PRAYER SERIES PART ONE
AN INVITATION TO PRAYER
7/15/07
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Pastor Spot:
• Welcome
• Prayer is a big deal in scripture (prayers of confession, petition, thanksgiving, praise) (Community prayer/individual prayer)
  o You’ll spend a lifetime discovering prayer (in all its beauty, mystery)
  o We’re going to take 3 weeks to dive deeper into the relational nature of prayer – our hope is that you might be encouraged and renewed in your heart – maybe take some steps deeper in prayer…
• Aug 5th & 12th – will be some very important sermons on Understanding Casas – Roger/Glenn
• Aug 5th – for those with families will be promotion Sunday (where kids/students move up a grade) – always a little anxious feelings
• Time of giving back to God – prayer for offering and rest of the hour

T be still? ⇒ I want us to wrestle w/ this rhythm – invitation of prayer in script. – jesus’ words themselves about prayer…

Mark 1:35
Luke 5:16
Luke 6:12

Jesus had this rhythm of prayer in his life
Google over 74.9 million links on prayer
  • 96% of Americans say they pray
  • Prayer wheel and other devices out there to help us pray…

⇒ and in almost every tool, situation – I can’t help but come to the reality that we’ve so shortchanged what prayer is – meant to be…we’ve turned it into these microwavable meetings with God…

III That for many of us at times-- we treat prayer as one of our life-lines in the game of life;
We live in fast past world – land of drive thru’s, on demand - instant everything.

Quote: henri nouwen says, “prayer is the central piece of the Christian life…the only necessary thing.” (book: The Only Necessary Thing)

T In this series - I’d love to stretch us (myself included) – to help us move beyond our tendency to drift towards ATM prayers…

ST my first experiences using an ATM:
• I remember feeling empowered – cautious with my pin number
• I worried about the machine eating my card – I took long time…
• So overjoyed when the little mouth of the machine would open and out would pop money – I’d count it b/c I never trusted a machine counting $
• Over time – it got much faster

⇒ the point of the ATM now & then: punch in my need – get it and go…often our prayer life can get reduced or begin to drift toward this kind of transaction – versus this deeply relational interaction!!

I want to offer us this core thoughts: prayer is far more than us asking God for what we need; prayer is the inversion of that – it’s saying God I AM available too you!
It's more than us saying God, I want to get you on my agenda – rather, it’s saying to God, ‘I’m here and I want to get on your agenda’…by the way, I’ve got some stuff too, but I want to be with you first.’

Billy Graham was once interviewed, they asked him:

Billy Graham: you’ve preached on every continent, millions of people, counseled presidents, led countless rallies for God – he was asked if you had to do it over again, would you do anything differently?…he said, “I’d pray more”

**Definition** Prayer is: constant communion with God! (communion = “union with”)

It’s not mere communication – b/c communication sounds too ‘get down to business’ – alright what do you have to get through, here’s what I have to get through…I’ll email you that, you send me that…⇒ alright, I talked with God today and move on…

**Conversation** is a part of prayer and much of that communication is us talking with God –

Q which is if: I were to ask you to write down your definition of prayer ⇒ you’d probably get around to ‘when I talk with God’

Most of our prayer times have us doing a lot of talking and very little listening. Why is that? We don’t like conversations with people where listening isn’t a part of it…Maybe listening is more than we realize of prayer…

**Constant commune with God = prayer**

Prayer is that attunement to being WITH GOD!...it’s about AWARENESS!!

Communion is far more than mere conversation – it’s intertwining OF LIVES…

⇒ it’s what’s on your radar God – is now getting onto mine

⇒ what moves your heart – is now beginning to move mine

⇒ it’s factoring in God more and more in the normalcy of your life and living

Q how many of you ever been in love – in love right now? (hands down…)

Q Ever been in a relationship/friendship that was close enough – you could communicate w/out talking? You thought you knew what they were thinking about before they said it and you were right – you can walk in a room and know what’s on their heart?

Ever been a relationship/friendship – where you can ride down the road and be quiet & ok?

III when you 1st go on a date – silence is not good…(guys you gotta get a talking list – 20 things) you can ask ‘how’s school’ ‘fine.’ - …ah, (19)well have you seen any good movies recently?

On a 1st date: it’s bad if it goes quiet for too long, and too soon! Awkward…you know they’re calling/IM there friend later saying…

• “Guy didn’t have anything to say – just said uuhh..drooled and starred at me…I gotta get rid of this guy”

• Girl couldn’t talk – guy saying stuff and she’s like “I don’t know, (repeat)”

But the longer you know someone (friendship or dating) – the more you’re okay with quiet…the farther the relationship, the more the unity ⇒ communion starts to happen.
**Communion is:** constant awareness of the other person, that’s what it’s about. They’re thinking about you and you know they’re thinking about you and your thinking about them thinking about you – your thinking about them, they’re thinking about you’re thinking about them…

**It’s conversation, it’s not conversation, it’s mundane things, it’s big things…**

**Prayer is not:**
- a 7 minute agenda item.
- Here’s what you need to do before you leave the house for school / work
  - Ah, I prayed today..i’ve done my duty – now I’m gone…

–it’s moving to a place where you’re in constant communion with Him; you’re constantly thinking about him and you know he’s constantly thinking about you! It’s factoring him to the live you’re living…the decisions your…

Sometimes it’s:
- Talking – being still and quiet
- It’s the mundane things - It’s the overwhelming things
- Sometimes it’s night, sometimes it’s day –
- Sometimes it’s joy – sometimes it’s pain – it’s fears, it’s tears, it’s laughter…
- Sometimes it’s I ‘feel’ you so close I can touch you → other times it’s I’m not sure why you feel so far away, but I’m going to hold on b/c I’m committed to this thing…

→ that’s what prayer is: constant communion with God
- That’s why Paul can write in 1 thess 5:17 (pray continually) - awareness; attunement with one another

we begin to view and operating prayer like that, in order to see these 3 things happen…these 3 things seem to flow from Scripture inviting us toward the deeper experience of prayer…and intimacy with God

**Constant communion…**

We pray: for the purpose of: 3 things and I believe in this order!

1. **KNOW HIM AND UNDERSTAND HIS WAYS**

Prayer is not, Jack give me 3 wks on how to get what I want from God
Prayer is about getting to the place where you get to know God and understand him more

**John 17:3**

“now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

1 Jn 2:12-14

→ remember we talk a lot about maturing in Christ around here (1 Jn 3 – spiritual children – to spiritual mother and fathers) - the characteristic is spiritual mothers/fathers “know God” not just know about him – (where you could win at the bible drills/quizzes with impressive knowledge) but that they know him – there is an intimacy and authentic connection
2. **is coming to point where catch his heartbeat and his purposes**

   this is more than mimicking motions – (ie: kids who shave in mirror like their dad) this is deeper – the pharisee’s had great motion – but their emotion – their hearts were far from God

   God, if that’s what your heart is beating for, than I want to participate in that.

   It’s flipping upside down my agenda – it’s not me giving my list to God…it’s about me getting my heart ready to get his list – listen & catch his heartbeat and purposes…

   You see this in the life of Jesus:

   John 5:19; 8:28; 12:49-50

   He’s got this rhythm of being alone with God – communing with the Father – so much so ➔ that in another gospel account – Jesus says “I only do what I see the father doing, and say what I hear the father saying.” ➔ how would he know that? ‘cause he’s communing with the Father

   He was listening in prayer for God’s heartbeat – his purpose – his agenda!!

   How often do we stop and ask:

   Q  God, what’s on your heart today? What’s going on in the world, my home, my school, my friends? I don’t want to miss anything where you need my participation today…

   ➔ I want to know you ➔ to catch your heartbeat and…the 3rd clearly articulated purpose of pray is all about:

   3. **accessing His Kingdom power & provision for life!**

   And Lord, I want to lay before you all my needs – I need your power to touch down in my life with these needs…b/c I need your power and provision

   God doesn’t want you to just pray about the BIG things…he wants us to pray about everything…

   III  I don’t think that goes to ever minuscule thing ➔ I didn’t stand in my closet today in deep prayer, “Lord, I just want to please you” – about what to wear this morning…

   ➔ IT IS taking every thing in our life – that’s on our hearts, in our minds, got us caught up…and laying it before God so that his power can touch down in our lives and we can trust him to meet our needs

   Q  I used to question: how can God truly hear my prayers along with the other billions of people on the planet? Does he ever get overwhelmed – shut down – things go array?

   How many of you own an ipod – use Itunes?

   As expected, the Apple iPod music player and iTunes gift cards were extremely popular gifts over Christmas 2006. But even company officials underestimated just how in-demand their products would be.

   As soon as the wrapping paper was thrown away on Christmas morning, users began connecting to the iTunes store to redeem their cards and download songs. But internet traffic at the popular music website was so heavy that many users received error messages and were not allowed to log on. Others complained that it took as long as 20 minutes to download a single song.

   Analysts said the dilemma occurred when too many people tried to access the site at the same time, thus overwhelming the Apple servers and frustrating users. Dan Frakes, senior editor at MacWorld magazine, said, "The store itself was working; there was just too much traffic."
Thankfully, "overwhelmed" is a word that will never apply to God,

Hugh Poland, Kingwood, Texas; source: "Online Shoppers Overwhelm iTunes Store," Houston Chronicle (12-27-06)

That reality prompts the Apostle Peter to say:

1 Peter 3:12
“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive their prayers…”

1 Peter 5:7 (New Living Translation)
“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.

Let that reality sink in a bit…(pause, reread)
→ if that is a picture of the REAL GOD, than that is a God worth being in communion with! In constant awareness and attunement with…

This is part of the Sermon on the Mount – teaching/sermon of Jesus
Ch 5 – is all about moral basis for the life in the Kingdom of God
Ch 6-7 – Jesus is describing the lifestyle of those who live in His kingdom

Matthew 6:5a
I love this about Jesus – he just assumes that we’d want to be in communion with the Father…that’s what he did!

He’s the Son of God walking around here on earth – and every time you look for him he’s off by himself, alone praying with the Father…being in communion with the Father

He only had 3 yrs of a mission on earth – 30 when he started, 33 when he was crucified…around about midnight, and he’s slipped off to pray – early in the morning he’s gone out to pray…in the middle of intense ministry and he’s off praying…

He just assumes that we’ll want to communion with the Father b/c we can!

Matt 6:5
→ (in greek) meaning taking a long time / stance on a very busy street – so to be noticed!

→ pharisee’s had turned prayer into this public act to be seen by men – rather than about this connection b/t an individual or group of people and God

→ jesus is saying:
• There is a tendency in us to want to impress people with how we pray! We want the appearance that we’re better than we might truly be…we’re about the external appearance…

→ he’s getting at this notion of the spiritual life is about authenticity and sincerity – and not about religious piety…
→ Jesus is showing how true spirituality is about doing things for God and not human approval or validation

**Matt 6:6**

But when you pray: you go into your room/private place (starts in private – it can be in corporate too)

→ b/c you’ll know your heart is pure in wanting to know God and understand his ways and not for the approval of men…your motive will be pure

In the ANE – there weren’t houses like you and I have – there were no doors inside (there was only a storeroom where goods were kept and that was the door that could be shut.) -- probably no windows, = least public place in the house…

***Ill – our house in Colorado***

→ this might have even stirred up the image of the High Priest going into the Holy of Holies and closing the curtain behind him…to meet with God

→ it’s finding a place/space to settle – (to be still like psalm 46:10 says)…

→ **“your room”:** its personal thing! (finding what that is for you – this stage of life)

I’ve got friends:

• fav chair in house
• outdoors
• study – journal
• walking
• backporch
• I’ve got 3 kids – I’ve got a lot of quiet space in the car…

→ a place where you can be silent – don’t have distractions – can be tuned in to pray and listen…

you’ll learn the secret and pleasure of knowing God and his ways – catching his heartbeat …and the peace that comes with trusting him with your stuff…and it’s just b/t you and him…and the only glory in there is HIS GLORY…living in the mystery and beauty of prayer – the invitation to have a relationship with God of the Universe

**Matt 6:7-8**

**Principle here:** God doesn’t have a “word meter” – the more words = higher chance for God to answer…

***ILL***

ever have your kids in back of the van – phrase gets stuck over and over again – or that song that gets stuck in your head and you’re continually singing that same phrase over and over again?…

→ babbling is the right word here:
If you’re concerned about it – you pour it out, but don’t have to continual pour over and over it again and again…

Repetition is NOT required in order to get God’s attention…and interaction

When you show up for your date and your wife has a new outfit and they ask your opinion: you give it – you don’t carry on and on:

Ill you don’t say: “that is a nice outfit, I mean that is a really great outfit. It’s the best outfit I’ve seen. It looks so good on you – it’s better on you than anyone else. It’s perfect color for your skin tone, and it’s stunning on you. It’s must be your thing. It’s not only the right color – it’s in your color pallet – it’s just really, really, really perfect for you. That’s a wonderful outfit! It makes your eyes, wow! And your hair, just pow! Where’d you get that outfit? ‘cause it’s just a great outfit… I love the shirt – it’s great weight, material and texture – it’s perfect for you…I like the pants – well, are they pants, slacks (etc) – I’m not sure – the thing on the bottom, I love the thing on the bottom… it’s so perfect for you → eventually the person’s like Just Stop!

→ IN the ANE – pagan worship was notorious for repeating prayers – going on and on; as they tried to get their deity to respond and take notice of them
• 1 Kings – Elijah and the prophets of Baal – going morning ‘til noon
• Paul in Acts 19 – Ephesians calling out to Artemis for two hours

Quote: “the power of prayer is not in the one who prays but in the one who hears it.
- Max Lucado

→ Jesus is saying God doesn’t answer prayers based on how long we pray…he’s saying we are to go too HIM and commune with him and let him know what we need – He’s a very attentive and tuned in God!

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Matt 6: 8

Jesus predicates effective pray on a relationship of intimacy -- NOT a business partnership model – which was closer to the one followed by the pagan religions around Israel at the time…

Why do I need to pray?
• It takes pressure off – shrinks your list done; now you can spend more time with him to get to know him…catch His heartbeat – b/c He is already tuned into what’s going on in your life – (1 peter 5:7 – cast your cares b/c He cares)

Why do I need to pray?
b/c God wants you to draw close to him more than anything else on this earth

why do I need to pray?
b/c you were made for God – and he was made for you.

Why do I need to pray?
b/c it’s in that communing relationship that we begin to find life

conclusion:
We’ll pick up the next couple weeks – this is a blueprint, a frame of reference and a plan – a model of how we should/could pray…

Seque to Communion as a Community: