

THE EDIFIER

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An Invitation to Prayer

We all enjoy a good conversation, thriving from the natural ebb and flow of interaction of camaraderie between family, friends and work mates. Primary in communication is speech, aided of course by body language, voice inflection and syntax. Being “verbal” is uniquely human, as generally compared to the animal kingdom. At mealtimes, humans dine whereas animals feed or graze.

Thus ideally, family dinners (without of course the distraction of television or mobile phones) are more than likely characterised by conversation.

God created us in his image and likeness with a natural desire to intelligently communicate. We see this via an incident in the Garden of Eden, when in the cool of the evening, God sought conversation with the first humans. When he called out, “Where are you?” it wasn’t because he didn’t know where they were, but because he wanted to embrace communication at their level. We read, of course, with interest of what happened and who said what.

Likewise, throughout the rest of scripture, we see a God seeking to communicate his thoughts and purposes with us his children. And his greatest joy is that we hear and respond.

Prophets conveyed the exact words of God. And we read of mighty prayers, by men like Solomon and Hezekiah, who responded to God’s sovereignty. Daniel prayed three times a day. (Will we also be remembered as people who are devoted to talking with God?) We read of short, intense prayers like

those of Elijah and Elisha. We empathise with the prayer offered by Hannah in her personal distress, as well as the call to prayer by Queen Esther in a time of national distress. These and other testimonies of faithful people who responded verbally to God, in what’s commonly called “prayer”, help us also throughout our journey in the circumstances we experience.

It is this kind of ongoing conversation that’s at the heart of the relationship God invites us into Christ Jesus. Prayer isn’t bringing offerings before idols in an attempt to solicit divine favour. Prayer isn’t like a marooned sailor, scribbling a note, putting it into a bottle and tossing it into a vast sea, hoping for some

response! That certainly takes faith and a lot of hope. But that’s not Christian prayer.

Prayer is said to be one of the greatest of Christian disciplines. And perhaps it is. But it is more than just discipline; it should, rather, become a natural part of covenant relationship involving the spontaneity of simply “talking to God”.

For most people, talking is naturally easy; our approach to our Heavenly Father should also be experienced with an honest but respectful ease. Knowing God exists is one thing. It is yet a completely another to know that He cares for each and every one of us in a personal, if we’re willing intimate, covenant relationship.

Viewing prayer in this refreshing light means that as often as we involve God in our thoughts and actions, graced by open and willing “conversation with God”, we can then experience the greatest transformation and contentment imaginable. God is ever ready to hear our prayers. His ears are not dull nor is his arm shortened that he cannot hear and intervene ! (Isaiah 59:1)



A well-known hymn aptly expresses an ongoing and dynamic relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ:

*"I need thee ev'ry hour;
Stay thou nearby.
Temptations lose their
pow'r
When thou art nigh."*

These words express dependence and a sense of enduring companionship and reliance on God. Without this ongoing relationship, temptation to sin becomes ever more prevalent.

Sometimes, prayer can be short and to the point: "Help me, God!" Or, express gratitude with just a few, simple words. We see this with Jesus when he often prayed, "Father, I thank you..." Other times, prayer can be intense, detailed and pointed, crying out aloud in distress or interceding in the distress of others. This is especially evident in Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his crucifixion, as recorded in John chapter 17.

Just as legitimate are our questions uttered in prayer, as Jesus did when he cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) Was this not a prayer!? In this case it was public. It was urgent. It expressed humanity, as it did an enduring connection with his Heavenly Father.

Thus, the issue isn't whether or not we pray, or how many times we pray each day, or whether we see prayer as a discipline that must be rigorously adhered to, but rather as a readily available, natural and healthy connection to our Heavenly Father that occurs

throughout the course of each day. I've been encouraged in the past when someone thoughtfully expressed their empathy with, "I've been praying for you." Whether in hospital, travelling, feeling lonely, facing hard times, or experiencing an unexpected death or tragedy, those simple words lifted my perspective to know of others' concern. You're further encouraged that they've been elevating your troubles "boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16)



The Apostle Paul's writings are prolific with references that emerge from active prayer. In fact, when he wrote letters to various house churches, he often began telling his friends that he'd been praying for them.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now... And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

(Philippians 1:3-9 ESV)

To the faithful in Colossae he began with,

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

(Colossians 1:3 NIV)

And yet again in his letter to those living in Thessalonica:

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NIV)

Paul illustrated where prayer ultimately leads to when he said, referring to the resurrection at Jesus' return, that, "*all creation yearns for the revealing of the sons of God*" (Romans 8:19). A lifetime in active conversation with our Heavenly Father will result in finally "*seeing his face*" in glory.

Never allow our limited view of life to limit who God is and how eager he is to enter into communion with us. In writing his benediction to those who lived in Ephesus, Paul wrote:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

(Ephesians 6:10, 19)

Do we allow the busyness of life to sometimes hijack devotion to God in prayer? Perhaps we should be too busy not to pray! After all, a life of prayer is a life with God.

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Twice Jesus Focused



I remember my tennis coach telling me to keep my eye on the ball. The next ball hit me in the eye. That was real focus. I pray this article helps the Christian reader keep their eye on the ball. Sometimes we need to be hit in the eye or right between the eyes because part of being a true disciple of Christ is receiving correction, rebuke and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This is part of being a true child of God and not an illegitimate one (Hebrews 12:3-11).

If you are the sort of person who starts things but doesn't finish them, or has good intentions but doesn't follow them through, or is on fire for Christ one day and cold the next, then read on. If you are a person who has not committed your life to Christ and is having trouble finding focus and direction in life I pray that by focusing your eyes on Jesus you will be struck full in the eye by his majesty and Godliness. Let's turn our eyes upon Jesus.

Jesus had goals set for His life and He was intensely focused on achieving them. Did he set His own goals? No. His Father set them for Him. His Father's will was the focal point of His life.

And just as the Father set Jesus goals to achieve, Jesus has set us goals to achieve, but we have to be twice Jesus focused if we're going to reach them – (1) focused on Jesus and (2) focused like Jesus.

Jesus was a man on a mission from God. He came forth from God. None of us have ever met a person so concentrated on fulfilling the purpose of their life. Here are some examples.

You might know the story of Jesus as a 12 year old, but put yourself in the shoes of his parents. If you took your 12 year old child up from your little town to a large bustling, boiling pot of a city, and after you'd done your business in the city and been away from it for a day only to then realise your son was not with you, how would you feel? Let's say you then went back to the city looking for him, and after another two anxious days you finally found him and he's in the most important church in all the city reasoning with some of the leading pastors, answering their questions and absolutely amazing them with his wisdom, would you think your 12 year old child was just a little bit unusual or special to say the least? And then, if you said to him, "why have you done this to us? Look your father and I have sought you anxiously", and he turned around and said to you, "why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business", what would you think? But also, by "my father" he didn't mean you. He meant God! Would you think your son was rude or hard to understand, or just extremely focused? This was Jesus at 12 years old. His parents' reaction was that they did not understand His statements.

Jesus often told people up front what His mission was. He talked about it a lot. Why? Because He was so focused on it. In John 4:34, in response to a very simple everyday concern for Him about whether He'd eaten or not, He took this as an opportunity to tell His disciples about His mission. What if you said to me, "David, eat, you're too skinny", and I said, "I have food to eat of which you do not know"? And what if I overheard you questioning my statement and I took this as an opportunity to tell you about my mission and I said, "I need food to grow, to sustain me so I can complete God's mission for my life?" You would perhaps think I was eccentric, intense, or off in a world of my own. Well we see Jesus in John 4:31-36 behaving similarly.

Jesus was so focused on his mission that he loved to talk about it even at seemingly unusual times. Does Jesus' intensity inspire us to be more Christ-like in our intensity or focus? Or do you think Jesus was just behaving a bit strangely that day, and that He's not calling us to strangeness, but rather balance and respectability? No! Remember we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. We are not of this world. We are a peculiar or special people called so we may proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Let me suggest if we are focused anything like Christ was, Christ's will, and the Father's, will be on our lips and in our thoughts continually. Jesus talked much about the work God had set Him because it was constantly on His mind. Let's look at a few of these

mission-minded statements of Jesus:

"But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." John 5:36

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." John 6:38

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour." John 12:27

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Luke 4:18-19

Jesus was focused on fulfilling the scriptures according to his Father's will.

Another great example of this is in John 2:1-4:

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.'"

They have no wine! That's a very important issue don't you think at a wedding? Let's suppose you are a wedding guest and also a wine-maker with your van filled with wine near the reception hall. Your mother says to you, "we've run out of wine. Help us, or the bride and groom's day will be ruined!" Could you really respond in any other way than to help? But Jesus, who had the greatest ability to help, had bigger issues on His mind. He didn't respond by immediately saying "yes, I'll help". He responded by saying, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."



I say, that's focus - that's intensity. He was a wonderfully compassionate man, as we know from the rest of His life, yet he was so focused on his Father's plan, that He responded in a way that is surprising to us and shows his concentration on His Father's work. However, as the story continues we see He did honour his mother's wishes. Notice also, how He didn't do it half-heartedly. Rather, He turned it into an occasion to glorify His Father. He provided the best wine.

We can't always be as focused as we want to be on the Lord's work either. We've got jobs to do, gro-

ceries to buy, books to study, common household chores to do and square pegs to put into round holes - many headaches. There are a lot of menial and repetitive things to do. There are many unimportant things to do compared with the great and important work given to us as Christ's disciples. But when we do them, we can and should do them wholeheartedly, as Jesus did, and always provide the best wine when we do them.

Notice though, Jesus never let Himself be tied down or hindered by the ordinary things in life He had to do. He just wouldn't let them prevent Him achieving what He was focused on achieving and He wouldn't let worldly opportunities distract Him from his goals either. For example, there was an occasion in John 6:15 where He impressed some people so much they were about to take Him by force and make Him king. But that wasn't His aim. Because he knew His purpose in life, He didn't get flattered and egotistical and think, "hmmm King Jesus, that's got a nice ring to it". No, it says He departed again to the mountain to be by Himself.

This is how focused God desires us to be. But we struggle. The world triumphs in our lives too often. Jesus would not have let his job prevent him from finishing his Father's work. Jesus would not have let his family prevent Him from finishing His Father's work. Jesus would not let leisure activities or personal problems or ambitions hinder Him. Jesus would not have let anything prevent Him from finishing the race or course set for Him. Can we be more like

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THOUGHTS ON WISDOM, FOLLY AND FACT

Knowledge, wisdom, and obedience when taken together can bless or curse.

Knowledge can be acquired, applied and shared.

Wisdom can be acquired, applied and shared.

But obedience must be applied and cannot be acquired or shared.

Knowledge is quantifiable.

Wisdom is manifest.

Obedience is a choice.

A learned man can be wise, yet act foolishly.

It is the folly of the wise.

An unlearned man demonstrates wisdom in obedience to that which he knows.

It is the wisdom of the fool.

One who trusts God for what they cannot know or do and lives a life consistent with the law of God is a contented person receiving a great blessing.



Article taken from the "Afterglow" newsletter,
May/June 2017.

Author Chip Hinds of Oklahoma, USA.

Jesus Is The Answer

*Jesus is the answer
To the needs of our world today
He is here to guide us
and protect us along life's way
He never will forsake us
His love for us is real
"Peace" He says, "I leave with you
My peace, now ye be still."*

*Jesus is the answer
We only need to pray
And ask Him to come into our hearts
And walk with us each day
he loves us more than anyone
He made the sacrifice
Just put your faith in Jesus
Through the blood he paid the price.*

*Jesus is the answer
He died for you and me
He arose again that we may live
With Him eternity
So ask Him into your heart today
In His glory you'll abound
Because Jesus is the answer
And through Him true peace is found!*

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If you want to know who God is, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what it means to be human, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what love is, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what grief is, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what prayer is, look and listen to Jesus.

And go on looking and listening until you're not just a spectator, but you're actually part of the drama which has him as the central character!

(Adaption from a quote N. T. Wright)

Enjoy and cherish every moment as elevated in prayer, and seal every praise and petition in Jesus' name!

Written by John Klassek

*Continued from page four*

Jesus in this way? He has many things for us to achieve, in His strength and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It's worth considering how we can decrease and Christ can increase in our lives. Do we need to work and play and be distracted as much as we do?

Even in his dying, agonising moments when He was in great pain, greater pain than any of us, Jesus was still focused. He had more to do. John 19:25-28 says:

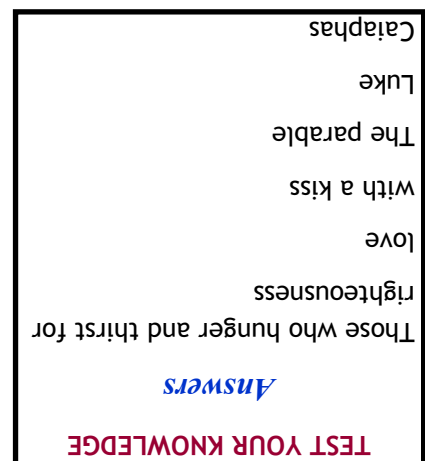
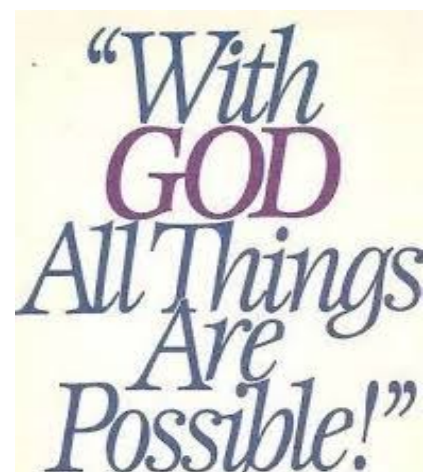
"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."



Now you've got to admire and be inspired by anyone who's on a cross in serious pain, yet still focused on other's needs and God's will. You have to admire the intensity and love of anyone whose dying words are, "it is finished" (not meaning 'I'm dead') but rather meaning I've achieved all the goals my Father set me. I

pray each of us will be able to die with such dignity despite any pain we're experiencing. I pray also we can die without leaving God's purpose for our lives unfulfilled.

Written by David Kidd





A recent poll ('In the Black', Oct 2016) found that sixty nine percent of Australians felt that they were struggling to make ends meet due to the cost of living, while the remainder felt they were not yet 'rich enough'. Of those 'struggling', the focus was more about maintaining current lifestyles than meeting basic necessities.

The poll went on to confirm what King Solomon had discovered hundreds of years earlier: The more money you have, the more you want. (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Wealth aspirations increased along with increased salary. Of those earning between \$70,000 and \$99,000 45% aspired to greater wealth whereas between \$100,000 - \$149,000 it was 55%, and greater than \$150,000 71%.

Despite advances in prosperity we continue to measure our wealth not by our own needs, but by comparisons of what everyone else has. Not only do the wealthy want more, they are more likely to think that people need more to live comfortably.

Research shows that families living in Sydney agree with the statement that you need a household income of at least \$150K to have a comfortable life. Of those earning \$150,000 - \$199,000 61% agreed while those earning over \$200,000 it was 75%.

It would surprise many of you that high income earners are just as prone to living from pay cheque to pay cheque as anyone else. One financial planner I know had a client that earned \$50,000 and claimed he had difficulty living on that wage. After looking at what he was spending the planner agreed with him.

But it was the exact same story for other clients earning \$100,000 and even one earning \$400,000. There is nothing mystical about this. It is simply that *expenses rise to meet income*. Read Proverbs 6:10-11.

I wonder what Christians think about when they read the Apostle Paul's words in Philippians 4:11. Some words describing what Paul experienced or is there something there for us?

"...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content... I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need ..." English Standard Bible (Refer also 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5).

Self-discipline, a confident knowledge of who you are and a knowledge of what your true purpose is would go a long way in living a more satisfied life and avoiding the snares of discontentment and covetousness. (Psalm 37:16; Psalm 119:72)

Written by Richard Todd



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

According to the Beatitudes who will be filled?

.....

According to Paul's formulation in 1 Corinthians, which is the greatest of the imperishable qualities?

.....

How does Judas signal Jesus's identity to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders?

.....

According to the Gospels, what is the unique literary style Jesus employs to preach his message?

.....

Which Gospel is written by a doctor?

.....

Who is the high priest of Jerusalem who put Jesus on trial?

.....



Has Time

Been Lost?

Is it possible to know—to prove today—which day of the week is the same seventh day that God blessed and set apart at creation?

Has the calendar been changed?

What about Joshua's long day. Did it change the weekly cycle?

God's Word says, "*Prove all things....*"

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Please send for the free booklet

"Has Time Been Lost?"

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