



Five Steps To A Better Prayer Life
Psalm 139:23-24
Westport Christian Church
April 25, 2010

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way. (Ps 139:23-24 NASU)

The prayer by Warren J. Keating, minister at First Presbyterian church in Yuma, AZ :
"Lord, please make me the kind of person my dog thinks I am."

Here is a little sign that was seen on the wall in a principal's office: "In the event of a nuclear attack, fire, earthquake or shooting, the ban on school prayer is temporarily lifted."

Here is a prayer that was found written in a students textbook that had been turned. It was simply signed "Suffern' Student". Now I lay me down to Study, I pray the Lord I won't go nutty, If I should fail to learn this junk, I pray the Lord I will not flunk. But if I do, don't pity me at all, Just lay my bones down in study hall; Tell my teacher I did my best, To pile my books upon my chest. Now I lay me down to rest, And pray I'll pass tomorrow's test. If I should die before I wake, That's one less test I'll have to take.

Prayer is the one thing that every Christian can and should do. But, I have discovered that not every person who calls themselves a Christian, prays.

Now, the subject of prayer is a subject that we could study for a long time and still have questions. However, in its simplest terms, prayer is nothing more than talking to God. You don't have to use certain words and a certain time, you simply open your heart up to the Lord and talk to Him. It is a form of communication that is vital for our walk with Christ. No matter who you are, I want to encourage all of us to pray more and to pray better with this message today. Kent Hughes tells this story in *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*. Some years ago a man approached a foreman of a logging camp and asked for a job. "That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree." The young man stepped forward and skillfully felled the tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "Start Monday!"

Monday Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday rolled by. Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can stop and pick up your paycheck on the way out today."

Startled, he replied, "I thought you paid on Friday." "Normally we do," answered the foreman, "but we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind." Our daily felling charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last on Wednesday"

"But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even have worked through my coffee breaks!" The foreman sensing the boy's integrity, thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your ax?"

The young man replied, "I've been working too hard to take the time." (Page 71)

How about you? Have you been too busy, too hard at work to sharpen your ax? Prayer is the hone that gives you a sharp edge. Without prayer, the more work you do, the duller you'll get. Consider with me "5 Steps to a Better Prayer Life."

I. Search Me.

"Search Me, O God" is an invitation coming from a right attitude. The word search literally means investigate me. Psalm 26:2 says, "Examine me" Psalm 139 and 26 was written by David. This is the same David that was known as a man after God's own heart, yet this is the same David that had sinned. This is the same David that did many things which God condemned, yet he cried out, "search me!"

David knew that God already knows all about him. He even states that fact at the beginning of this Psalm when he writes, "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar." (Ps 139:1-2NASU)

When you pray do you ask God to search you? Or are you afraid that you won't like what He finds. That is a difficult thing is it not? Lets be honest, it is hard to go to someone and tell them we've missed up, let alone go to them and ask them to search

us!

The truth of the matter is God already knows. He knows all about me, what I've done and what I have been thinking, yet He loves me anyway. The truth is ,we want God to search us. We want and need Him to cleans us, washing away our sins and stains. Search me O God!

The second thing which will better our prayer life is to ask God to . . .

II. BREAK ME

Why would I ask God to break me? Lets look at the example of the shepherd. If a shepherd had a lamb that continued to wonder off, putting itself in danger of getting lost or eaten by a bear or wolf, the shepherd knew what he had to do. He would simply break the lamb's leg. He would then set the broken leg, bandage it up and carry that little lamb around his neck until the leg was healed.

Remember, as a boy, David was a shepherd. He knew how easy it is for one member of the flock to wonder away from the one who provides and protects. David knew what the pain would be like to be broken by the Shepherd, yet he also knew it was the His Shepherd that would bandage him and carry him, keeping him from wondering and being destroyed. As painful as it may sound, we should be asking God to break us. Break us free from the things which are holding us back form Him. We should ask God to break us of the selfish problem of pride. Instead of praying for what we want we should pray for what God says we need "not my will but thine be done." The first step in improving one self is to seek out God's help. Allowing Him to change us to mold us.

Change my heart O' God, make it ever true, change my heart O' God, may I be like you!

The greatest fight that we will ever win is when we give in to God.

III. STRENGTHEN ME

Sometimes prayer changes things, but it should always change us. Instead of praying for God to change our circumstances, maybe we should pray for God to change us.

Instead of asking God to remove us from some circumstance, we should asking God what we need to learn from the situation we are in! Instead of asking God to remove our weakness, we should be asking Him to be glorified through it!

Paul writes, Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me -- to keep me from exalting myself!

Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said

to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:7-10 NASU)

We never grow stronger or taller than when we fall down on our knees. There is a contemporary Christian song which some of the lyrics are "I am the strongest when I'm on my knees."

Many times instead of asking God to remove us, we need to ask Him to strengthen us!

IV. LEAD ME

There is a poem titled THE DIFFERENCE (author unknown) I got up early one morning And rushed right into the day; I had so much to accomplish that I didn't take time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier became each task. "Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered. He answered, "You didn't ask." I wanted to see joy and beauty, But the day toiled on, gray and bleak; I wondered why God didn't show me.

He said, "But you didn't seek." I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock. God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't knock." I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day; I had so much to accomplish, That I had to take time to pray.

It is so easy to get caught up in all the things we must get down and all the things that are going around us we forget to ask God to lead us. It doesn't matter who you are, each of us needs God's leading. Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day. 6 Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses, For they have been from of old. (Ps 25:4-6NASU)

The truth is that we can't afford not to pray for God' leading.

V. USE ME

Our hearts desire should be to be used by the Lord. We should "Pray for a good harvest, but keep on hoeing!"

The wives of two church leaders were sitting sewing their husbands pants. The first talked about how all her husband could talk about was how nothing was getting done at the church. He had about enough. He wasn't going to do it all himself. He was ready to quit.

The second woman talk just the opposite. Her husband was excited about the church and all that there was to do. He sensed the power of the Holy Spirit moving in a mighty way. Even if things didn't always go right or according to his way of thinking, God was in control and at work in the church. The two women continued sew on their husbands pants. The first was sewing up holes in the seat of her husbands pants. The second was sewing up the knees of her husbands pants. It is pretty easy to tell what each man had been doing. Here am I Lord, send me!

Conclusion; When your knees knock together, kneel on them. In an address to the British Medical Association a prominent Dr. spoke about the benefits of prayer. He said, "The best medicine I've discovered is prayer. It does more to quiet the spirit and strengthen the soul than any other therapeutic agency known to man."

Dr. Larry Dossey, chief of staff at Dallas Hospital's Medical City said, "Prayer lowers blood pressure, helps heal wounds, heart ailments, headaches, and even influences the action of bacteria and medications."

A.S.A.P.= Always Say A Prayer.

P.U.S.H.= Pray until something happens.

5 Finger Prayer

1. Thumb- Nearest you, reminds you to pray for those nearest you.
2. Pointing Finger- Pray for those who teach, heal and serve as missionaries and care givers. Pray for those who preach and spread the Gospel.
3. Tallest finger- Pray for leaders in the church, in our country, and around the World.
4. Ring finger- This is the weakest finger. Pray for those who are weak, sick, displaced and hurting.
5. Little finger- The least finger should remind us to pray for ourselves and our needs last.

We should be talking to God on a daily basis. Taking time to pray can be the best investment you ever make of your time. The best way to have a better prayer life is simple- just do it!

AMEN