

Equip  
Session 5

Prayer: The  
Personal  
Dimension

Updated: June, 2013

## **PRAAYER: THE PERSONAL DIMENSION**

Prayer is so vital for our growth into spiritual maturity and effective ministry that we need to come back to it again and again in order to deepen our understanding and broaden our experience.

In this lesson we will lift up the importance of developing a strong personal prayer experience.

### FOUR LEVELS OF “EXPERIENCE” IN PERSONAL PRAYER

We need to know and experience each level to the point that we will:

- Be familiar
- Be comfortable
- Be competent at each level

#### **1. PETITION** - Requests for ourselves and for our close circle

- \* Petition is the beginning level of prayer, but it is an entirely valid level
- \* Jesus told us to pray for our “daily bread”
- \* Many believers spend most of their prayer time at this level

#### **2. INTERCESSION**

- \* Begin to move out of our closed circle to include others in prayer concerns

Illustration: in contrast to the Quaker whose prayer life included just “us four and no more”

- \* God has a much wider scope for our prayer
- \* At the Intercession level we partner with God in actually doing Kingdom work
- \* Our individual Prayer List becomes an important tool

(We will learn much more about the call to be Intercessors in Session Eight)

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**FOUR LEVELS AT WHICH WE NEED TO LEARN TO EXPERIENCE PRAYER**

1. Prayer as petition.

—Requests for help and strength, guidance and deliverance.

—The supply of material and spiritual need.

2. Prayer as intercession.

—Coming to the Lord on behalf of others.

—Learning how to labor for God.

3. Prayer as adoration.

—Standing in awe before Him. Meditating on His attributes: Holiness, righteousness, loving kindness, faithfulness, goodness, compassion, wisdom, etc...

A similarity exists between worship in the O.T. Temple and the N.T. Temple.  
I Kings 8:10-11, I Corinthians 3:16.

Our “Holy of Holies” (spirit) too will often “glow” with the presence of God.

*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh.—Hebrews 10:19-20.*

4. Prayer as fellowship.

—Coming into the presence of God asking nothing for ourselves or anyone else, but simply to love Him, to know Him, to enjoy Him—and for Him to enjoy us.

3. **ADORATION** – we begin to come into true worship

- \* We stand in awe before Him; we meditate on who He really is: His character and His mighty deeds.
- \* We worship; we declare, “Lord, You really are worth something!”

Worship was a custom during the Middle Ages

- \* Lords and ladies would be addressed as “Your Worship” to reflect a certain deference to their high standing in society
- \* In the U.S. there’s a similar custom in addressing judges as “Your Honor”
- \* In his pamphlet, “The Key to the Heart of God,” the priest Stenzel compares worship to the interaction between a man and his dog:

*You come home at the end of the day and your dog greets you, full of joy to be in your presence once again, wriggling all over, jumping and licking*

*Then as you settle in your easy chair to read the paper he lies at your feet, his limped eyes are fastened on you. When you glance up, a shiver goes through his whole being, he thumps his tail. How he adores you!*

- \* In a sense we do the same when we worship God in a much loftier way
  - at His feet, drinking in His presence, adoring Him, our heart and mind absorbing “who” and “what” He is, our soul overwhelmed

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A similarity exists between the Old Testament and New Testament Temples

- \* Many are familiar with the Old Testament temple; what is the New Testament temple?

*“Don’t you know” declares St. Paul, “that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

- \* In an earlier lesson entitled "How God Sees the Church" we learned that God’s dwelling place on earth today is not any longer in a house of wood and stone
- \* We have become the temple of God!

- He now dwells in the hearts and lives of His people

Just as the temple was the place where God’s Old Testament presence could be found, so today His presence has taken up residence in the hearts of an ever-expanding multitude of believers all around the world.

- \* The construction of the Old Testament Temple provided a doorway through which the people entered, an outer courtyard where the laver, showbread, incense, and altar were located
- \* Access to the Holy Place where the priests ministered to God, and the most sacred Holy of Holies where God dwelt, was severely restricted

The Holy of Holies was :

- \* a space of 20 cubic feet enclosed by heavy curtains - totally dark
- \* its’ only furnishing was the Ark of the Covenant, the visible place where the presence of God dwelt among His people
- \* Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was allowed to enter this domain
- \* The High Priest had to cleanse himself, brighten up his countenance, burn incense, and take the blood of the sacrifice to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat which covered the Ark
  - a cord was attached to the High Priest’s ankle so that he could be retrieved should he be either stricken or overcome while in God’s presence
- \* After the appropriate ceremonies had been conducted by the High Priest and God was pleased, that whole place would begin to glow with the intense presence of the glory God

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Our “**Holy of Holies**”

- \* As we worship Him from the deepest part of our being, our spirit, there are times when our “Holy of Holies” will seem to glow with the intense presence of God too, even as in the Old Testament
- \* When Jesus died, the thick veil which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple area was torn open
  - This veil was so thick that no knife could cut it nor could horses pull it apart
- \* God had now forever opened His awesome presence to all who would enter (Matthew 27: 51)

*And so dear brothers, now we may walk right into the very Holy of Holies where God is because of the blood of Jesus. This is the new, fresh, life giving way which Christ has opened for us by tearing the curtain, His human body, to let us go in to the presence of God.*

Hebrews 10:19-20

We all serve as priests in the New Testament (Revelation 1:6)

- \* We come into the very presence of God each day in our homes and when we gather together for corporate worship
- \* As elders and pastors, our desire is that every time we gather we should have His presence in our midst in such a way that it will constantly effect our lives in new ways
  - Just to adore our God, to enjoy His presence, to give Him the “worth-ship,” the honor due unto His Holy Name!
- \* As we move into this level of Adoration:
  - sometimes we will just want to be quiet, to bow down before Him
  - sometimes we will want to break forth in free and spontaneous expression of worship
  - one of the most satisfying ways to worship from our spirit is to worship in tongues

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#### 4. **FELLOWSHIP**

- \* In this level we come into His presence asking nothing for ourselves or for anyone else, but simply to love Him, to know Him, to enjoy Him – and for Him to enjoy us
- \* The Lord wants us for Himself; He made us for Himself
- \* He wants to have heart to heart fellowship with us - it adds something to God, it blesses Him

Illustration:

in the Garden, God and man walked hand in hand. It was not just so that God could receive their “shopping list” (how to deal with that nasty Cain, how to heal the elephant). It was just to enjoy each other’s presence, the love that can pass between friends, the Fellowship level of prayer

#### CONCLUSION

Few Christians move with comfort and familiarity in the last levels, Adoration and Fellowship

May something rise up and be born in your spirit which will not be satisfied until, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, your prayer experience moves fairly regularly right into the presence of God to enjoy Him, to adore Him, to worship Him, to expose yourself to Him.

That’s all you want. It’s the top, it’s the pinnacle, it’s the highest, it’s the most. It’s what God created you for. It’s a little bit of heaven.

That’s where your prayer life should take you in the months and years to come.

*Only to sit and think of God  
Oh what joy it is!  
To think the thought, to breath the Name  
Earth has no higher bliss.*

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**BEGIN TO DEVELOP A FIRST-HAND, PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH GOD**

After the Exodus from Egypt, God walked with the people of Israel, revealing His presence to them

- \* For the first months of their journey, He spoke through Moses
- \* When they came to Sinai, He wanted to speak face-to-face with the people themselves

Describe the preparation and the event as it took place at Mt.Sinai

- \* As God's presence thundered down upon the mountain, the people were frightened and ran away
  - They entreated Moses, " you go speak to God and then tell us what He says – if we speak with God we will die
- \* Here at Sinai the people rejected being "first hand" in the Presence of God
  - Their fear and unwillingness kept them from interacting personally with the One who had indwelt the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, which had been guiding them all along the way

We have learned how to pray as individuals for the things we need and the things others need. We have learned how to pray as a corporate body - to intercede, and to minister in prayer corporately as a body. But many of us still are not familiar or comfortable one-on-one with God.

1. MANY OPT FOR A **"GO-BETWEEN"**

- It seems there is a perpetual tendency for people to get someone else to hear from God for them instead of developing a "first hand" relationship themselves
- Today, we may not clamor for a Prophet or a King to represent us before God like Israel did, but often we look to a Pastor, or a TV evangelist, or a book, or even a CD
- We just want to find some other way so that we don't have to pay the price and take the time necessary to be in the presence of God; then we'll consider hearing what God may be saying to us
- All too easily we will settle for a "Second Hand" relationship, but God doesn't want anyone or anything to take the place of our getting into His presence, face-to-face, for ourselves!

DEVELOP A FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE WITH GOD

1. Man's tendency to opt for a go-between. Exodus 20:18-21  
 —a king, a priest, a prophet, a pastor, a tape, a TV preacher—who will hear from God for us.
  
2. The “cost” and “convenience” factor  
 —Time, effort and inner struggles
  
3. “An Inner Sanctuary”  
 —The state of soul wherein the presence of God can be experienced.  
 an inner sanctuary  
 a “portable” sanctuary
  
4. Establish a daily “Time Apart” to meet with God.
  - (1.) Deal with any problems which may plague your quiet time.
  - (2.) Set a specific time each day to meet with God.  
 —Make a definite engagement to spend time in the Word and prayer.
  - (3.) Establish a definite place. (The “Law of Association.”)  
 —A place of privacy without interruption.
  - (4.) Insist on getting heart to heart with God.  
 —Spend whatever time is necessary getting into His presence  
 —Do anything (!) that will help you truly meet with God.

2. THE **“COST” AND “CONVENIENCE”** factor becomes part of our struggle in developing a “First-Hand” relationship with God

\* A relationship takes time and effort

- We can't just run into the Presence of God in spare moments
- We have to stop the hectic pace of life and deal with the drive to achieve our own self interests

\* If we can get someone else to go into God's presence for us, then we can have a religious respectability without demanding the moral perfection that God requires of those who see Him face-to-face

\* If we are personally in the presence of God, then we will inevitably change

- Isaiah fell on his face: “Woe is me” (Chapter 6)

There came a seeking for forgiveness and a need to change which always happens when we are face to face with God

- Jesus took time and effort: “I don't say, teach, judge, or do anything,” He said, “except what I see the father doing”

Jesus taught His disciples to walk in same way

- People changed in God's immediate presence (Acts)

Philip was sent to an unreached culture (Acts 8)

Paul was riveted in mid-life and was never the same again (Acts 9)

Peter had racism dealt with in his life (Acts 10)

\* Jesus said there is a cost:

- deny yourself
- take up your cross
- seek first the Kingdom of God

\* Like finding an expensive and rare pearl, we have to lay aside other things to find it and go for it!

- But, the reward is so great!!

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3. Find that “**INNER SANCTUARY**” in our spirit where God dwells

\* This sanctuary is unlike the one we go to on Sunday morning and unlike the place to which we retire for our devotional times.

\* We carry this sanctuary constantly with us

- All day long we can slip into it and meet Him there:

*“Ah, Lord, you are here.”*

*“How do you feel about this?”*

*“I need Your strength now.”*

\* From this sanctuary we can see all that is around us through His eyes, we can move at His pace to fulfill His plan and purpose for our lives

THE UNANIMOUS TESTIMONY OF THE GREAT SAINTS is that the practice of coming into His presence and of being powerful with God go together

\* “Be still and know that I am God”

\* “Wait upon the Lord...” (Isaiah 40:31)

- renew, mount up, run, walk

- teach us, Lord, to wait

\* If we behold, contemplate, ponder His glory and majesty with unveiled face, then we will be transformed and changed from glory to glory! (II Corinthians 3:18)

That’s what we want, isn’t it? It’s surely what God wants. It’s the Key to our spiritual vitality.

\* We can “do” and “be” so much more after we have been in His presence!

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4. ESTABLISH A DAILY “**TIME APART**” to meet with God

It is absolutely essential that you find a time and place to regularly retire to be with God

Keeping you from this will be the number one “priority” of the enemy; if he can keep you from God, he will have accomplished 90% of his objective against you

- (1) Discuss any **problems** that may plague your personal time with the Lord  
(Have your group list )

Here are some possible problems that people have encountered:

distractions and interruptions	mind wandering
lack of discipline	lack of faith
lack of sleep	schedule too full
getting alone	lack of commitment
not feeling like it	repetition
too general (not specific)	not enough listening
opposition from the enemy	

Wrestle with these things in a practical way

- \* Know that it’s going to take some doing; some things in your life will need to change
- \* Make sure you’re not indulging yourself or are unwilling to face up to what keeps you from getting into the presence of God
- \* How to deal with a “Wandering Mind”

Don’t be too hard on yourself; begin to pray where your mind is

Actively give your thoughts away to Jesus, surrender them to Him.

Pray out loud

Walk up and down, exercise, lay prostrate

Sing, shout, jump – whatever it takes!!

I’d rather spend 25 minutes getting into His presence where I can really honor and adore Him for 5 minutes, then to spend a whole hour with my mind wandering here and there

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(2) Set a specific “**TIME**”

*“A man who is prudent gives thought to the ways in which he walks.”*

Proverbs

**Give thought to when you are going to plan a time especially set apart for Him; it is key**

- \* The rest of your personal walk with Jesus will rest upon this foundation
- \* History reveals that all who were powerful for God walked in this habit
  - Without it you will be spiritually impoverished
- \* We are not talking about how many services or other meetings that you attend
- \* The basic requirement we are speaking about is that you regularly get heart-to-heart, face-to-face with God
- \* When making your priority list, be sure that meeting God in His Word and through prayer needs to go to the top of that list

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(3) Establish a definite **“PLACE”**

\* We are all creatures of habit; it is much easier to “connect” from a place where we are used to meeting God regularly.

\* It may take creative initiative, but you can establish a “place” where you and the Lord can be alone

- no TV, no telephone, no family activity

\* It may be under a special tree, or in your bedroom with a fan on, or when the kids go down for their nap

A Time and a Place – how mundane!! Anybody knows that!

\* It may “go without saying,” but it doesn’t “go without doing”

- And to be honest, many Christians don’t do it.

\* Mundane or not, it is the KEY to your walk with the Lord!

- The enemy will fight you to keep it from happening

**A “Time” and “Place” built around God’s Word each day**

\*The “center-piece of your personal meeting with God

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(4) Insist on getting “**HEART-TO-HEART**” with God

- \* More than just a ritual or a discipline
- \* More than just going through a devotional exercise
- \* But rather getting face-to-face, heart-to-heart with God

Our unspeakable Privilege – a regular audience with the “King of Kings”

- \* We are only 1 out of 4 billion persons on this earth; yet He wants to meet with each of us, and He will, every single day if we’re willing.

\* GIVE HIM OUR BEST TIME OF THE DAY!

- If we can get the perspective that this time with Him truly is the “High Point” of our day, it will help straighten out our priorities
- It starts the night before; we will never be sharp first thing in the morning if we stay up late indulging ourselves
- Take a cold shower; exercise; get some coffee, if need be
- We must get ourselves alert so that our mind and heart are ready and we can spend some quality time with Him that is alive, vibrant and expectant
- \* Do anything to break through the lethargy or whatever else would interfere
  - Confess any sin and get it out of the way
  - Sing songs and scripture choruses
  - Use God’s Word as a springboard; speak it out loud

## CONCLUSION

- \* God wants a personal “one on one” with you every day!
- \* It is probably your top priority if you want to be a growing Christian, to be powerful for the Lord, and to move into all the things that He has for you
- \* Regularly connect – and all the other things will flow out of that

It will take work, effort and discipline, but the rewards will be so rich that you dare not miss them!

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FIRST

Give a few more minutes for any to complete the chart or diagram of their own spiritual journey

Briefly go over the question sheet #4 and get reports on their eating of Matt 18:19-35.

Collect these sheets and hand back the ones you looked over from last week.

NEXT - discuss:

When do you find is the best time for you to have personal daily fellowship meeting with the Lord?

Do you experience vital times of prayer and fellowship with Him?

What have you discovered that helps you to focus your attention on Him?

THEN

Begin by allowing various people to describe their spiritual pilgrimage up to now as they show the chart or graph which they have made.

One of the leaders can start if others are hesitant (but only share briefly)

You probably will not have time for everyone to share tonight, so be sure to give them opportunity in subsequent weeks.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT WEEK

1. "Eat" Romans 8:23-32