

Silence is Loud!

Learning to hear the gentle whisper of God...

(1 Kings 19: 11-13, NIV)

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but **the LORD was not in the wind**. After the wind there was an earthquake, but **the LORD was not in the earthquake**. After the earthquake came a fire, but **the LORD was not in the fire**. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

- Did you know we can be so busy doing life (and even ministry) that we miss the opportunities to hear the gentle voice of God speaking to us?

Three things to help kick start your prayer life...

1. Remember, prayer is a tool.
2. Create a silent environment.
3. Be still and know I'm God.

(Psalm 46:1-3, 7)

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, and the mountains quake with their surging. The LORD Almighty is with us;

Verse 7: He says, **"Be still, and know that I am God;"**

In Prayer...

We learn to be still so we can separate.

We learn to be silent so we can listen.

***Some Practical Advice for your prayer life...

- Find a quiet place in your house. (If you have kids, it might have to be a quiet time, too...early morning, whatever.)
- Remove the distractions and noise: No TV...no radio...nothing to distract you.
- Sit there for two minutes silently. Don't ask God for anything. Don't start making prayer lists. Just sit quietly and think about God...his holiness...his grace.
- Try and stay focused – try not to let your mind wander
- Keep it simple – you don't have to use complicated words or lists. Just talk with God.

So What... Jason?

Why is prayer so important?

It is important, because prayer is communion with God.

*“In prayer we encounter the personal God Who hears us and responds to us, who is always ready to come to our assistance, who never betrays us, even if we betray Him many times. In prayer we communicate with the sublime Reality which is the only true Life: compared to it, every other reality is partial and imperfect. **Life without communion with God, without prayer, is but a long pathway towards death, a gradual dying. We live insofar as we participate in God, and we participate in God through prayer.**”*

Today's Scripture is from the New International Version
Jason Shanks, September 3 & 4, 2011

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Now What?

Below are a couple of prayer types to help your prayer life be more focused, silent, and still...

Centering Prayer

- Choose a simple word or short phrase that expresses your desire for God. Some examples may be love, peace, hope, joy, freedom, grace, Jesus, forgiven, etc. Any time you feel your mind wandering or losing focus, say your word until you regain your focus. You can even use this word throughout the day to remind you of God's great love and presence in our lives in all things.

Breathe Prayer

- In the Breath Prayer, we use the rhythm of our breathing to pray a simple, intimate prayer of heartfelt desire before God. When we breathe in we call upon a Biblical name or image of God. When we breathe out, we express a simple God-given desire. An example may be, "(breathe in) Father God... (breathe out) forgive me." Or, "(breathe in) Jesus... (breathe out) strengthen me."

Praying Scriptures

- (1 Thes 5:16-18) – *"Rejoice always, **pray continually**, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*
- Praying scripture allows us to stay focused and shape our prayer life throughout our day through the words of the scripture. It allows God to direct the content of prayer. Find a verse in the scriptures to memorize that is particularly meaningful to your life at this time. It may be helpful to write it down on a piece of paper or note card. Meditate on the words of the scripture throughout the day, especially during difficult situations or whenever you find your mind wandering to thoughts you do not want. Allow the verse to constantly point you back to God in all that you do. At our house we sometimes put the verse on the refrigerator to remind us as well. I encourage you to explore some ideas of your own.

These are just a few examples of prayer disciplines that can help you begin a journey towards an intentional prayer life with your Creator. I encourage you to try these in the next few days and create times of silence and stillness in your life. Be ready to listen to God's gentle voice in your life. Thanks for being on a growing journey with Christ.