

Introduction to Prayer

I. Why Pray? (Obedience / command / discipline)

- a. Because we need God.
 - i. Prayer is based in need.
 - ii. We turn toward God because we need God.
- b. Crisis and Prayer.
 - i. Increased frequency of prayer.
 - ii. Dependence created. The need becomes clearer.
 - iii. Prayer begins when the need becomes acute.
- c. What does such Prayer seek?
 - i. Assurance of God's love - presence.
 - ii. The futility drives the dependence – the dependence seeks to rest in God's lovely arms. I Thessalonians 5:17

II. Our stumbling blocks to prayer.

- a. Frustration and the discipline of prayer.
 - i. Lack of understanding or experience.
 - ii. Lack of time.
- b. Guilt.
 - i. In large numbers, Christians are not praying and know they are called to. (guilt paralyzes)
- c. Embarrassment.
 - i. Again, the experience immobilizes.
 - ii. The eloquence issue.

III. The Post-Modern world's intrusions.

- a. H. Nouwen: *"We have become children of an impatient world to such an extent that our behavior often expresses the view that prayer is a waste of time."*
 - i. Societal assumptions of activity. Actions, results, and doing are of value.
 - ii. Filling up our appointment books.
 - iii. Prayer is most essentially being not doing.
- b. Pluralism – non-specific convictions.
 - i. Pluralism that leads to an indifference to commitment to a particular.
 - ii. Paul Sponheim: *"If everybody's convictions are equal or due equal respect, are they not all equally trivial?"*
 - iii. We live in a day where prayer (if prayer happens) is distorted and betrays gross generalizations.
- c. Individualism / Privatism

- i. Prayer is a private matter between me and God for my private needs. Mat 6:5-6
- ii. Prayer used as a tool in the obsessive search for the self. Meditation / techniques / the solitary figure. *The Lord told me.*
- iii. The Christian faith recognizes the persuasive nature of prayer (Luke 11:5-13). The Christian faith resists the privatization of prayer.