

When It Comes to Prayer, We Must Minister to God First

Ministry to God must come before ministry to people. First Peter says that “you are a chosen race, *a royal priesthood*, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may declare the goodness of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (2:9, italics added).

The role of the priest is to minister first to God; then to the people. The way that we minister to God is by praising, worshipping and communing with Him in prayer and meditation. The way that we minister to the people is by allowing the overflow of what we have received in our time alone with Him to pour out into the lives of others (Prov. 15:8; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 1:4,5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:16).

The Relationship of Prayer

My husband, Floyd, and I have been married for 43 years. We love each other, and because we do, it is not a chore to be together—it is an awesome privilege. We want to share and know the most intimate details of each other’s lives. Although I am often the one who is out front in our ministry, Floyd is the strength behind the scenes, working to make sure that what I do when I am publicly ministering runs smoothly and effectively. This happens as we spend time communicating about our heartfelt and physical needs. We have the same goals, the same purpose and a mutual love and respect for each other.

Similarly, the Bible says that you are Christ’s bride (John 3:29). Your marital relationship with Him will deepen as you spend time alone with Him, sharing heart to heart. Prayer is that unique channel of dialogue between you and the Lord. Intimacy is cultivated as you invest time in your relationship with Him. The result will be knowing His will and making His

will known to the people. Moses is a perfect illustration of this.

There is probably no one man in the Bible who is more fully respected among the Jewish people than Moses. Why? Moses knew God; therefore, God made His ways known to Moses and His acts to the children of Israel. We read in Exodus 33:11 that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." The Lord longs to speak to you today through the Holy Spirit, just as He spoke with Moses (Ex. 33:11-23). And not only does God want to speak to you, but He also wants to show you a dimension of life that is invisible to the natural eye.

The Bible says, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). Therefore, to know and understand the things of God, your spiritual eyes need to be opened. Keeness in the Spirit realm comes as you discipline yourself in prayer, praise, fasting and renewing your mind through God's Word. Ask the Lord to reveal spiritual reality to you just as Elisha did when he asked God to open his servant's eyes, allowing him to see the chariots of protection:

So he answered, "'Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than with them.' Then Elisha prayed, 'Lord, open his eyes and let him see.' So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha" (2 Kings 6:16-17).

The more our spiritual eyes are opened, the more understanding we will have about our physical circumstances. Jesus was so spiritually attuned that He said: "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You." But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me" (Luke 8:45-46).

Peter was looking at the natural touch; Jesus was aware that

something was happening in the spiritual realm. Prayer ignites our natural senses so the light of His Spirit is able to shine in on the motives of the power and principalities at work around us.

The Sacrifice of Prayer

The Scripture tells us that Jesus went to the cross for the joy set before Him. How can this be? How could the Cross possibly have brought Him joy? Because when Jesus was on earth, He was limited by time and distance. Through His death and Resurrection, however, He was able to send the Comforter so all believers could have ongoing, immediate access to the Father via the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:34 says that “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

As we follow Christ’s example, we too must freely give ourselves to prayer. Prayer is an unselfish work that is often unseen and unappreciated by others; they only experience the results. When we pray, we are not seeking to be seen by men, but rather to stand in the presence and pleasure of the Lord (Matt. 6:5; Heb. 7:25). Our times with God the Father bring us into oneness of heart with Him. We are then able to experience His heartache over the lost, His compassion for the hurting and His love for others—even our enemies.

Prayer is a love response to the burdens of others. The apostle Paul set forth a model for unselfish prayer in Philippians 2:3-4:

“Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

The apostle said he did not cease giving thanks for others while making mention of them in his prayers (Eph. 1:15,16; Phil. 1:3-4, 7). Paul, like Jesus, believed God. As a result,

prison gates were opened, souls were saved, the afflicted were healed and lives were transformed. Prayer is powerful, especially when it is based upon God's Word.

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