

## Prayer Kept Simple

My twenty-three-year-old grandson recently asked me, “Hey, Pops, do you pray a long time out loud?” I quickly answered from my perception how I thought I prayed. I have fifty years of experiencing both answers to prayer and wrestling over delays in my walk with Him.

*Prayer Kept Simple* was birthed by this question.

His question became God’s catalyst for me to observe. How often do we mature Christians put undue weight on younger Christians by passing along our more complex prayer practices *as if* we have always prayed like this? Oh certainly, in the proper context, our current prayer life can help point toward possibilities through one unique life.

However, I wish I had responded with more wisdom and answered the questions beneath the question. “How did you learn to pray, Pops?” or “Pops, can you give me some prayer tips for where I am on my journey?”

That interaction set me on a journey to write *Prayer Kept Simple* to lay a foundation of prayer for the younger and also to build a strong platform from which to grow our lifelong prayer.

*Then I struggled for months to write about simple prayer! I was confused, unsure what I was missing.*

Walking this morning and *praying on my way*, I had a flash of insight why I have struggled so hard to write *simply* about prayer.

*Prayer is such a natural part of life that we often overlook it!*

For example, have you ever been around a six-month-old baby from good parents who love and care deeply for their baby? The infant’s first sounds are wordless gurgling or cooing accompanied by a smile. Without words, the infant is *communicating* with dad and mom.

*That’s prayer in its simplest form!*

Is that so surprising? You may not agree with Dr. Mehrabian’s formula to describe how the mind determines meaning since it’s so startling. He concluded that **93 percent** of communication is “nonverbal” in nature. It makes me wonder why some scholars attempt to limit prayer to verbal expressions.

Picture with me another scene. If you had a positive family environment, remember back to when you were five or six. If not, remember a movie, book, TV show or neighbor that depicts this, or use your imagination.

You run into the house on a wonderful summer day with the screen door slamming behind you. You yell “daddy, daddy” (or “mommy, mommy”). You hop up on his lap, look into his smiling face and wrap your pudgy little arms around him. Then with a quick squeeze you say “Daddy, I’m off to finish my adventure,” sprinting out after his quick nod. The child simply wanted to include his father in every aspect of the adventure his or her life.

*Hold onto these feelings and thoughts, the touch and smells.*

*That’s prayer in its simplest form!*

At the heart of all prayer is communication out of a growing intimacy from deepening relationship in every aspect of life, the exhilarating and the routine. A good God loves you more than you can imagine. Prayer is not first of all for asking or for warfare. It sows a growing confidence that we may freely share every moment of life with Him.

Prayer is then the *simplest* thing in life for an authentic child of God. Enjoy all of life together with your three favorite Persons in all you do, in the routine and in the extraordinary. It's *simple*, not complex, yet *not* without effort on our part.

Share with Him a stunning sunset, a puzzling problem, a breakthrough solution, a leisurely walk through the woods, a challenging relationship, confusion and despair when God did not respond when and/or how you think He should have. This takes *no* time, yet He occupies *all* our time. The Father, Son and Spirit yearn to be involved in every aspect of our lives.

Knowing the Father's initiating *first-love*, receiving His outpoured love requires *nothing* (Jesus *already* did it all)...except giving our willing heart's "yes."

Jesus trained up His Twelve over three years in a face-to-face, hands-on relationship. In all that time, His closest followers only asked Him *one time* to "teach us." *Just once.*

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, **teach us to pray...**" (Luke 11:1, **emphasis**).

His disciples knew how to pray. Each had been trained up in the Jewish religion. They had been trained what to pray. The Psalms were their prayer guide.

*Then, what were His close followers asking? What did they see in Jesus' life that drew them to ask Jesus, "teach us to pray"?*

I'm suggesting that what His closest followers longed for was for Jesus to "teach us to pray with such an easy, collegial, fruitful friendship as You do with Your Father on Your way, Jesus."

***They longed to come as beloved sons and daughters into their Father's presence, like Jesus did.***

The rest of Luke 11 may all be related to aspects of prayer. Focus now, though, on the next word Jesus utters to point His disciples to prayer in *The Message*.

"**Father**, reveal who you are..." (Luke 11:2, **emphasis**).

May we approach Jesus with the same request to free ourselves from rigid forms in pray. Push into a relational life in prayer with the Father, Son and Spirit with a heart's desire of "reveal to me who You are, Father."

As I look carefully at the life of Jesus, He lived out such a life of unbroken communication with His Father in every aspect of life, whether in the routine or the revolutionary. This prepared Jesus to meet each person right where they were with a word from the Father's heart. He welcomed them without judgment and nudged them closer to His Father's heart to the degree they were open.

*Are we so insightful and open to confess such dependence?*

["The] Son can do **nothing by himself**; he can **do only** what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does **the Son also does**" (John 5:19, **emphasis**).

This ongoing conversational prayer *on His way* fueled Jesus' walk through the world. He went around doing good because the Father and Spirit were with Him (Acts 10:38). In other words, all Jesus did while on earth surged from a conversational life of prayer with His Father. *It all begins here in relationship!*

"**As you** sent me into the world, **I have** sent them into the world" (John 17:18; also John 20:21, **emphasis**).

Play close attention to this universal model for Jesus-followers as we journey in life. “**As Jesus...**, **so His people...**” is the model for the Christian life. **AS Jesus** prayed, **SO we** pray.

Jesus conversed perfectly with the Father *on His way* because He was without sin. We **pray on our way** *im*perfectly because we are still very much in process. Begin where you are and choose to partner with the Spirit to build such a life of **prayer on your way**, *incorporating Jesus naturally into all we do and think*.

That’s why I’m writing *Prayer Kept Simple*.

I want to meet young Christians or those who struggle with prayer with what is most fundamental and basic about prayer.

There’s more to prayer than turning our focus to our Family-of-Three in every aspect of life on the way. Yet prayer must begin with this relational emphasis. This is the one and only foundation for also answering the puzzling questions about prayer and for our “*prayer in our closet*.”

I suspect this is what Paul meant by the following, although you decide.

pray without ceasing... (1 Thessalonians 5:17, *ESV*).

God designed humanity for such a relationship lubricated by communication. That’s **God’s part**. **Our part** entails only **one** thing. Make our **all** available to Him in sweet, moment-by-moment connection as we increase our communication with Him. **Increase** our connecting communication **on our way**, naturally, not **perfectly**, like in any good relationship.

I’ve stopped focusing on my failure (most of the time!) and focus on the joy of the times I’m connecting. Don’t fret or wallow in regret when (*when*, not *if*!) your mind wanders.

“If you should forget Him for minutes or even days, do not groan [but] begin anew with a smile. Every minute can be a fresh beginning” (Frank Laubach).

I chose the word “*simple*” for this aspect of **prayer on our way**, yet not to imply it’s always easy. The most crucial things in life demand effort. And prayer is crucial, essential, fundamental.

Prayer is *simple*, straightforward, not complex, uncomplicated, elementary, manageable, for each, every moment of the day...yet not without our effort. God does His part well. Here’s **our part**.

“My part is to live this hour in [increasing] inner conversation with God and [and move towards] responsiveness to his will, to make this hour gloriously rich”  
(Frank Laubach, 1/29/30 journal).

Begin with relationship, **praying on your way** with our Family-of-Three who enjoys you and loves you more than you can imagine. When we involve the Father, Son and Spirit in all we do in life, we begin to see life more like He does.

We begin to see Him, ourselves, our family, our church and the world more rightly. For instance, we may naturally give a word in season to another believer. We see an opportunity with someone without Christ and ask, “*How can I pray for you now?*” An answer to a knotty problem at school or work springs into our minds. We respond better to a personal attack or difficulty.

*Prayer doesn’t end with praying on our way, yet it does begin with such a natural relationship.*

Oh certainly, the “*praying in our closet*” of **asking** and even **warfare** are crucial aspects of prayer. However, prayer **always** begins in God’s great heart, then swoops down into an open heart who will complete the circuit by **asking** God to do it. So, begin here with **prayer kept simple**.

*The Father, Son and Spirit long for growing intimacy with us, even more than we yearn for Him. He fashioned us in His image that we might relate intimately with Him, like no other creature.*