

***Prayer closet prayer*** is that special and specific time that you prioritize to get alone and turn off all the distractions and noise and just be still and focused on God in prayer. I’ll speak to that more in a moment.

But prayer doesn’t have to only be private and formal and slow and devoid of life’s noise.

When you pray “all the time” or “unceasingly” you do not stop everything and dial God up and speak long winded things and then formally hang up the call.

No, ***it is an all the time, informal, walking and talking with God that literally is unceasing.***

Think about it with me… what would your life look like if you really were in tune with the fact that God is always with you? Every little step of the way, every thought you had, everything you looked at, everything you said. **How much more would you honor Him, enjoy Him and feel close to Him?**

The thing is: God is closer to us then we know how to fathom and yet we are the ones who are all too busy and constantly tuning Him out.

While formal prayer is good, we must learn to pray more often and more along the way.

Think about the formal and or big life moments of life that you typically pray.

Before Meals

Before Sleep

Before big game, test, event.

Before travel

And in emergencies or sticky spots.

**Have you ever wondered if God ordains many of your sticky spots simply so you will pray to Him?**

Think about what you have in the gospel in that you have unhindered access to the living God.

Think about the fact that the all-knowing, all powerful, all glorious God is fully focused on you and hears every word of every prayer you make. Think about what He is able to do.

Who God is and the access and relationship we have with him because of Christ is why we ***“Pray at all times”*** Praying at all times is how we enjoy our reconciled relationship with God. It is how we stay focused on God.

The words of the classic hymn **“what a friend we have in Jesus”** are so helpful here to remind us to bring everything to God in prayer.

*O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations?
  Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
  Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Can we find a friend so faithful
  Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
  Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

**Church: We should Pray all the time because God is all-powerful:**

**Jeremiah 32:27** “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?

**Matthew 19:26** But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

**Why would we not go to the one who holds all things in his hands..To trust Him & rest in Him?**

**We should Pray all the time because God is the source of peace, help, comfort and healing.**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Peter says, cast.. all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. **1 Peter 5:7**

**Phil 4:6-7 .. do not worry.. instead pray and he will give you peace beyond understanding.**

**Oh how we need to Pray. My hope is that we are all growingly become people who pray all the time.**

**4. Quality Time in our Prayer Closet**

Ok, now, let’s talk about prayer closet prayer. First, **Why is it called that?**

Are we supposed to actually pick a closet in our house and decorate it and put a pillow on the floor and that’s where we formally pray.

You know***, “They made a movie about that”…*** I don’t remember what it’s called because I never saw it because it’s my understanding that it is full of unbiblical Christianize… that is a mess.

The term ***“prayer closet”*** comes from Jesus words in …

**Matthew 6:6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Some translations say “inner Room”.

So, **where is an inner room in a house?** The closet. It is the small room in the room.

All of this is really missing the point. All Jesus is pressing for is the opposite of what he just said the pharisees were guilty of doing which was praying in public not for worship or true abiding with God but for a public show of self and manmade accolades and respect.

The inner room or prayer closet is essentially just a space you can be private with the Lord without distraction and temptation to put on a show and make prayer something it is not.

**How did Jesus model this in his own life?**

Not by putting a pillow in a closet.. no he did this by finding quite space in nature.

Why, because doing it outside is better. No, not necessarily.

Some people will over emphasize that too. Saying, they have to go to “God’s country” and get out in nature to really connect with God. That is also putting too much on the location.

God is everywhere. The space that is quite and removed is for us and not for HIM!!

Jesus went to nature because he didn’t have a home or a closet to retreat to.

**Matthew 8:20** And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Again, it’s not about the actual space.

When we make too much of the space we over focus on the creation when the entire point is to be keenly focused on the creator. We see Jesus do this often in verses like…

**Luke 5:16** But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

**Luke 6:12** In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

**Mark 1:35** And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

Justin taught on this in his lesson a few weeks ago on the spiritual discipline of Silence and solitude.

**Donald S. Whitney** said, “One of the best ways to step back and get a more balanced, less worldly perspective on matters is through the disciplines of silence and solitude.”

Silence and Solitude with God in prayer is a wonderful and needed discipline in the Christian life.

It is important because one of the biggest ways the enemy keeps us from maturing in our faith in Christ is ***to simply keep us busy.***

One of the biggest ways we stay busy in our modern day is this… **(cell phone).**

We literally take this anywhere we go and most feel very vulnerable and even uncomfortable without it.

**WHY is that?** Because we have become addicted. We have become all too dependent on it.

Now, as wonderful as this device is for productivity and communication with others…

But this is one of the single handed greatest diversions the enemy has put in the hands of Christians everywhere. One of the biggest reasons why silence and solitude is so foreign to your life is because you have this with you everywhere and feel uneasy if you don’t!!

We have to address the things that keep us from really making time to be alone with God in prayer.

**Christian, what are you doing to literally schedule time alone where you have nothing that is able to pull you away. To unplug and be still with God, where you can read your bible and talk to God in prayer?**

Prayer Closet prayer that is private and slow and more dedicated time to **“Be still and know that He is God…” Psalm 46:10**

I pray that one of the ways you would grow in your spiritual discipline of Prayer is to not only pray ***all the time*** in a less formal way but to also prioritize time to pray in private in a more formal and dedicated way. To be still and know that He is God in all that you are facing and going throw in life is truly one of the best blessing for your weary soul!! To be disciplined in this practice is to better abide in God and grow in Christlikeness!!

**5. How NOT to Pray:**

**I mentioned earlier Jesus speaking about how we are not to pray.**

In **Matthew 6:5-8** Jesus gives us some great insight that we need to rightly understand!!

**Matthew 6:5-8**And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Real quick, let’s talk about the last part before the first. Jesus says ***“your Father knows what you need before you ask him”***

Christian, please understand, prayer is not telling God something He doesn’t know. God Knows!

It is not uncommon that I will ask people, **have you talked to God about that?** And they will say, NO NO, I do not want to bother him with this one. Ummmm… ? To late!

**You would be so much better off to just talk to him.** **WHY?**

Because He knows more about the who, what, when, where, and why then you do! SO…

**Why would you keep him out of it??? He is omnipresent. You can’t bother Him. He is more present than you know how to give him credit!!!**

**Church: Prayer is not telling God something He doesn’t already know but it is inviting God to move in and through us in that situation or moment.**

**As a father I love it when my kids invite me to share in what they are feeling or going through.** Same with our God, Prayer is us linking up with him to see that thing through in a way that honors Him and brings him Glory and us JOY!

Back to **Matthew 6:5**

Jesus says, **Do not pray like Religious or Irreligious people do.**

Irreligious people have no connection with God and therefore they **“heap up Empty phrases”**

Religious people like to put themselves in public to press their self-righteous ways on other people.

They like to use lots of fancy words and go on and on in an effort to be impressive to God and others. **A Religious prayer is proud and full of posturing…**

GOSPEL prayer is humble and authentic.

GOSPEL prayer is respectful and not bossing God around.

What I want you to begin to see is much of what determines your prayer life is based on how you understand and know God.

**PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS:**

**There is an important reason why we do not pray “like” other religions and “with” other religions!** Because …**they aren’t praying!**

**Because prayer is by the power of the HS, through the mediation of Jesus Christ to God the Father. True Prayer is only to one true God**.

Every other religion is worshipping Counterfeit, little “g”, man-made gods.

The bible says that anything posing to be God are really demons.

**1 Corinthians 10:20** No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.

Here is the point.. it is not enough to be spiritual, or to be religious.

**You need to know who God is. Not only that but you need to trust in Jesus with your life!!**

**Why? because we need the Holy Spirit to power our prayers and Jesus to mediate them!!!**

**Some will ask at this point in the lesson, what about the non-believer crying out to God in prayer? Does God hear their prayers?**

**The answer is more wooden then some may like but it is this.**

**God hears and knows everything!!**

**The bigger question is: Are they really praying?**

**Or are they just speaking out loud in a way that they are calling prayer?**

**Church: the heart of stone does nothing by faith in God.**

 **If and when a person is being given spiritual life and they are reaching out to God in the faith he is giving them, then yes, they are praying!!**

**If not, then, no in their pride and rejection of Christ as Lord, they are not praying!!**

**Church: May we not pray like the unbelieving or the Prideful!!!**

As we look to Jesus teaching on “how to pray” in Matthew 6, I want you to notice that Jesus starts by telling the disciples who God as he begins to teach them how to pray.

**Matthew 6:9** Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”

**Notice,** Jesus says.. PRAY then LIKE THIS.. Don’t miss that point of clarity.

Jesus is not saying: **PRAY exactly this**… Like a mantra!

He says “pray like this”. The emphasis in what He is teaching is about balanced prayer and not that this is the only thing you should say when you pray like many can be guilty of doing.

Some will just recite this prayer and check a box. May we all be careful to not every make the beauty and wonder of talking to God in prayer just checking a box in formality.

**Matthew 6:9-13** Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Next week, in part #2, I want us to look at the parts and the balance of this prayer and what Jesus is showing us in it. In this time, I will get very practical for how you can better practice the spiritual discipline of prayer!! But for tonight, let’s go no further then Jesus emphasis on who we are praying too.

We have spent time looking at the Mediator, the Son, Jesus, and the power for prayer in the HS.

Let’s turn now to consider the Father!!

**6. Praying to Our Holy Father**

 ***“Our Father*”**

These first two words are essential to see fully before you go any further when trying to understand prayer.

When we are saved. When we are given Life in Christ we are restored to the eternal family of God.
This means, We are no longer on our own.

This means, It is no longer just “me and mine” but “us and ours”!

So when Jesus says, “OUR” Father. He is showing us we are not alone anymore but a part of something special and lasting. Something bigger than ourselves.

Brother/sister, when you pray you need to be regularly reminded you are no longer and orphan and you are not an only child. NO, you are part of something very special. The wonderful blood bought family of God!!

**Our who? …OUR FATHER!**

**14 TIMES IN THE OLD TESTEMENT God is referred to as Father in the context of him being the father over all of Israel and the father over all of Creation!**

**In the 4 Gospels Jesus speaks to or about God as Father.. *60 times.***

Did you know that there is no prayer to God where anyone addresses him as Father until JESUS does! This is an awesome clarity that we need to not miss.

New Covenant Prayer is to God as Father!!!

**One of the biggest impacts on how your prayer life goes is dependent on how you look at God.**

Understand….

**God is not impersonal**.. He is personal**..** He is loving.. **He is not far away**.. He is close…

**He is not distracted and busy** .. He is involved intimately in the moment by moment life of his children. OF YOUR LIFE!!!

**What is also shows us is that our prayer life is to be respectful (like you would be with your father) but not Formal (like you would be with an unknown authority like a President or a King.)**

Many people do not really like prayer because they grew up in a religious tradition that taught you to have a **formal interaction with God**..

**( hold this, says this, face this direction, pray at this time of day, etc)**

**UNDERSTAND… That is a totally different team! God is a loving Father. He is “our Father.”**

This means we are respectful but we also can have a more personal interaction that is not formal and cold.

**What this also means is that God hears all Christian’s prayers no matter who they are.**

<>The elderly Pastor who prays in an almost angelic chant using the words of the ancients and the creeds

<>And the Surfer who knows only about 5 words (epic, rad, gnarly, stoked, and awesome) and uses them all in every sentence.

**A helpful example of this is my kids.. When Savanna wants to spend time with me and cuttle she doesn’t say to me “Dearest FATHER, I beseech thee… to cuttle with me… in thy dwelling place, most often known as the Living ROOM.”**

**She doesn’t do it that way…. WHY? because I am her Father.**

**She says, Excuse me, Daddy.. Yes Savanna…. Can weeee cuttle?**

**It doesn’t need to be formal and take 45 minutes and she doesn’t need to lay prostrate on the floor humming while facing the master bedroom to address me.**

It’s the same with prayer, When we pray we are not depending on our delivery, style and perfectly execute monologue. **We are dependent of the mercy and grace and love of our heavenly Father, the perfect work of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit!**

Christian, you have to **stop making prayer all about you** and let God work in and through you so that it is personal and authentic and enjoyable.

Prayer is ultimately about God and your loving connection with Him now and forever!!

**Before we move on, let me highlight one more aspect of God as Father.**

***God is a Father. Not a Mother!*** This is why we worship him as God and not Goddess.

We call him Father because He is the Holy and Eternal Father of the Son and all whom He has chosen from before time and adopted into His family. We are His kids of Grace!!! RIGHT?

Now for some of you.. this “God is our Father” language is hard because of your relationship or lack thereof with your blood father. It is hard in a very real way for you because you do not know such as thing as a loving, present, caring, interested Father.

Maybe, because you never had one who was around or when he was he was distracted, he was mean, arrogant, or even abusive. Maybe he never cared to spend time with you, maybe he walked out on your mom, or he won’t return your phone calls.

**For those of you who relate** I want to encourage you with this:

**Do not judge God by your earthly father.. Judge your earthly father by heavenly Father.**

Psalms says.. *God is a father to the fatherless.* (Psalm 146, 68, 40…)

God is the truer & better Father! Brother, Sister, **PRAYER IS TALKING TO YOUR ETERNAL Father**

Jesus says,

**Our Father in heaven!**

Heaven here does not mean he is far away…

Answer this for me: **What are you picturing when you pray?**

 **a God far away.. up in the clouds… one that you have to shout to?**

Beloved: God is not far. He is closer and more present than we know how to understand.

**Heaven, here, means that He is high & exalted! It means he is the King over all things!**

**How cool is that?** It means, There is no one or nothing that is outside of his authority!

Prayer is talking to your loving father who is able more than able!! Who knows you and chose you and redeemed you. Who has secured you and will see you through. Oh how He loves you.

We need to just enjoy being with him and loving him back!

**My kids really help me in the area of our approach to God in prayer**.

Not because of their technique but because of how they interact with me as their Father!

**Especially, when my older kids were younger or with my youngest kids today,**

 **when I come home I have a practice whereby I say with joy and energy…**

 “**Where are my kids at?” Then I here from a distance,**  “Daddy’s home” and they come running.

No matter how hard or bad their day has been.. This moment is most often full of joy and love.

**Church: this needs to be our joy to run to God in prayer with our hearts and hands open to Him without condition or without being impacted by our current circumstances.**

**I love this instruction from Jesus!**

Jesus is saying as you go to prayer, know you are talking to your Loving and present **Father?**

**Can I press on the Men for a moment?**

When our kids are older and the next generation rises up, when they hear God is a loving Father… who wants to spend time with his kids and hear them pray to Him in all things.

**Will they say?** **“ Yes, I get that, because I know what that looks like because of how my Dad loved me and was present with me”**

🡪One of the worst things a father can do is dishonor **the office of Father** by overly focusing on making more money or checking out when we get home. By not making time to know and grow with his kids. In doing this brothers, we taint their intimate understating of God’s fatherly love and care for them and make it another generational hurdle that they need to overcome!!

🡪 I want my kids to know me and little “f” father and God as big “F” Father

Here is my main point.. **If you know God as a loving, present, father! You will love to pray!**

**You will pray all the time and your will enjoy it.**

But for far too many Christians… **Prayer is awkward, wooden and difficult.**

Are you too caught up in the how that you essentially set aside the WHO? Saying things like…

**“What if I say the wrong things, what if I talk to long, what if I don’t know what to say..”**

If this is you, come next week & I will help you fill in the gaps & grow in a healthy balanced prayer life!

I hope that tonight has helped shed some of the fear as you begin to rightly understand who God is and what the wonderful role of the HS and Jesus play in prayer.

Beloved: It’s not about you. It’s about Him.

It’s about walking with him and talking with him in faith.

It’s about enjoying quality time to be with him.

It’s about learning to bring it all to Him and trust it all to him.

I am praying for you all as you look to digest and apply these things to your spiritual discipline of Prayer!!!