

Becoming More Like Christ Through Spiritual Habits
Pursuing God Through Prayer
Psalm 27:1,7-14

- I. How many of you have heard of guitar hero? How many have played the game?
 - a. This is a guitar ... a guitar hero guitar.
 - i. I've seen people spend hour after hour perfecting their skill at this game – and they will call themselves “guitar heroes.”
 - ii. But no matter how good you are at Guitar Hero, it doesn't mean you know how to play guitar.
 - b. Now, if you were to get an actual guitar and spend as much time playing the “actual” guitar as you did playing the Guitar Hero guitar;
 - i. After spending about the same amount of time you might be able to play an “actual” guitar.
 - ii. You might be able to play very well.
 - iii. But the appeal of the Guitar Hero guitar is –
 1. It's easy.
 2. It's “cooler.”
 - c. Unfortunately, we do much the same thing with our pursuit of spiritual habits.
 - i. We look for shortcuts and formulas.
 - ii. We want recitations and incantations.
 - iii. We want to get the result without the investment of time and energy.
 - iv. We want quick fixes to deep spiritual dilemmas and problems.
 - d. No where is this more true than in the spiritual habit of prayer. {The church is the guitar hero nation of prayer!}
 - i. We want a prayer that we can say so we can be sure that God responds in the way *we want* God to respond.
 - ii. We want to invest a few minutes of time and get huge returns on our meager little investment.
 - iii. It sometimes appears that God becomes a vending machine as we pray.
 1. I'll put my spare change into it and push the button and God will give me this.
 2. It's not so much about what God will do, but about what we select (or tell) God to do.
 3. “God, I prayed about this and this is what I wanted and I wanted it so bad. And your word says that you want me to be happy, so why didn't you give me what I wanted?”
 - iv. Look at me, I'm praying!
- II. Prayer is (fundamentally) a conversation.
 - a. It grows out of a relationship that begins when we saturate ourselves in God through meditation.
 - i. It begins in relationship.
 - ii. It grows out of relationship.
 - b. Conversation means that there are times of listening as well as times of speaking.
 - i. How much time do you spend in prayer speaking?
 - ii. How much time listening?
 - iii. Have you ever been in a conversation where the other person talked so much, so fast, and without pausing to take a breath – that you couldn't get a word in?
 - iv. I wonder if God feels like that in the face of our prayers.

- c. Conversations can happen anywhere, anytime, for any reason.
 - i. There is no single place to pray.
 - 1. You may have a favorite or “set aside” spot.
 - 2. But you can pray anywhere!
 - ii. There is no designated time to pray.
 - 1. Some religions teach prayer at specific times during the day.
 - 2. Any time is the best time for prayer.
 - 3. “Arrow prayers.”
 - iii. Prayer can happen for any reason.
 - 1. “Remember when ...”
 - 2. “I just thought of ...”
 - 3. “I just wanted to say ‘hi.’”
- III. We are expected to pray.
- a. “I don’t pray. I don’t believe in it.”
 - i. I don’t really want to have a relationship with Christ.
 - ii. I don’t need any more instruction than I’ve already been given.
 - iii. Listen to Jesus:
 - 1. Matthew 6:5-9 – “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ”This, then, is how you should pray:
 - 2. 6 times in 5 verses – when you pray!
 - iv. Listen to Paul
 - 1. (Colossians 4:2-4) – “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”
 - 2. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) – “Pray continually.”
 - b. So why don’t we pray?
 - i. We don’t allot the time.
 - ii. We don’t have the discipline.
 - iii. We don’t have a crisis.
 - iv. Where there is little awareness of real need there is little real prayer.
- IV. You can learn to pray.
- a. By praying.
 - i. There is no right or wrong way to pray.
 - 1. There’s no formula to follow. {a-c-t-s}
 - 2. There are no new vocabulary words to learn.
 - b. By examining Scripture.
 - i. Scripture is a great way to learn to pray.
 - 1. The psalms – prayers for all occasions.
 - 2. Lamentations – prayers for the worst of times.
 - 3. Mary (*Magnificat*) – Luke 1, Zechariah (*Benedictus*) – also Luke 1.
 - 4. Elisha – “give me a double portion of the blessing you have.” 2 Kings 2.
 - ii. What are they asking for? How are they asking?

- iii. What are they saying?
 - c. By praying with others.
 - i. There is power in people praying.
 - 1. Did you notice that last weekend?
 - 2. Matthew 18:20 – “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”
 - 3. Some of the best times of prayer ...
 - d. Learning takes time.
 - i. Too often we get frustrated right out of the box and never really make good progress.
 - ii. We give up too soon.
 - iii. If you wanted to walk through a doorway 10 feet away you would have to take several steps.
 - 1. Imagine taking a single step and then deciding that because you haven’t reached the doorway that it isn’t worth it.
 - 2. So you go back to where you started and repeat the whole process again.
 - 3. You take one step and head back in defeat and frustration and you do it over and over again.
 - iv. That wouldn’t make sense, but people do it all the time with prayer.
 - 1. They take one step forward and because they haven’t reached their goal they regress.
 - 2. They never take the series of steps and give learning to pray the time it needs.
 - v. One step may not be sufficient; it may take 5 or 6.
 - vi. But each step is necessary.
- V. Prayer is simple.
 - a. Although it’s something we need to learn, it’s really not that complicated.
 - b. It’s something we can all learn to do and learn to do effectively.
 - i. God expects each of us to pray.
 - ii. Then we all have the ability to pray.
- VI. Prayer is action!
 - a. Do a “word study” on prayer in the Bible.
 - i. Who prays? What do they pray? How do they pray?
 - ii. How does God respond?
 - b. Find someone to pray with.
 - i. Someone who seems especially effective in prayer.
 - ii. Someone who will pray with you that a change will occur in you.
 - c. Commit the time to learn to pray.
 - i. Tell yourself right now that you will make time to pray.
 - ii. Tell yourself right now that you will persevere in learning to pray.
 - d. Right now, say yes.