

#93 “Practical Helps for Personal Prayer”

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1. Isolate

It is probably best to set a regular time for prayer each day, preferably before the daily grind. Yet this is not a Biblical requirement, and it should not become legalistic. We already saw how Jesus prayed at all different hours of the day, depending upon the circumstances. David also prayed at nearly every time throughout the day. The important thing is that prayer happens. The goal is that we isolate ourselves from the daily grind and routine and get to a place of quiet. There we can concentrate and let go so we can listen to what the Lord wants to show us in our hearts, in our life, and in His Word. As it says in Matthew 6:6, “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” It needs to be just God and us and nothing else. We have got to be able to hear Him, and we cannot be pressured for time. Someone will argue that they don’t have time for this. The fact is we have time for what we think is important. Those who value prayer as absolutely essential like Jesus did will make time no matter what like He did. While the baby naps, while on lunch break, or before the family awakens could all be ways to find a few precious moments to be with our Lord. **Jesus was the expert at finding inconvenient times to pray.** In fact, more often than not prayer is inconvenient. Yet, like Jesus, the key is that He made time and that prayer was done.

2. Meditate

Meditation is a lost art today. It is also a confused art. It is not an emptying of the brain to try to reach some spiritual reality. It is not some mystical experience about becoming one with God and hearing some actual voice or feeling some warm, loving feeling. It is a filling of the mind with God’s Word, God’s character, and God’s works. Hence we should take a Bible with us when we are praying. We are to be listening and waiting to hear from God as to how He wants to lead us and where He wants to take us for our next steps in life. I typically read some of God’s Word first before I pray so that my prayer will be in response to what I am taught from the Word. I also pray before I read the Word that God will teach me and lead me through His Word. I would suggest picking a book and reading meditatively through a chapter or less or more until God draws our attention to a convicting thought, confusing statement, or enlightening thought. We can then study elsewhere in the Scriptures to understand it. We should pray for illumination of our minds and hearts to grasp what God wants. But it is always from His Word and through His Word, never anything extra or new. We meditate to reflect upon His truths and on His working in our lives. We are to try to determine by the Spirit’s leading what God would have us change. We try to determine what He would have us become or do.

How often should we meditate? Joshua 1:8 says, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful

to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.” Day and night is an awfully long time to meditate. But it is God’s design. Psalm 1:2 says of the righteous man, “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.” There ought never to be a moment when we are conscious that we are not thinking about God and His bearing on our life. We may not always be meditating consciously upon God, but we should never be cognizant that we are ignoring God. If we are, we need to get back to a quiet place and meditate. We are to meditate on God’s precepts, wonders, ways, statutes, and works. There is never going to be a lack of wonder about God to think upon. There is no way that we can be what God wants and live as He desires if we are not reflecting throughout the day upon His truths. This gives the Holy Spirit opportunity to transform our mind according to God’s Word. We have no problem reflecting and even dreaming about a movie we saw or rehearsing a song we heard on the radio over and over in our heads. Yet we do not think about God and what He is doing and desiring according to His Word. This is a shame, and it ought to expose to us what we value and where our hearts are at. We need to get back to the basics and repent. Do we want to prosper in our spiritual growth and effectiveness? Do we want to be revived? We had better meditate on God’s Word. There is no way that we can lay aside the weights and entanglements of sin in order to fix our eyes upon Christ unless we meditate upon God’s Word. It must saturate our minds and hearts. It can sustain us from sin. As Psalm 119:9 says, “How can a young man keep His way pure? By keeping it according to the Your Word.” Our minds must be saturated with truth. God’s Word is what our mind should be focused on. The Spirit will then lead us to apply the truth to various areas of life.

3. Evaluate

There comes a time in our prayer time that we need to ask God to search our hearts. Psalm 139:23-24 says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.” If we have any unconfessed sin, God will make that very forefront on our hearts. He wants to deal with that right away before He will reveal anything else to us. If there are any underlying sin issues that we may not be aware of, we need to ask God to show them to us. We are works in progress, and we have sin patterns that we are as of yet unaware of. There are weak areas that God wants to shore up. We must let Him speak to us to show us where He wants us to change.

4. Initiate

There is no point in taking all of the time to pray, meditate, and evaluate and then not bothering to put into practice what the Lord has put His finger on. James 1:22-25 says,

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of

liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”

We look in a mirror and get bent out of shape over a zit, peeling skin, broccoli between the teeth, or any other physical mar, spot, wrinkle, or stain. In nearly every case, we will act immediately to deal with such a problem. We ought to be as troubled by any sin issue that God has identified. It is easy to forget what God has taught us, and so we must make a point of putting God’s Word into practice. It is vain, pointless, and just plain dumb to take all of the time and energy to hear from God and then not do what He says. We must be doers of the Word and not hearers only. Few Christians do what James says in abiding in Christ and His Word by keeping short accounts with God. This is why many lead fruitless lives, get deceived, and live in confusion and double-mindedness. Upon the conviction and the leading of God, we ought to act immediately to repent and obey.