

BE STILL & KNOW THAT I AM GOD

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(PART ONE)

While living in this time of darkness and uncertainty around the world, we listen to the news, and we remember the words of Jesus, who said the time would come when men’s hearts would fail them for fear, “*looking after those things which are coming on the earth*” (Luke 21:26). As things accelerate, you really do sense this fear on every hand, possibly even among those of us who name the name of Christ. Many people think that these problems can’t be solved anymore, that all is hopeless in the world right now.

After we have done everything we know to do, and after we have exhausted all of our resources, all of our ingenuity, and all of our connections, and there are no other earthly solutions left, sometimes that’s the only time that we pray. That’s the problem. Prayer should not be our last resort. Prayer ought to be our first line of defense! We who are called by the name of the Lord should be earnest about our personal prayer life. In fact, we are the ones who should actually be defined by our prayer life.

Make An Appointment

You might ask, how can I have a more effective time of

personal prayer with God? The first thing we should do is make a daily appointment for that special time of prayer and intercession before the Lord. I believe that this appointment is usually best in the wee hours of the morning. The psalmist David said, “*Early will I seek thee*” (Psalm 63:1). There’s something about that time of day when things are quiet, with fewer distractions, and the fresh new day is dawning, that we seem to gain a heightened awareness of God’s presence when we seem to hear the voice of God more clearly. There is also something about the dawning of the new day that sets the tone for the challenges that we will face that day.

In Lamentations 3:22-23, Jeremiah wrote, “*It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*”

In spite of our sin, God’s faithfulness, mercies, and compassions being extended towards us are fresh and new every morning. We wake up every morning, amazed that God granted us yet another new day to live, to breathe, to work, to love, to enjoy life, and also as another chance to GET IT RIGHT! When I watch the sunrise every morning, and I am conscious that my

heart is still beating and my lungs are still breathing, it's as if I can hear God saying to me, "This fresh new day is yet another gift I have given to you, my son, as an expression of my love to you." There must have been something about every new morning that was granted to the prophet Jeremiah that made him keenly aware of God's presence, and of His great unfailing mercies, faithfulness, and love towards us.

Be Still Before The Lord

The second thing we should do is BE STILL! The way we begin our appointment with God is to BE STILL before Him. We shouldn't carelessly or irreverently rush into the presence of the Lord with our list of petitions. "Lord, please give me this," "Lord, please do that for me," "God give me," "God protect me," "God prosper me," "God deliver me," "God heal me." These prayers are all about me, me, me. It's not that God is not interested in answering our personal petitions. He absolutely does want us to come to Him with our personal needs. But we've got to put first things first. The main thrust of our prayers should not be about ourselves, because ultimately this life is not about you or me anyway. It's about God. Our lives should be all about glorifying His Name. Therefore, our lives here on this earth have meaning only as they relate to our relationship to Him, and how we can be used to further His kingdom and His will. So we need to enter into the presence of the Lord carefully, humbly, and reverently, recognizing God as the main focus of our prayers, not ourselves.

How did Jesus teach us to pray in Matthew 6: 9-13? He taught us to pray after this manner, first, "*Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*" What does it mean to "hallow?" It means to respect, to awe and revere. We must give Him praise for all that He is. We must recognize that we are entering into a Divine Presence, the presence of the One who stretched forth the heavens and laid the earth's foundations, and whose majesty fills all heaven and earth. We are entering into the presence of the One who even knitted you together in your mother's womb, and who loved you with no limitations whatsoever. He proved that love by sending His only begotten Son into the world to take the penalty for our sin, so that we could be saved, have an intimate relationship with Him, rule and reign with Him in the kingdom of God, and live with Him eternally. That is a presence that we should enter into very carefully.

What did Jesus teach us next? "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" First and foremost, may GOD'S kingdom come, and GOD'S will be done, not my kingdom, my business, my plans, my ambitions, or my will.

So the main purpose of prayer is to glorify God and develop an intimate relationship with Him. This means we need to BE STILL before Him. Being still before God is so hard, especially during these serious days in which we are living, because there are so many distractions, and we are being pulled in so many different directions. Even when we strive to be still and quiet before God, so often we find that many thoughts and plans and fears for the day flood through our minds contrary to our intentions. It's amazing how awkward that silence is for many people these days. In this "hurry up"

world, where the pace of life is so fast, where the demands on our time are so great, and where we are bombarded nearly every hour with phone calls, texts, emails, social media, news outlets of what's going on in the world, or the connections we have with families and friends, the act of actually sitting down and being still in God's presence poses a great challenge to us. Our excuse is, "Oh, I've got to go here now." "I've got to do this now." "I've got to handle it this way." It seems we are on high alert all the time. So without taking the time to be still before the Lord and quietly communing with Him at the beginning of the day, many times, we perform the duties of our stressful days irrationally and emotionally.

Therefore, we must be intentional about our appointment with God. We must, with the same determination to carve out time for other daily activities, also schedule this special time with the Lord. We must simply stop, retreat from all the cares of life, take a deep breath, close our eyes, and listen to God's voice, who is calmly saying to us, "Listen to me, my child." I believe that some of the most powerful times, when we encounter God in our lives, are in those most quiet moments, when we sit still before Him.

If we're not still, if our lives are full of activity, we really can't know God's mind. We'll miss the fact that God is already there and is already moving. We sometimes panic, and we shout, "God, where are you?" God says, "I'm right here, my child. I am speaking to you, but you cannot hear Me because you're so busy." He whispers to us, and says, "O my child, Shhh. Be still before me. I will calm your nerves. I will reassure you. I will revive you. I will give you my peace. I will give you my strength. I will give you my joy."

Sometimes, when we strive to be still before God, we may not feel that He is speaking. Sometimes, because we're so desperate and impatient, we want God to speak to us immediately. We want answers right now. God wants us to be still and wait before Him daily, even if at times it may seem that we cannot hear His voice. "*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*" (Isaiah 40:31).

Jesus said that the true sheep will hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. He calls his own sheep by name and He leads them. They follow Him, because they know His voice. They will not follow the voice of strangers, but will flee from them (John 10:3-5, paraphrase). Therefore, as the sheep of His pasture, we must cultivate the ability to hear and recognize that voice. He tells us to be still before Him. God doesn't ordinarily get our attention with great trumpet blasts or lightning flashes. God moves very quietly and slowly in our midst. Because of this, we cannot really hear his voice unless each of us slows down the pace of our lives enough, so that after we make that appointment with Him, we calmly, quietly, and determinedly steal away from the hustle and bustle of life to sit, close our eyes, and do as God says, "*BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD*" (Psalm 46:10).

What Happens During Those Still Moments?

In the stillness and the quietness of those appointments that we make with Him, where little by little, we begin to feel the winds of the Holy Spirit blowing, and we begin to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking, the manna of God's word begins to sprinkle into our consciousness. Slowly, gradually, little by little, the word that God speaks to us, and that which we read in His written Word begins to come more and more alive within.

Little by little, we begin to gain more insight and revelation into God's word as we read it, and as we listen to the things that the brethren teach us about the Scriptures. Little by little, we begin to hear the voice of God. We find it to be such a gentle, loving, comforting, reassuring voice, and yet also a very powerful one. Little by little, our narrow human perspective begins to fall away, and our vision expands to see ourselves and the world around us through the lens of His larger, divine perspective. Little by little, He begins to unlock the mysteries of what He is doing at this present moment in your life and in all of our lives. Then we begin to REST in what He is doing. He gives us peace and joy through it all. All the fears and anxieties that we formerly felt just melt away, and we experience His rest as we abandon ourselves into His strong, loving arms. These things don't happen all at once, but slowly, little by little.

Out of that stillness should come our personal worship. What is worship? It's a joyful expression of adoration to the One who we have made our Lord and Master. It's a time when we focus on who He is. For when we focus on who He is, instead of upon ourselves, we find ourselves in awe of His majesty that fills all of heaven and earth. In that stillness, we also rest in the fact that God is our Salvation. He is also our Provider and our Protector. In the stillness, we rest upon the fact that God will never leave us nor forsake us, and that He is our Peace, our Joy, and our Righteousness. In the stillness, we find ourselves speaking in that heavenly language, as we communicate to God from the deepest part of our spirit into the deepest part of God, and He understands.

There are times in our lives when God allows us longer seasons of time to use this quiet, intimate time with Him for spiritual self-examination and reflection, a time where we ask ourselves where we stand with our God. What is in our hearts? What is in our minds? Where are our priorities? Are there things in our lives that need to go? Are there things we should be doing that we are omitting from our lives? We can use this special period of time to ask the Lord to bring things to our attention that need to be changed, and the strength to do the Lord's will in all that He asks us to do. The Lord may even impress upon our hearts to fast during this period of time as well. These principles of making an early appointment with God every day, being still before the Lord, praying, fasting, and reading His word, applies not only to individuals, but to whole families. If fathers have neglected the leading of their family in something as important as the family altar, this is a good time to start that again.

Cry Out To God

After you have made an appointment, waited in silence before God, prayed after the manner of God's kingdom to come and for His will to be done on the earth, and you are resting in Him, then you can make your petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." In other words, give us the things that we NEED, not necessarily all the things that we want. If you feel you are in danger, that is a good time to call upon the name of the Lord, for he careth for you.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalm 50:15, NIV). Here is a wonderful promise that God gives us, telling us that He will deliver us when we call on Him in the day of trouble. Not only that, but when we take the time to call on Him, it says that we are actually HONORING Him. The reason God is honored when we call on Him, is because He sees that we are relying on Him rather than relying on ourselves by impulsively taking matters into our own hands.

Throughout the Bible, so often we read this phrase, "They called on the name of the Lord." This means to CRY OUT! This is what the children of Israel did perpetually for hundreds of years. First, they walked in sin and disobedience. Then they suffered from famine, hunger, disease, or defeat or captivity at the hands of enemy nations. Then, when they finally came to the end of themselves as a nation, they CRIED OUT to the Lord. This means they IMplored God for aid and deliverance from the very depths of their hearts. They cried, "O God, we need you like we've never needed you before!"

That's what REAL prayer is. That's a prayer that really touches the heart of God. It's the type of prayer that says, "Lord, if you don't show up, I cannot make it; I don't know what I'm going to do." Sometimes the best kind of prayer is that which cannot be called anything else, but a CRY. This is what God invites us to do throughout His Word, which is to open our mouths and CRY OUT to Him!

Jeremiah 33:3, "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*" God's promise here is that if we call unto Him in our time of need, not only will He answer us, but He will show us GREAT AND MIGHTY THINGS that we could not even fathom now. God is not aloof. He is not disconnected from our seemingly fearful situation. God tells us from the very beginning to the very end of the Bible, that when we desperately need His intervention, and we CRY OUT to Him, He will be right there.

When we don't know what to do, CRY OUT to Him, and He will come to our rescue. When we're at a crossroads in our life and need direction, CRY OUT to Him, and He will give it to us. When we are at our wits end, CRY OUT to Him, and He will show up and move. Our situation may look bleak, but don't forget that God is bound by His own promises to deliver us when we cry out to Him. Let us consider one of the most awesome promises God gives to us in His word.

In the very familiar chapter of Psalm 91, there are some

amazing promises of PROTECTION given to those who dwell in “*the secret place of the Most High.*” What are they? He says that they will not need to be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flies by day (v.5), nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday (v.6).

Even though a thousand may fall at your side, or ten thousand at your right hand, it shall NOT come near you (v.7). If you have made the Lord your habitation, there shall NO evil befall you, and NO plague shall come nigh your dwelling (v.10). He will give charge to His angels to keep you in all your ways (v.11). If you have set your love upon your Lord, He will deliver you. He will set you on high, because you have known His name (v.14). When you call upon Him, He will answer you. He will be with you in trouble. He will deliver you and honor you, as you have honored him (v.15). In fact, He will even satisfy you with a long life, and show you His salvation (v.16). But remember, these and many other promises come with a condition. God says, “If you will. . . then I will . . .” And those conditions have to do with our relationship with Him and walking in obedience to His will.

Paul’s Experience In Asia

From the Apostle Paul’s writings, there is good reason to believe that he was a very capable, self-reliant, proud man before God was finished with him. When he was in Asia, he experienced a danger so horrific, that he described it as having “the sentence of death” in himself and that he “*despaired even of life*” (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). He must have been convinced that he was going to die. For a man like Paul to have been reduced to this kind of fright and despair, this experience had to have been very severe. He probably had not known real fear like that in his life until that moment. In fact, his hardships were so life-threatening at that time, that he regarded his survival and recovery from it later as tantamount to being raised from the dead.

And yet, upon reflection, Paul acknowledged that this fearful experience was a very good thing for him, because he realized that he was powerless to deliver himself from the “*sentence of death*” coming his way. He could not rely upon himself anymore, and this gave God the opportunity to reveal His power to him. It pricked his pride, and afterwards made him live his life completely dependent upon the Lord. He said that God put him through this experience, so “*that (he) should not trust in (himself), but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us*” (2 Corinthians 1:9-10).

God deals with us in the same way. He has chosen us to serve in His kingdom. As such, He wants us to develop a sense of dependence upon Him, so that we will one day willingly yield the complete control of our whole lives to Him. Out of His boundless love towards us, He will often allow adverse conditions to come into our lives to weaken our human resolve, so that one day we will finally, willingly abandon our will to Christ and make him our king and Lord. He may put us through a series of trials, struggles, tears, and failures. Like He did with His servant, Paul, He may even put us through some frightening and fearful situations that we realize are beyond our human ability to “fix.” Eventually, we come to the end of ourselves. Our pride is gone, and we are reduced to nothing in His presence. Then, we are finally willing to bend our will to God’s will. In our humility, we offer all the broken pieces of our lives to Him, lay them at his feet, and plead with Him to intervene. When we are keenly aware of our weaknesses, that is precisely when there is the opportunity for God’s power to be manifested. That is what this is all about, God having HIS power and HIS majesty being revealed.†

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