

To understand prayer we must do a little is *biblical anthropology*. We are people created in the image of God. We were created to know God, created to reflect God, and endowed with certain characteristics from God. And we are created to know him....Our dialogue with him is through what we call prayerwe lost all that in the fall... **So Jesus came to find us...living in a lost condition... rebellious, independent and estranged from God... and Jesus reconciles us to living with God with dependence upon God...in a growing love relationship**

NIV LK 19: 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

➤ All have gone astray from God but Jesus came to find and reunite to God

*NIV JN 6:40 For **my Father's will** is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

We believe him...he reunites us to the Father...who sends us the Holy spirit...we find ourselves... at home with God

NLT JN 14: 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate who will never leave you. 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

- **The purpose of God is now completed relationally spitiually ...God in us we in God..**
- **Real life is God's life...we inherit this real life when God indwells us...in the future it will be completed physically in the new heaven and earth...**

IF THE SPIRIT lives in ME, GOD IS NOT DISTANT BUT UP-CLOSE AND REAL. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON. The holy spirit has individuality. He is one being and not another. He has will and intelligence. He has hearing. He has knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think. He can hear, speak, desire, grieve and rejoice. He is a Person."

----- A. W. Tozer,

Our heavenly Father give us the **Holy Spirit the counselor... lives in us and with us...there is no limit to our learning...**

John 14:26 *But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.*

- This completes the reconciliation Jesus brought between us and God...
- Father ,Son and Holy spirit in relationship with us...
- The purpose of God is now completed relationally...God in us we in God..
- Real life is God’s life...we inherit this real life when God indwells us...

We communicate to the eternal God through prayer... you will walk with God if you talk with God” prayer changes us...moves us from independence to dependence.. Prayer is a communication process that allows us to talk to God! Prayer happens when a finite human being enters into dialogue with the infinite creator of the universe. He desires us to communicate with Him, like a person-to-person phone call

- Prayer is our highest and most effective use of energy...
- Prayer puts us in contact with God our Father and places us in the position to receive his perspective and guidance....
- Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest and wisest point of view...

Luke 11:1 Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.

First off...Most of the disciples had prayed all their lives, they knew how to pray...but they realized there was a whole more to it than they realized..... something about the quality and quantity of Jesus’ prayers and as they recalled about John’s prayers... caused them to see how little they knew about prayer.

- Peter, John, James and Andrew had followed John the Baptist to some degree ...and had also noticed and possibly learned from the power of his prayers
- **So what does this tell us... Prayer like all communication is a skill that must be learned and deepened...**
- we as people are not naturally gifted communicators...that is why there have been so many books, programs, seminars, CD’s, DVDs, are devoted to the skill...so if you do not consider yourself a good pray-er...you are actually in good company...and you can learn much today...

- The good news We can learn to pray better.....and part of that is learning from others...

So He will give them the how too pray...the pattern of prayer ...the fundamentals...the basics... the principles...the outline...

NLT Luke 11: 2 Jesus said, "This is how you should pray: "Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. 3 Give us each day the food we need, 4 and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation."

- **First Father**...relational our father...with out any of the baggage...of an earthly father
- **Why? Name be kept holy** —Separate, Reverent....To treat as Holy. He is our Father yet the Sovereign of the Universe.
- He is also separate than us...he is not like us...he is not broken in any way...
Your Kingdom come soon.... is the petition for longing.....**Your Kingdom be established here...**it incorporates the idea of of the fullness of God's kingdom taking over this world system...

- Prayer in not overcoming God's reluctance to hear or help, but laying hold of His kingdom will in all situations

3 Give us each day the food we need ...Now it is appropriate for us to bring our requests for daily sustenance to God. We often place these prayers first.

1. Daily so we remain dependent on him daily
2. Daily so we pray daily...persistence in prayer

Daily because we only have today...each day has enough problems of its own

and forgive us our sins ... means we will never be rejected...

- God's forgiveness of His children is not gained by outstanding Acts of devotion on our part. Rather, **God freely forgives His children as a mark of His outstanding Grace and Mercy!**
- Gracious...Kind, Merciful, Forgiving, Compassionate
- Our God wants us to remind us daily that he is a forgiving and Pardoning God.

God forgives our sins because He is a gracious God... We must do the same for others...because that is what a child of the King does...that is how we roll

And don't let us yield to temptation.....Lead us away and out from under temptation... **Rescue us from the evil inclination that is born in us.'** and it also has the idea...to not let us yeild to the temptation to fall away under trial or temptation...

Because His love is much greater than our failures could ever be...and he has a heavenly solution to all earthly issues... the Holy Spirit living in us...So Pray

Lead us not into temptation to choose wrongly...or do not abandon us in our time of testing.....which is the work of the Spirit living in us

- **For Paul to have the Spirit is to walk life differently than we once did...**

this walk includes living with a "newness of Life" a newness of thought.. a newness of communication...a newness of understanding...

NLT Rom 7:5 Romans 7:5 When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

The Torah law though good led to death...because we can't keep it...Rules

- **but the Law of the Spirit enables us to live a transformed life...not by rules but by His power in relationship with us...and living in us and communicating with us and we with him.!**

Since we are in this permanent relationship we have the power to hurt God...So Do not Grieve the Holy Spirit...who lives in you

NIV Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

NLT Eph 4:30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

- **The word "grieve" is a significant word....it comes from a Greek word which denotes a pain or grief that can only be experienced between two people who deeply love each other. Do you know God suffers in loving us...just as we suffer in loving others... God is passionately committed to us... so God is suffering and God is loving us At the same time.**
- **you need to let this sink in for a moment**
 - **God the Father loves us so much that He gave us His Spirit who loves us just as equally as Father**

- just as someone in love thinks about, dreams of, and cherishes the one he loves, the Holy Spirit longs for us, thinks about us, desires to be close to us and wants to reveal Himself to us
 - and because He is in a love relationship with us, we can cause Him to grieve
 - **One can only be truly grieved if they love a person. Grief involves suffering.**
- **However when though the Spirit will never leave us, but if we grieve Him, He may temporarily withdraw His fellowship and power..**

Luke 8:18 *“So pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them.”*

- for the Christian who consistently abides in the Spirit, no consequence could be more devastating

The Holy Spirit never forces Himself upon us...at times, we may even wish He was more insistent, that He'd whack us on the head and shout, *“Don't do that . . . it causes me to suffer with you and for you.”* instead, He quietly, gently, convicts us of sin and leaves us to choose: Will I please Him? Or grieve Him?

John 15:26 **“But I will send you the Advocate^{bl}—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.**

1 John 2:27 *But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.*

- **God desires that we are continually aware of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence and sensitive to his teaching and leading...also how deeply sin affects Him, and us...**
- the surest way to avoid grieving the Spirit is to know Him and walk in a moment-by-moment, love and obedient, relationship with Him, then, grieving Him becomes unthinkable for it is painful to grieve someone you love.

Learning to grieve not the Holy Spirit of God is a lifelong endeavor.

The remedy to grieving the Holy Spirit and suffering the disruption of His fellowship is for Christians to confess their sins and be cleansed by Jesus Christ

1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

- **As Christians appreciate that cleansing, and restoring and as we love God more, we are more motivated to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit. because of our relationship with him...**

Gal 5:25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

- **So a question for you all....Why doesn't God put to rout by way of divine healing us from our capacity to sin and therefore inflict Grief?**
- **Because the capacity to sin is precisely where the great mysteries of the cross and our lives correspond. Jesus suffered because of love.. there is suffering involved to love....**

If we are the image of God and if there is suffering in the world, then we along with God must also be suffering in loving the world....

We may not find refuge from our suffering and grief and sin, but we can also not find refuge from God's love, which permeates our suffering sin and grief through and through.

God is suffering and God is permeating love. At the same time. we are called to do the same...for ourselves and others..

The cross reveals this ultimate reality. Jesus did not observe human suffering from a distance but was instead, "somehow at the center of human suffering, with us and for us."

we want to love but not suffer...they are unavoidably linked

God loves us and yet we grieve him...and yet he will not bandon us...he calls us to do the same!

I believe in a God who suffers with me and surrounds me with a love so great it will one day make all things new.

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- Here are some simple guidelines for knowing God's voice and discerning when it's not him, but the voice of the enemy:
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- • Jesus is a gentle Shepherd, and his voice drips with mercy. Jesus does not condemn your personal worth; but satan is a condemning and an accuser.
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- • The Lord's voice is often quiet and deeply internal; satan's is intrusive and vulgar.
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- • The Holy Spirit calls and draws us; satan threatens, demands, and drives.
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- • The Lord's voice lines up with Scripture; the enemy speaks lies.
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- • The Lord's voice will bring a fresh "now" word that will change you and touch you; satan will lock you in the past.
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- • The Lord's voice is rooted in hope; satan brings negativity or despair that leaves you feeling hopeless.
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- • God's voice inspires us to love; satan inspires us to criticize others.
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- • Peace comes from God; satan brings anxiety.
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- • The voice of the Spirit will always glorify Jesus; satan glorifies self.
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So a question for you all

Why doesn't God put to rout by way of divine healing us from our capacity to sin and therefore inflict Grief?

Because the capacity to sin is precisely where the great mysteries of the cross and our lives correspond. God suffers in love.... If we are the image of God and if there is suffering in the world, then we along with God must also be suffering. We may not find refuge from our suffering and grief, but we can also not find refuge from God's love, which permeates our suffering through and through.

God is suffering and God is permeating love. At the same time. The cross reveals this ultimate reality. Jesus did not observe human suffering from a distance but was instead, "somehow at the center of human suffering, with us and for us."

We tend to make a collective effort to avoid the transformation that comes with longsuffering and circumvent the virtues that might be cultivated in our lives by enduring such pain and hardship. It would have been to deny the places where God's profound, abiding love and our deep suffering dance together in mysterious, holy ways.

I believe in a God who suffers with me and surrounds me with a love so great it will one day make all things new.

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when Jesus came to earth 2000 years ago, he did not come to replace one set of rules with another better defined set or one ethical system with another ...He came to bring life to people... he offered man an alternative way of living to all ethical systems. Life from God and with God not life from people place or things...

We are tempted to believe the lie that if I do this or have that ...our inner man will be content will be changed or will have fullness

- If I try hard enough to follow the rules I will be content and accepted, if I break all the rules I will be rebellious and happy...opposite sides of the same coin
- If I can control my circumstances, relationships, environment I will be secure
- If I have enough position, power or prestige ...I will have identity...
- None of these forms will make the content of my life whole...

- But even if that is achieved...I still am in need...why? Because we were never designed to live independent from God..

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Jesus contrasts how sometimes respond to requests and how God responds to prayer.....

LK 11:5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

LK 11:7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

- night travel God not someone we have to beg...or coerce like this man in fact he says...ask..

LK 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

- So Jesus says to the ask my Father...Father is not reluctant to answer our prayers...ask, seek and knock...it will be opened for you...not out of compulsion or duty...but because of love...
- But we must participate in the conversation...prayer...
- Then he gives them an example

Jesus tells us in the next instruction even something better to pray for.....

*LK 11:11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven **give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**"*

- Jesus gives a distinction between his Father and our earthly fathers...even earthly fathers try to give good things to their children... though they have evil tendencies and can have corrupted motives... vices, can be immoral, be mean, neglectful, absent, cruel, selfishness, violent etc.
- Example father who gives/spoils child out of spite for mother...or withholds out of spite...or a father who gives stuff but is emotionally absent...
- But Father in heaven gives good gifts with out any corrupted motives or hidden agendas..

Then he says ask for the best gift ...more of his Holy Spirit...

**IF THE SPIRIT HAS ME, GOD IS NOT DISTANT BUT UP-CLOSE AND REAL.
THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON.**

The holy spirit has individuality. He is one being and not another. He has will and intelligence. He has hearing. He has knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think. He can hear, speak, desire, grieve and rejoice. He is a Person."

----- A. W. Tozer,

- **The best gift the Father can give us is the Holy Spirit the counselor... lives in us and with us...there is no limit to our learning...**

JN 14: ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (triunity)

- **This completes the reconciliation Jesus brought between us and God...**
- **Father ,Son and Holy spirit in relationship with us...**

LK 19: 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

➤ All have gone astray from God but Jesus came to find and reunite to God
Jesus finds us...living in rebellious independence away from God and reconciles us to living in loving dependence with God...

JN 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

We believe him...he reunites us to the Father...who sends us the Holy spirit...we find ourselves...home

➤ **The purpose of God is now completed relationally...God in us we in God..**
 ➤ **Real life is God's life...we inherit this real life when God indwells us...**

EPH 1: 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

We are never alone...we have the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...we are reconciled...the plan of God is completed...the Spirit indwells us giving us Spiritual life.We are at home with God...while we are on the way home to God...the miracle happens..

➤ **For the rest of eternity we will grow in that relationship...we can now live dependent on God...**

AS Jesus states..

JN 14: 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, (Trinity) will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

The best gift the Father can give us is the Holy Spirit the counselor... lives in us and with us...there is no limit to our learning...

The Spirit brings peace to our souls, calms the troubled hearts, gives courage to the fearful...and he does more listen.....

- **gives gifts and service...** ([1 Corinthians 12](#)); a gift (something good) a possession to share (serve) others with...that works effectively...

1CO 12:4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

- **For example:**

*1CO 12:7 Now to each one the **manifestation (sign, appearance, materialization, something apparent)** of the **Spirit is given for the common good.** ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of **wisdom**, to another the message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another speaking in different **kinds of tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues.** ¹¹ All these **are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.***

- **The Gifts of the Spirit are not about power...but sharing...to honor and serve one another out of love...**

- **The Spirit changes us...**

*TIT 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and **renewal by the Holy Spirit,** ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,*

- **He gives power** ([Acts 9:31](#)) gives courage be a witness and a testimony....to do that which we have never done.. like these disciples

AC 1: ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- **Builds us up** ([Romans 8:26-27](#));

RO 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

- **He loves us..** ^{RO 5:5} *And hope does not disappoint us, because **God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.***
- **Loves Forgives...forever...** ^{HEB 10:15} *The **Holy Spirit** also testifies to us about this. First he says: ^{HEB 10:16} "This is the covenant (**unconditional promise**) I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."*
- ^{HEB 10:17} *Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."*
- **The Holy Spirit will complete... will complete what he starts**

^{PHP 1:6} *being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you (**the Holy Spirit**) will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

The Holy Spirit is the best gift he gives to those who ask...God in us...we are free...no longer separated from God but united to God...

For where The Holy Spirit is...There is freedom...we have been freed from the yoke of slavery to sin... to separation from God we are joined in union with God

- *We continue to grow in understanding God's love forever...*

Going back to Luke 11:13.... *how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

To have more of the Holy Spirit is to give more of ourselves to Him....to trust him more...depend on him more...trust his control more....will you ask him...for more

End song freedom reigns

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Prayer in its purest form is a love relationship with God. It's an enjoyable relationship, not a religious activity.

It is the privilege of going to the very throne room of God to spend time in His presence. Our souls are starved for this experience—**to speak and to hear from the living God who loves us and is waiting to share his heart with us.**

But if it is to be a love relationship then it would mean that there are two people in that relationship and there are two people that communicate to each other.

That means that a huge part of prayer is that of us listening to God...and yet that is probably one of the least things we do in prayer.

Intimacy does not exist when our relationship is built on one-way speeches. As we pray to God, we must be fully aware that both of us will speak and both of us will listen.

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There are many times in life that we find ourselves in times of trouble. Sometimes those troubling situations in our life are just due to living in a fallen world and with imperfect people. Then ***there are times that we find ourselves in troubling situations because we are knuckleheads or because we made a really bad and willful decision outside of God's desired will for our life.***

The great thing about God is that in both of those situations, He is there and ready to answer. Why?

God Will Deliver You Through Prayer

Setup context of Psalm 50: Every 7th year, during the Feast of Tabernacles, the priests were obligated to read the Law to the people and explain it's meaning (Deut. 31, Nehemiah 8). Psalm 50 is believed to be one of the things that were also read during that time because it outlines the consistent Godly living that should result from true spiritual worship.

Asaph, who was appointed by King David, as one of his main worship leaders, wrote this Psalm. And the picture that is painted as we read this Psalm is that ***God the Judge summons the court. And in this courtroom God calls two kinds of people:***

- 1) Those who just follow God out of ritual and their relationship with Him is dead
- 2) The Hypocrite (When we hide our sin through religious activity)

Two categories that we have all found ourselves in at one point or another. And when calamity strikes our life because of bad choices we've made, it is always rooted in those two situations just mentioned.

And here is what God says in Psalm 50:

Psalm 50:1-6 (NLT)

¹ The Lord, the Mighty One, is God,
and He has spoken;

He has summoned all humanity
from where the sun rises to where it sets.

² From Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines in glorious radiance.

³ Our God approaches,

and He is not silent.
 Fire devours everything in His way,
 and a great storm rages around Him.
⁴ He calls on the heavens above and earth below
 to witness the judgment of His people.
⁵ "Bring my faithful people to me—
 those who made a covenant with Me by giving sacrifices."
⁶ Then let the heavens proclaim His justice,
 for God Himself will be the Judge.

What a powerful picture of the Great Judge who has come to judge not the world, at least in this portion of Scripture, but His people...you and me. Those that call Him Lord.

⁷ "O my people, listen as I speak.
 Here are my charges against you, O Israel:
 I am God, your God!
⁸ ***I have no complaint about your sacrifices
 or the burnt offerings you constantly offer.***
⁹ ***But I do not need the bulls from your barns
 or the goats from your pens.***
¹⁰ For all the animals of the forest are mine,
 and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.
¹¹ I know every bird on the mountains,
 and all the animals of the field are mine.
¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
 for all the world is mine and everything in it.

In other words, God is saying to His people and to you and me...***I'm not impressed with material things you give Me. Yes, you are supposed to do that but that doesn't gain you some special place in God's Kingdom.*** It's almost as if God is saying "***Thanks for offerings but I don't need that stuff. Those offerings are just a base level of your walk with Me. I already own everything anyway.***"

(Illustration of our kids wanting praise because they did something that is very basic)

When we pray, when we open our mouths to God and change our worship to Him from just outward things to an inward recognition of His greatness and a thankful heart realizing that it is Him that has got us this far...then amazing things happen.

¹⁴ Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God,
 and keep the vows you made to the Most High.
¹⁵ ***Then call on me*** when you are in trouble,
and I will rescue you,
 and you will give me glory."

He goes on to say...

²² **Repent**, all of you who forget me,
or I will tear you apart,
and no one will help you.

²³ But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me.
If you keep to my path,
I will reveal to you the salvation of God."

All of those things mentioned that bring Rescue or Deliverance to our life involve Prayer or talking with God. Look at the words from this passage: **Thankfulness, Vows, Repent.**

and is very similar to how Jesus said to pray...

LK 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

LK 11:2 He said to them, "When you pray, say:

" Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.

LK 11:3 Give us each day our daily bread.

LK 11:4 Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation. "

All of those things involve the opening of our mouth to God and the use of our vocal chords to a holy God who desires to hear from His people.

No matter what situation you find yourself in, whether it be self-inflicted or just living in a fallen world, God says that our prayers or repentance and thankfulness have the power to move His hand and deliver us from our troubles. God has always been in the business of delivering His people and He has not changed.

Another thing that happens when God's people pray is...

We Are Shaped Into His Image and Learn To Recognize His Voice and Discover What His Perfect Will Is

Too often we only pray when we need or want something from God - which is understandable considering the English word "pray" means to "ask or beg".

But the Hebrew word for prayer - tefillah - means to "self-evaluate". So to the Jews of the Bible, prayer was not a time when they asked God for things ... **it was a time when they examined themselves. They would use prayer as a way to compare their actions, behavior and attitude against God's holiness.**

Now that doesn't mean that we can't or shouldn't ask things of God. We know that the Bible is strewn with examples of God's people asking Him for things...in fact because God is a Good Father, He wants His kids to come to Him.

But listen to the heart of this...Prayer is not just sitting on Santa's lap asking for your most recent need...but it is becoming spiritually intimate with your Creator. The One who desires deep relationship with you because you are His crowning achievement of Creation.

God desires to shape you into His image and reveal to you the mysteries of His will. He desires to have such an intimate relationship with you that He can share His great plans with you.

Proverbs 4:20 (ESV)

²⁰ My son, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.

Psalm 78:1 (ESV)

¹ Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

Psalm 119:36 (ESV)

³⁶ ***incline*** my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

The Hebrew word translated "***inclined***" in those verses is the word ***natah***.

When you trace this word to its Semitic root, you find ***it is a musician's term, used for the tightening of the strings on a musical instrument.***

We call this action *tuning an instrument.*

The strings of an instrument need to be tightened in order to achieve just the right tension so that when they are played, ***they will be in tune or in harmony with all the other instruments in the ensemble.*** But it gets even better...

In fact, the Hebrew word that is rendered as "ear" is 'azan, which does mean "ear,"...but when you trace that word to its Semitic root, ***you find that it is also a musician's term, used for a musical instrument.***

That's right—***this idea of inclining one's ear is really a picture of tuning a musical instrument so that it is in line with the other instruments.***

Knowing God's mind and hearing His voice is really a matter of tightening the strings of your spirit or heart so that you are in tune with God's Spirit, with His mind and heart.

When we are all in tune with God, they will be ***natah 'azan, inclining their ears***, and they will be of the same mind, the mind of God, hearing the same message from Him.

That's what Prayer does in our life...without it...we are out of tune...playing some out of tune chorus in our life...out of harmony with Him and unable to walk in His peace and in His favor.

(An out of alignment life is always a life void of Prayer...give some examples)

Beginning all things in prayer is a foundational discipline of the Christian life. The times of praying in stillness and solitude are when God reaches into our minds, emotions, and wills—the deepest places of our souls.

In the quietness of prayer, we free ourselves from the constant distractions of the world and the nagging whispers of our past, dysfunctions, and sins. ***Beginning all things in prayer during the day and having close and continual fellowship in prayer with God will leave its mark on us.***

As we follow our Lord by beginning everything in prayer, we position ourselves to receive the glorious benefits that flow from this way of living. ***There is no other way to deeply know God apart from the stillness of prayer*** (Psalm 46:10).

One of the sweetest and most powerful benefits of beginning all things in prayer is that our “spiritual ears” will be trained to recognize His voice. ***We learn to quiet our thoughts, our educational training, and our persuasions. We become deaf to anything except His voice and will.***

By following Christ's example and beginning all things in prayer, ***we are able to discern His voice above the disharmony of the world and the murmurs of the enemy.*** Learning to recognize His voice is fundamental preparation for hearing the Lord through the Word.

Beginning all things with prayer leads to right hearing. Right hearing produces right speaking. This is how we learn to speak words of life to people, to speak the language of the kingdom, and to call people to their destiny in Christ (Isaiah 50:4).

So when we pray we experience the deliverance of God, we are shaped into His image and able to recognize His voice and walk in His will for our life...finally today, when we pray...

God Does Amazing Things

I'm going to throw out a challenge to you: If you're not daring to believe God for the impossible... you're sleeping through some of the best parts of your Christian life.

And further still, if the size of your vision for your life isn't intimidating to you, there's a good chance it's insulting to God.

You should be living by audacious faith every day. Audacity is not just for “elite Christians.” It’s intended for every believer.

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This divine encounter that takes place in prayer will always do two things: ***it will change you, and it will give you ammunition for spiritual warfare.***

As you enter into prayer, God will not only speak to you, but He will also pray through you by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes people ask me, ***“How do I know when it’s God speaking and when it’s the enemy? I don’t want to be misled. I only want to listen to the Holy Spirit.”***

That is a very normal question and a fair one. ***Something that all of us have struggled with and that dilemma (at least in our head) has kept many a person from taking the time to just be still before the Lord in prayer and listen for Him to speak to them***

Here are some simple guidelines for knowing God’s voice and discerning when it’s not him, but the voice of the enemy:

- **Jesus is a gentle Shepherd, and his voice drips with mercy. Jesus does not condemn your personal worth; but satan is a condemning and an accuser.**
- **The Lord’s voice is often quiet and deeply internal; satan’s is intrusive and vulgar.**
- **The Holy Spirit calls and draws us; satan threatens, demands, and drives.**
- **The Lord’s voice lines up with Scripture; the enemy speaks lies.**
- **The Lord’s voice will bring a fresh “now” word that will change you and touch you; satan will lock you in the past.**
- **The Lord’s voice is rooted in hope; satan brings negativity or despair that leaves you feeling hopeless.**
- **God’s voice inspires us to love; satan inspires us to criticize others.**
- **Peace comes from God; satan brings anxiety.**
- **The voice of the Spirit will always glorify Jesus; satan glorifies self.**

Trust me and trust His Word...He is speaking to you every day. It just takes us being still and learning how, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to shut out the words of the enemy and to take every thought captive and to allow God to share His heart with us.

This concept of Listening Prayer is so critical to our walk. We are quick to tell God our “shopping list” of requests, asking him to break through and bring a miracle. That’s wonderful! He wants us to come to him and ask. But who will stop to listen to the Lord’s heart as He will speak clearly in our prayer encounters with Him?

I believe it is possible to hear God’s voice and whisper every day. The key is having our ears opened by God.

So how do we begin that process in prayer to be attentive to the voice of God?

We’ll be taking a look at a number of verses today but there is perhaps no better place to start than to look at what the Church did when it first started and when the Holy Spirit was poured out for the Church.

Acts 13:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² ***While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting***, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

I always like to worship as a means to hear God’s voice. The words of a song often become the very voice of the Father to our heart. ***It was that way for the early church.***

A dead prayer life is always connected to a dead worship life

Hearing from God always involves us getting into His presence and worship is a great platform to do that.

Psalm 100:1-2, 4 (ESV)

¹ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

² Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

As you begin to cultivate a life of worshipping Him, you’ll begin to hear better. It’s not just about singing words. It’s so much more than that. ***It’s that place of allowing yourself to be vulnerable to the emotions of His heart as He touches yours.***

It’s about allowing the words and the melodies to bring you before Him and into His presence.

Start worshipping at home, and as you do, you'll experience a softening of your heart to Him, and He'll begin to speak to you!

I can't tell you how many times the Lord has ministered to me as I've poured myself out before Him in worship. ***It's out of this place of deepest intimacy that God will speak.***

The ability to hear what God is speaking comes directly through the supernatural revelation given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Look what Paul says about this supernatural revelation of hearing God...

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 (ESV)

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ ***these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*** For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

You must learn to trust that what He's done for others He will do for you! It's faith that opens our ears and keeps us alert to hear His voice.

John 10:1-4 (ESV)

¹ “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. ***The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*** ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and ***the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.***

If Jesus said it then it's still good for today. If He did for them, He'll do it for you.

Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Believe that God will speak, wait to hear Him, and be ready to act.

Imagine how your life can be changed by hearing His voice and following Him! ***Jesus did not say that His sheep can hear His voice, He said they do hear His voice and recognize that it is Him.***

God has always desired to speak to His people, and He has always gone to extreme lengths to communicate to His love and His will to His people.

God has used a variety of ways to speak to His people down through the ages. We can gather from Genesis 3:8 that God talked face-to-face on a daily basis with Adam in the garden of Eden, meeting Him in the cool of the day. After Adam disobeyed God, he and Eve were expelled from the garden, and God turned to other forms of communications with His beloved creation.

To show you just a brief picture of God's desire and lengths to which He has gone to speak to His people...

There are at least 8 ways in which God spoke to His people in biblical times:

1. **Direct Revelation** — This is what many today would regard as an audible voice of God. It can also be thought of as a very strong impression, one that comes unexpectedly, is absolutely clear, and very specific.
2. **Dreams** — God has also spoken to people through dreams and visions. Examples are throughout the Bible of God giving a vision to His people about something important He wanted them to know.
3. **Written Words** — God has always placed great value on the written Word. His commands were spread throughout the early church by both spoken and written means. Behind the written Word of God is always the inspiration of God.
4. **Prophets** — We repeatedly find this phrase in Scripture: "Thus says the Lord." Those who spoke these words of God, the men we call prophets, felt that God so overwhelmingly gave them a message, they could do nothing else but speak it.
5. **Circumstances** — We can regard many of the miracles in the Bible as God's use of circumstances to confirm the good news of the gospel message. They underscore the direct mandates of God and provide a second witness or give evidence that the gospel has been preached fully

Hebrews 2:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

6. **Angels** — The word angel means "messenger from God." God's angels come to people uninvited, unannounced, and unexpected. They're usually so awesome in form their first words are, "Fear not." They deliver messages which are always direct and specific, then leave. The Bible refers to angels as "ministering spirits" whom God sends to help us ... but they always come at God's choosing and on the authority of heaven.

7. **Jesus Christ** — God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. He's God's supreme Word to us, the perfect fulfillment of all His laws and commandments. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14).
8. **The Holy Spirit** — God speaks to each believer by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conveys God's truth, and He is "God with us" (John 14:16-18).

Understanding how God has spoken in the past helps lay the foundation for discovering the primary ways He speaks today.

Remember...if He did it for them, He can do it for us. Why? Because He does not change and He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

We must never limit God in the methods He uses to speak to us. All those ways mentioned are still ways that God can and does speak to His people. But many of those are very super-supernatural ways right. But what does it look like on all the other days?

In my experience and observation, I believe there are three main ways, or at least more consistently, that God speaks to us today:

1. **Through His Word**

The Bible is the Word of God, ***His complete revelation***, and it's His foremost way of communicating with us today.

The Bible is His Word for all people because it speaks to the basic human condition, and it addresses every emotion, human relationship dynamic, problem of the heart, aspect of the psyche, temptation or desire, heartache or joy, and issue of faith, hope, and love.

The Bible covers it all! Whenever we face difficulties, experience heartaches, or have questions, we should go first to Scripture. There, God will speak to us directly, personally, intimately, and effectively.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2. **Through His Holy Spirit**

As we walk daily in the Spirit, surrendered to His power, we have the right and privilege to expect anything that we need to hear from God.

The Holy Spirit living within us and speaking to us reminds us of what God has said and done for us in the past.

His Spirit gives us the words we need to say, the direction we need to go, and guides us in our prayers for ourselves and others.

By His Holy Spirit, God guides us each day, saying “no” to everything that would bring us harm, delivering us from evil and temptation, and speaking in our hearts a “yes” to everything that will bring us blessing.

John 14:26 (ESV)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 16:12-15 (ESV)

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

And the third one is this...

3. **Through Other Believers in Christ**

God uses people to speak to each of us. Some may be total strangers. Others may be dear friends, members of our immediate families, pastors, teachers, or Bible study group leaders.

God gives us comfort and counsel through the words of other believers to encourage and admonish us when we need it most.

The multiple ways that God gets His messages to you are part of God’s assurance plan that He’s the One who’s speaking and that He wants you to get His message without question or doubt.

Finally, I know the question is still lingering out there today: **How can I be sure that God is speaking to me?**

There are five identifying hallmarks of God’s messages to us. They’re a means of determining whether the voice we’re hearing is truly the voice of God. ***If you have a question about whether a message is from God, line it up against these criteria:***

1. **The message must be consistent with the Word of God, the Bible.**

God will never tell us to engage in any activity that’s inconsistent with Scripture.

2. **The message will usually be in conflict with the mainstream of conventional wisdom.**

We must recognize that most of the world is moving in a direction away from what God's Word says to be true. ***God's message stands in sharp contrast to what the world around us has to say on an most issues.***

But when God speaks to you, He calls you to His way of thinking and seeing.

In the New Testament, ***this mindset is called the "mind of Christ."*** Ask yourself, Would Jesus do this? If not, don't do it.

3. **The message will clash with fleshly gratification and basic human lusts.**

We must recognize immediately that any counsel is not of God if it urges us to gratify the flesh, without any thought for the consequences. ***God gives us messages that please the Spirit of God within us, not our lusts and sinful desires.***

4. **The message will challenge one's faith to rise to a new level.**

A "measure of faith" has been given to every person, and our faith is to grow. ***We grow in faith when we hear from God, obey what He says to do, and then acknowledge God's faithfulness to His Word in our lives.***

5. **The message will call for personal courage to do what God has said or to change what He has said to change.**