

A New Way of Praying

“Getting Through the Silence of God”

Moments of Centering: “Just To Be Close To You” (Fred Hammond)

Scripture Focus: Job 23:1-10

- I. Job’s dilemma was navigating through the silence of God at a time in his life when he really needed to hear from God.
- II. We, too, like Job have those seasons when in our moments of praying we hear nothing from God. The questions become how do we navigate our way through these seasons? How do we try some new ways of praying?
- III. Prayer continues to be a very demanding experience for us. No matter how long, how consistent you have been in your prayer life, there are always new spaces, places, understandings and revelations God wants us to know about prayer. Often those new understandings come when we go through seasons of silence during our moments of prayer.
- IV. The experience of prayer continues to have tenets of allusiveness:
 - God is near and yet far away.
 - God is intimate but also very distance.
 - God is present but also absent.
 - God responds immediately; and then God takes God’s good time.
 - God gives a resounding yes and we move with certainty; God says nothing and we are left wondering what we should do.
 - We want answers; we get silence.
 - We want to know for sure; we get silence.
 - We want assurance; we get silence.

It is as if God has decided to leave us to ourselves. It is in these spiritual moments of desolation that we must make some prayer changing decisions.

- V. These seasons of silence should lead us to embrace new understandings of how God moves in our prayer lives.
 - A. C.S. Lewis says, *“God is annoyingly chatty when the conscience does not want to hear a God voice and amazingly silent when we need urgent answers the most”*.
 - B. We must be willing to wrestle with the uncertainties of these seasons of silence and make up our mind to stay. *“Prayer is **mining** the relationship with God and true relationship is only developed by wrestling through the uncertainties and difficulties with a made up mind to stay”*. (*The Sound of Intercession*, Dr. Claudette Copeland).
 - C. You can stay through the silence of God when you realize from the time you start to pray God heard you even if you don’t hear God. (Daniel 10:12-14).
 - D. One of the goals and purpose of prayer is for us to develop intimacy with God. Prayer principles suggest this will not happen if God always gives us quick responses to our request, always saying “yes”. God’s silence is God’s method of developing that intimacy. Intimacy comes when we are willing to just spend time with God with no demands; just learning to enjoy God’s presence; just knowing God is there.

- E. God's silence is a way of stripping us of both our external and internal dependencies. *"This becomes an opportunity for us to enter into the center of our hearts and become familiar with the complexities of our inner life."* (Following the Movement of the Spirit, Henri Nouwen, pg.VII).

VI. Getting through the silence of God.

- A. When God is silent learn to spend time in silence. (Psalm 46:10)
- B. Engage in inner realignment of your priorities. Work on removing the clutter from your life.
- C. Do not make major decisions during your season of spiritual desolation.
- D. Do not allow your emotions to dictate your responses.
- E. Go with what you already know about God.
- F. Look for God in new ways. You may not hear God during your actual prayer times but you may hear God in the unexpected places.
- G. Be intentional about submitting to the will of God for your life.
- H. Be consistent in spending quiet time, prayer time with God. *"A life without a quiet center easily becomes delusional. In solitude of prayer we slowly unmask our illusions and our dependencies.."* (Spiritual Formation, Henri Nouwen)
- I. Practice the ancient spiritual discipline of "lectio divina" which comes from the Benedictine tradition and refers primarily to the sacred devotional reading of the Bible. It means to read with reverence and openness to what the Spirit of God is saying to us in the present moment. When we approach the Word of God as a word spoken to us personally, God's presence and will can be made known. The regular practice of lectio divina presents an occasion when my story and God's story meet and in that moment something surprising happens.
- J. Sometimes the silence of Heaven; of God can be aroused by the sound of our praise. God may be silent but the sound of praise just might get God's attention.

Closing Song:

"And He Blessed My Soul"
(Chris and Kyle)

References

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