**Prayer Changes Things, It Might Even Change Us**

Today I would like to talk about prayer. I wouldn’t consider myself an expert on it and I definitely wouldn’t say that I have an eloquent prayer life. But I would like to share what’s on my heart about prayer and even if you get nothing else out of it today, I hope you will be encouraged to believe that prayer matters! If you want change in your life, in the life of others, or in our world, it is going to take prayer.

I will start by sharing the definition of prayer.

One online dictionary defines prayer as:

“a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship.”

Another says:

“an address (such as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought.”

Another source explains:

“Prayer is spiritual communication between man and God, a two-way relationship in which man should not only talk to God but also listen to Him. Prayer to God is like a child’s conversation with his father. It is natural for a child to ask his father for the things he needs.”

And one last explanation says:

“Prayer is not a religious duty but an invitation for communion with God. Prayer is simply an invite for conversation; a special moment to experience intimate fellowship and communion with the Lord.”

How do you view prayer?

How do your actions demonstrate that it is worth your time?

Is it certain words that seem holier than your normal language?

Do you see it as available at any time?

What are you hoping to accomplish from prayer?

Regardless of how you answer these questions you can always grow in prayer. Just like any kind of intimacy it has to be pursued in order to flourish.

Consider a friendship, or any kind of relationship for that matter, would it grow if you just decided, “Oh, I already know everything there is to know about said person, I don’t really need to pursue them anymore.”

That is a guarantee for making a relationship go stale. God wants us to pursue Him. Like a child should pursue their parent. Even though I often fail to see it and it is often complicated, when I really try to understand my parents, I grow in my appreciation for them and my realization of what they did for me. So let’s consider how this thinking applies to prayer. Turn with me to Mark chapter 9.

Peter, James and John have just gone up on a mountain and have seen what is commonly called Jesus’ transfiguration. The scriptures say:

2 Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. 4 Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. 5 Peter exclaimed, “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials[a]—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 6 He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him.” 8 Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them.”

Mark 9:2-8 NLT

Maybe Jesus asked all of His disciples to go with Him (and they weren’t interested) or maybe He only asked Peter, James, and John to go. Either way, they got to know Jesus a little deeper than the rest of the disciples. Jesus even told them not to tell the others. It wasn’t because He didn’t want them to know, it was because He didn’t want them to know yet. Only the three who saw what happened were ready and they were ready because they chose to spend intimate time with Jesus. Every experience we share with someone (Even God) deepens our intimate knowledge of who they are or who they aren’t.

I know that sometimes it doesn’t seem like anything is happening when we spend time with God or when we present our requests to Him, but that doesn’t mean we should stop.

My youngest son’s Caleb and Levi really enjoy going to the baseball field for batting and fielding practice and unfortunately I seldom have time to take them. It is my will to go. I want to take them. But the big picture and all my responsibilities (and their responsibilities) often keeps me from saying “yes” to their request.

But what if they stopped asking? What if they just decided, “We only get to go when it is Dad’s will any way, so we will just wait until Dad decides to take us.”

I can tell you that they would miss out on a lot of practice time. Their request helps me understand and confirm the desires of their heart, their silence leads me to believe that either they don’t believe in me or that they really don’t care that much about practice. And every time we go, not only do they get better at baseball, I get to know them better and they get to know me better (which isn’t always an easy thing). Let’s continue on in Mark 9, we are going to jump down to verse 14 and I would like you to consider how Peter, James, and John, because of their intimate knowledge, may have viewed things differently than the other disciples:

14 When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them. 15 When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet him.

16 “What is all this arguing about?” Jesus asked.

17 One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, “Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won’t let him talk. 18 And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn’t do it.” 19 Jesus said to them, “You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.” 20 So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. 21 “How long has this been happening?” Jesus asked the boy’s father. He replied, “Since he was a little boy. 22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.”

23 “What do you mean, ‘If I can’?” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.”

24 The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!”

25 When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. “Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak,” he said. “I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!” 26 Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, “He’s dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up. 28 Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, “Why couldn’t we cast out that evil spirit?” 29 Jesus replied, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer.”

Mark 9:14-29 NLT

What did Jesus mean when He said that “this kind can be cast out only by prayer.” With the knowledge of the transfiguration, I think you would understand it to mean, “This kind can only be cast out by communion with God Himself.” In other words Jesus Himself (who was and is God) had to do it.

Prayer changes thing and communion with God matters.

Do you believe that taking time to talk with God will change you, change your life, and change the world?

If you don’t I would encourage you to believe it. And if you do believe it I would encourage you to pray “I believe, but help me in my unbelief.”

Prayer changes thing and spending time with God matters.

1. (1 Sam. 1).

**Hanna prayed for a baby and God gave her one.**

1. (Acts 12)

**The church prayed for Peter and God busted him out of jail.**

1. (2 Kings 19).

**King Hezekiah prayed for delivery and God defeated His enemies.**

1. (Mark 5).

**Jarius came to Jesus to ask for his daughter’s healing and He resurrected her.**

1. (Exodus 33).

**Moses asked to see God and God showed Himself to him.**

1. (2 Kings 20).

**Hezekiah prayed and God lengthened his life.**

1. (Daniel 2).

**Daniel and his friend’s prayed for an explanation and God gave Daniel revelation.**

1. (2 Kings 6:16).

**Elisha prayed that God would blind the enemy army and God did that and more!**

1. (Luke 23).

**The thief on the cross confessed with the Lord who saves and He was saved!**

Remember what I said about my boys asking to go to the field to practice. It reveals one of three things,

1. They truly have other priorities (could be good, could be bad)

2. They don’t believe that asking me will make a difference

3. They don’t believe in me at all

What does your prayer life say about your relationship to your heavenly Father?