



In the weeks before Easter, known as 'Lent' we are looking at 'Prayer'. Have some of us found ourselves praying less often as finding time for regular prayer gets subsumed under the weight of life's events? This Sunday we're hoping to find ways of rediscovering the joy of the special relationship we have with our Father. **Read Matthew 6: 5 – 13.**

1. Who are we meeting with?

Our worries are often rooted in things we cannot control and these hamper our prayer life: we still have the impulse to sort stuff ourselves. Deep down we doubt that praying to God will make any difference. But:

- **God is all-powerful and all-knowing.** He is in charge of our lives and can be trusted to have our best interests in His heart: we don't need to manipulate outcomes for ourselves. Think of:
 - God's power over Nature: Moses in the desert, dividing the Red Sea. Job 38. Jesus feeding the 5000.
 - God's power over circumstances: Read the book of Acts! Peter's and Paul's releases from prison.
 - God's power over hearts: Moses' reluctance to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Saul the persecutor who became Paul the apostle. Peter's denial and reinstatement: God changes peoples' hearts!
- **God loves us as much and more than any person who has ever loved us in our lives.** John 3:16
- **God is inviting me to have a personal audience with Him.** Matt 11:28-9: take My yoke upon you The traditional way of training a young ox is by yoking it to an adult, so both animals have to do everything together: the younger one learns from the older. Similarly we learn from Jesus in prayer.
- In the Psalms we see the word **SELAH** = Pause for thought. What a God! **Pause – let it sink in!**

2. Preparing for the meeting – Focus on God! Read Matthew 6: 5-13 again.

- Adopt Jesus' prayer Principles: Pray regularly, privately, (*not like the hypocrites – Greek word means 'actors': one who plays a part*), sincerely (*not over-wordy*) and specifically (*like the Lord's Prayer.*)
- Focus on God and not on the mountain of your anxieties: prayer is not about asking God to deliver the solutions to our problems that we want. It's about getting back on track with God's mind-set.
- It's about learning or regaining His perspective on our problems and aligning our wills with His.
- So we focus on God and His thinking: **Thy will be done! SELAH.**

3. Building habits over Lent.

Regular praying contributes to our spiritual well-being in the same way as regular exercise, or pursuing a hobby boosts our physical and emotional well-being. During Lent we have 6 weeks to form a prayer habit:

- **Bookends. Build a regular pattern of praying before and after acting.**
 - Your Day: Pray when you get up and when you go to bed.
 - Your family – pray before you leave the house and before supper in the evening.
 - Your work: pray walking to the train, and walking home from the train.
 - On the drive into work or coming home from work. When you arrive at work and when you leave.
 - Before and after some event: a task, a project, a journey..... **SELAH**
- **Blog/Diary/Journal. Keep a note of your conversations with God.**
 - Restrict yourself to one page a day and tell God of the things on your mind and how you feel.
 - Write down experiences, reflections and people you want to pray for. Leave room for answers later!
 - Note things or encounters with people that have been significant that day..... **SELAH**
- **Bible.** There many Bible reading schemes that are not intimidating: 'Bible for Life'. 'Every day with Jesus' by Jeff Lucas. Reading a short passage from God's word puts his perspective into the day. Also recommended is Bill Hybels' book: 'Too busy not to pray' and Martin Luther's comment about his prayer life: **'I have so much to do today that I'll need to spend 3 hours in prayer to get it done'!**

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1. Have we 'cooled off' in the matter of regular prayer? If so, why?
 2. Suzanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, brought her ten children up almost single-handedly. She had no time to 'Go into her room and close the door', but she advised her children that when they saw her with her apron over her head, that meant she was praying, and not to be disturbed. Tim reminded us that there were aprons available for both men and women these days! Have any of his ideas helped? **SELAH**