

Unceasing Prayer

Series 4/6- Seeking the Intimacy We Need

Introduction:

- A. There's a wonderful way of always living in God's presence
 - 1. Although I have not fully experienced this continual communion with God (I know enough though)
 - a. **Brother Lawrence-**
 - b. **Saint John of the Ladder-**
 - c. **Juliana of Norwich-**
 - d. **Kallistos (a Byzantine spiritual writer) teaches...**
 - 2. For many this may seem impossible or even undesirable (examples)
- B. Can you identify with this?
 - 1. God does not expect you to dive right into this ocean of constant communion
 - 2. We're trying to move into this by practiced living which is both understandable and practical
 - 3. In many ways it's harder to pray inconsistently than consistently...
 - a. It's harder to play a good game of tennis when we practice only once in a while
 - b. Can we experience integration of heart and mind and spirit with an erratic prayer life?
 - c. Can we like Moses "speak face to face" with God as someone would a friend by our unpredictable prayers?
 - 4. We develop intimacy by regular association!
 - a. Learning to play the guitar enlightens me to how hard it is.
 - b. We are forming fixed habits of righteousness to make prayer the natural, spontaneous thing

I. Unbroken Communion

- A. the Bible is not silent about unceasing prayer
 - 1. Paul teaches -- **•1 Thess. 5:17 •Rom 12:12 •Eph. 6:18 •Col. 4:2 •Phil. 4:6**
 - 2. The writer of Hebrews urges us to continually pray- **Heb. 13:15**
- B. Jesus gave parables on prayer- **Luke 18:1**

II. The Consuming Passion

- A. Increasing need for unceasing prayer in our day (endless activities and cluttered hearts)
- B. Unceasing prayer speaks to the chaos in our lives (peace, stillness, serenity and confidence)- **C. S. Lewis**
- C. This does not happen overnight-- We must want it! With a consuming passion!
 - William James- Religion exists not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever"**
 - or Napoleon- "[Religion] keeps the poor from murdering the rich"**

My guess is a little prayer sprinkled here and there is not enough for you--If only we knew how?

III. The Practice of the Presence of God - Oswald Chambers

- A. Our hearts are a private chapel where we can commune with God--
 - 1. We can be in the middle of and possess an openness to the divine presence of God
 - 2. Can we really live this way? No way! we say
- B. This life of unbroken fellowship with God is not automatic or effortless
 - 1. Difficult? Yes, but not impossible!
 - 2. So we begin one step at a time

Conclusion: Steps to Unceasing Prayer

- A. We don't just leap into the constant presence of God.
- B. First-- Outward discipline
 - 1. The pianist
 - 2. **So we begin in simple, straightforward and even in artificial ways**
- C. Second-- To have this move into our subconscious minds
 - 1. When we get to the point that our consciousness of God's presence is automatic.
 - 2. When we reach this level we begin to notice changes in our behavior
 - a. Traffic
 - b. Home or the workplace
 - c. Able to listen to others intently
 - d. Become more aware of others

- D. Third-- This happens as prayer moves into the heart
 - 1. We're really moving the mind into the heart
 - 2. This is when our prayers become less work and more loving, tender and spontaneous.
- E. Fourth-- when prayer affects the whole personality
 - 1. When prayer becomes like our breath and blood which moves throughout the entire body
 - 2. This level of prayer is too big for me, right now...
 - This says a lot about our spiritual condition and experience.

God calls us in the sanctuary of our soul, and welcomes us there, so we can experience His continual presence.

Read Psalm 1:1-3

Prayer-

"O Lord, my Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth." The Pleiades and Orion sing your praise. Sparrows and chickadees mimic their song. All creation seems in harmony with you, the Master Conductor. All, that is, except me. Why? Why do I alone want to sing my own melody? I certainly am a stubborn creature. Forgive me.

I do desire to come into harmony with you more fully and more often. I do desire a fellowship that is constant and sustaining. Please nurture this desire of mine, which seems so small and tentative right now. May I someday become like the trees, which are "planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper."

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978-256-8901