

Effectual Fervent Prayer, Part 3 - Disciplined Prayer

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Joel 2:12-15 Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Part 1 – Jubilee Prayer (a corporate call to prayer and fasting)

Part 2 – Occupying Prayer (fervent - “passionate” - prayer)

Part 3 – Disciplined Prayer (effectual - “effective” - prayer)

“Disciplined” & “Prayer” don’t often go together – but they should!

PRAYER SHOULDN'T JUST BE RANDOM! It is not an accident that followers of Jesus are called DISCIPLES, which comes from the same root word as DISCIPLINE. Prayer is certainly **“a training regimen that has cumulative benefits over time”** – PRAYER IS A DISCIPLINE!

Today we will look at the Bible’s most familiar passage about prayer:

Matthew 5:1 (KJV) And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

Matthew 5:1 (MSG) When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching His DISCIPLES, not preaching to sinners. In fact, *The Message* introduces this passage to show us that Jesus always expects MORE from His disciples than He does from the crowd. As He “climbs higher” with His disciples, instead of Jesus telling us what HE wants to do for US (salvation), He now tells us what He wants US to do for HIM (discipleship). The Sermon on the Mount is all about becoming a “climbing companion” of Jesus!

Matthew 6:1 (KJV) Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 6:1 (MSG) Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding.

The Message is very accurate in paraphrasing this verse, because Jesus uses the Greek word “theaomai” which is the original root of our English word “theater.” Jesus is identifying the most common temptation in the area of spiritual disciplines ... the temptation to craft a public image that is vastly different than our private reality.

WHY ARE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IMPORTANT? Because they help us conquer our old nature and let our new nature gain the supremacy in our three basic areas of spiritual struggle:

1 John 2:16 (KJV) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Matthew 6:1 introduces 3 areas of spiritual discipline (“when ye give, pray, fast” - v. 2, 5, 16) where we are tempted to “talk” more than we “walk.” But when we playact in spiritual matters, we become hypocrites (literally, “actors wearing masks” - v. 2, 5, 16) who already have their reward (literally, “wages for work done” - v. 2, 5, 16).

Jesus is NOT saying that you always have to do your giving, praying and fasting in SECRET. He is simply teaching that giving, praying or fasting that is only motivated by a desire to impress others will NOT be rewarded by God. Because you have chosen to receive the “public” reward, you have eliminated the better “private” reward.

WHEN YOU GIVE

Matthew 6:3-4 (MSG) When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure — 'playactors' I call them — treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it — quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

Giving is an important discipline because it helps us conquer the LUST OF THE EYES. (The lust of the eyes says “I want”)

WHEN YOU FAST

Matthew 6:16-18 (MSG) When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well.

Fasting is an important discipline because it helps us conquer the LUST OF THE FLESH. (The lust of the flesh says "I need")

Fasting is negative for the flesh but positive for the spirit. It intensifies your prayer life like nothing else can.

Mark 9:29 (KJV) And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Your fast is between you and God, not to impress anyone else with how spiritual you are. You are not denying your flesh at all when your flesh gets public credit for all the denial it is enduring! This is why CORPORATE FASTING is good – everyone is doing the same thing.

WHEN YOU PRAY

Matthew 6:5-9a (MSG) And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. 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:

Prayer is an important discipline because it helps us conquer the PRIDE OF LIFE. (The pride of life says "I'm in charge")

Notice two things about Jesus' instructions:

- We are taught how NOT to pray before we are taught how to pray! (we need to have the right ATTITUDE in prayer, and then we also need to have the right APPROACH in prayer)

- Jesus is NOT condemning repeated requests (He told us to "ask, seek and knock" in Matthew 7:8, and He made the same request – "let this cup pass from me" – several times in Matthew 27)

When the KJV refers to "vain repetitions" the Greek wording means "to speak without thinking" (modern equivalent: "a broken record"). The Lord's Prayer (really the "Disciple's Prayer") is not given to be repeated, but to help us AVOID meaningless repetition!

This is a PRAYER OUTLINE – six topics to bathe in prayer daily. And as we make this discipline a ROUTINE part of our day, what we are really doing is cleaning out our heart, which is the conduit for communication from God (much like regular exercise keeps your physical heart healthy).

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV) After this manner therefore pray ye:

PRAISE: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

PURPOSE: Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

PROVISION: Give us this day our daily bread.

PARDON: And forgive us our debts,

PEOPLE: As we forgive our debtors.

PROTECTION: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

PRAISE: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Illustrations:

Praise – hand raised in worship

Purpose – thumbs up (God's approval)

Provision – point (to things I want)

Pardon – longest finger (went too far)

People – ring finger (relationships)

Protection – bend finger back (pain)



SIX WAYS TO GET A GRIP ON PRAYER

After He concludes His "PRAYER OUTLINE" Jesus adds one more critical reminder that this "disciplined prayer" is really about our hearts being a CLEAN CONDUIT for God to do what only He can do in us ...

Matthew 6:14-15 (MSG) In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

THIS WON'T HAPPEN IN A DAY, BUT IT WILL HAPPEN DAILY!