

GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved
WORLD!

(#31)

Prayer influenced by Scripture... changing us,
enabling the Spirit to accomplish more in us

PRAYER WITH A DIFFERENT FOCUS

People often view PRAYER as a means of "getting" **things** or "changing" **circumstances**.

HEY GOD, I'VE SHORTENED MY LIST OF DEMANDS – I MEAN "REQUESTS"!

AREN'T YOU PROUD OF ME?

What if we looked at prayer as a means of "getting" to know **God** better, or "changing" **us**?

PRAYER WITH A DIFFERENT FOCUS

Today, we're going to look at a suggested method of praying that makes this change in focus...

- Making it possible for the Spirit to influence us.
- Making our lives an inviting place for the Spirit to dwell.

WON'T NEED TO LOOK TOO HARD!

Last week, we looked at 3 prayers in the book of Acts. These prayers show us!

✓ The prayer in Acts 1:24-25 – Choosing a replacement for Judas.

➤ **Responding to the Holy Spirit's words:** Their prayer was in *response* to what the Holy Spirit said in Scripture. They prayed with a desire to obey Scripture.

"... the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the **Holy Spirit** spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, ...
" 'May another take his place of leadership.'
"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us ..."
Then they **prayed**, ...
Acts 1:16b, 20b-21a, 24a (NIV)

APPLICATION?

➤ **Their specific situation was unique:** They needed to replace Judas.

➤ **Their guiding principle applies to all of us:** They became aware of commands that applied to them, and wanted to obey the commands... with God's help.

➤ **Would you like the Spirit's power in your life?**

➤ **The Bible is God's Word, given by the Holy Spirit.** Do you think the Spirit might be delighted to be around people who pay attention to what he says, and who want to obey his words?

➤ **Just make sure the command or statement applies to you!**

✗ Some things won't necessarily apply to us!

... bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: ...
Luke 15:23 (ASV)

✓ But many things will!

Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse.
Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited.
Romans 12:14-16 (NET)

➤ **EXAMPLE**

Bless those who persecute you,
bless and do not curse.
Romans 12:14 (NET)

"Lord, you know how I respond every time someone wrongs me. Even when I don't vent out at them, you know what goes on in my heart. According to your Word, my response is sin. Not a 'mistake,' or 'imperfection,' but simply 'sin.'

✓ "This last half of Romans 12 is about 'unhypocritical love.' What that tells me is that I am not responding with love toward those who wrong me. I confess it, and ask you to help me to change.

"I want to use the power you have given me, to do what is right – to love them. ... [Etc.]"

✓ **The prayer in Acts 4:24-30 – Reacting to opposition.**

➤ **Including the Holy Spirit's words:** They quoted the Holy Spirit's words – words which explained the situation they were experiencing – and they prayed for a right response.

... they **lifted their voices** together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, ...
... who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the **Holy Spirit**, ...
... grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ..."
Acts 4:24b, 25a, 29b (ESV)

APPLICATION?

➤ **The apostles looked to God's words in order to understand the difficult situation they were in.** We also might have many opportunities to see how Scripture explains our situations in life.

>> HOWEVER <<

➤ **Including Scripture in prayer is a good idea any time we pray!** We don't need to wait until difficult situations arise!

➤ **Would you like the Spirit's power in your life?**

➤ **The Bible is God's Word, given by the Holy Spirit.** Do you think the Spirit might be delighted to be around people who enjoy centering their lives around his words?

➤ **Just make sure the passage is relevant to your situation!**



Some things aren't intended to be used for this purpose!

Then Judas ... went out and hanged himself.
Matthew 27:5 (NLT)



But many things are!

... there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 Cor. 12:7b-9 (NIV)

➤ **EXAMPLE**

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
2 Cor. 12:9a (NIV)

"Lord, you know how many times I have asked you to change my situation in life. Especially since I think I could serve you better, if things were different. But you keep saying 'No.'

✓ "I don't understand it. But in this passage, your Word tells me that your grace is somehow being displayed in my life through this situation.

"Help me to learn to be content. Help me to follow Paul's example, and rejoice that you are using this difficulty. Forgive me for constantly complaining that it gets in my way. ... [Etc.]"

✓ **The prayer in Acts 7:59-60 – Stephen, when dying for Jesus' sake.**

➤ **A life controlled by the Spirit:** His life (Acts 6) and words (Acts 7) were influenced by the Holy Spirit. This was the context in which he prayed.

Stephen (a man full of faith and the **Holy Spirit**), ...
... the wisdom and **Spirit** by which Stephen spoke.
... But Stephen, full of the **Holy Spirit**, ...
And as they stoned him, Stephen **prayed**, ...
Acts 6:5b, 10b 7:55a, 59a (NLT)

APPLICATION?

- **Not everyone dies from persecution!** But if you are persecuted unto death, wouldn't it be wonderful if the Spirit controlled how you responded?
- **But why wait?** The only reason the Spirit was powerfully present with Stephen when he died was because being Spirit-controlled had become Stephen's way of life at all times!

➤ **Would you like the Spirit's power in your life?**

- **The Bible is God's Word, given by the Holy Spirit.** Do you think the Spirit might be delighted to be around people who submit to his Word (and his power) in all aspects of their lives?

➤ **Just make sure you follow the right example!**



Some people show us the wrong way to live!

Demas has abandoned me. He fell in love with this present world ...
2 Tim. 4:10a (GW)



Other people are good examples!

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

1 Cor. 11:1; Philip. 4:8-9 (NIV)

➤ EXAMPLE

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philip. 4:9 (NIV)

"Well, Lord, Paul is not here, so I can't listen to him or watch him doing things. But I know that's just an excuse, because you recorded Paul's words and actions in the Bible. All I need to do is pay attention to what you said.



"I have to admit that I really haven't paid attention to his example. I've felt quite comfortable with the example I've learned from people around me. And I don't know that I really want to change.

"If change really is necessary, then I need your help. Not only do I feel unwilling to change, but I don't know what type of change I need! Lord, teach me your Word, and change my heart; or I will never succeed! ... [Etc.]"

NOTE THE PATTERN?

➤ THINGS RELATED TO THE SPIRIT

– They seemed to be at the forefront of their lives!

➤ THE SPIRIT-GIVEN SCRIPTURE

– It tended to be associated with their prayer. (Either in the context of prayer ... or as part of the prayer itself.)

If we took so much delight in the Spirit's Words (Scripture), that they were a constant part of our lives and our prayer... what might happen?

JUST IMAGINE ... AND DO!

DO WE WANT THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES?

IF WE DO ...

- Could the way we pray help it become a reality?
- Will the way we pray help it become a reality?

The way we respond to these questions could determine which type of "reality" characterizes our lives.

Credits

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