

BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

5. Personal Devotions – ‘Prayer in the Closet’



INTRODUCTION

We have been studying the truths we need to know so that our lives will be built on a strong foundation. One of the keys that will help us put these things into practise in our lives is to have a daily time alone with God.

Just as our relationships with family and friends only grow when we spend time with them, the same is true in our relationship with God. Let's look at this now.

1. A Relationship Means: Time

The people we are closest to are the ones we spend our time with. If we want our relationship with God to grow then we need to spend time with him. The greatest men and women in the Bible are those who spent time with God. Moses spent many hours on the mountain with God, and so did Elijah. However, our greatest example is Jesus.

Mark 1:35 'Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.'

If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to spend time with his Heavenly Father, then so do we! This is what Jesus tells us about prayer:

Matthew 6:6 'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.'

Question: Why do you think we need to spend time alone with the Father in a quiet place? Discuss.

It's so easy to be distracted with the things we can see, feel and hear! God is Spirit and he speaks to our spirit in a still small voice. If we go to a place that is quiet it is easier for us to concentrate on him.

2. A Relationship Means: Love

How do you respond when you meet someone who is very special to you? It is probably different to the way you would greet a stranger! When we come into the presence of the Lord to spend time with him, we need to express our love and joy at being with him. This is called worship.

Matthew 6:9 'Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.'

Jesus taught us to begin prayer by expressing our worship to God. The word 'hallowed' means 'holy, great or wonderful'. We are to express our love and appreciation to God for who he is. The Psalms are full of beautiful expressions of worship to God.

This is a good way to begin your time alone with God. There are different ways you can do this:-

- a. Sing praise and worship yourself.
- b. Speak praise – either using your own words or the words of the Psalms.
- c. Read praise – read one of the Psalms out loud.
- d. Sing in tongues – this is the language the Holy Spirit gives.

- e. Sing a new song to the Lord – the Holy Spirit will give you the words in your own language.
- f. Listen to a worship song and sing along with it.

Jesus said that the Father is looking for worshippers, and as we express our love to him, he wants to express his love to us. He wants to speak to us but we need to learn to be still and listen to his voice.

3. A Relationship Means: Sharing/Talking

A simple way for us to remember what prayer is, is the acrostic, ACTS. We have already looked at the first.

A	Adoration
C	Confession
T	Thanksgiving
S	Supplication

Confession

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus included confession or repentance.

Matthew 6:12	'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'
Psalms 66:18	'If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.'

During our time with God it is good to ask him to search our heart, as little things can slip in, like a wrong attitude or motive. These things can affect our relationship with God.

Thanksgiving

The next word in the acrostic is thanksgiving. There is so much to thank God for! Remember to thank him for answering prayer and forgiving your sin.

Supplication

The word supplication means, 'to bring your requests to God'. Another simple acrostic to remember is JOY. Jesus first, others second and yourself last. Sadly many people start and finish their prayer with just bringing their own needs to God, however he wants to use us to touch the lives of others through prayer, and to establish his Kingdom here on earth. So when we pray:

Jesus first	-	Matthew 6:10	'Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth...'
Others second	-	1 Timothy 2:1-2	'I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers... be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority ...'
Yourself last	-	Matthew 6:11	'Give us today our daily bread.'

Conclusion

God is interested in every detail of our lives and wants us to share with him as we would with our closest friend. He will never share our secrets with others or let us down! Not only that he is able to help us and wants to speak to us. Don't you want a friend like that? Then spend time with him and build that friendship.

Have a time of worship and then be still and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Some could share what he has said to them.