

Prayer, Week 2
An adult lesson
Tom Deaderick

Categories

1. Times are bad (Help me!) **LAST WEEK**
2. We've been bad (Sorry!) **THIS WEEK**
3. Times are good, thanksgiving (YAY!)
4. Peaceful communication with God

Last week we talked about our prayers when times are bad. When we are begging for God's help. One of the challenges in seeking God's help through them is that it's not clear to us, what His path for us is. We pray to be delivered from a specific circumstance, often in a specific way, but we know that God's plan is often different from ours.

We talked about how challenging it is for us to pray like Jesus did, so that regardless of what we want, God's will guides the way forward.

For me at least, this next kind of prayer is more straightforward. I often have a hard time figuring out what God wants me to do, should I try to get this kind of job, should we sign up to be 5th grade teachers again, what's the best way to bridge our relationship with someone. I don't know which of those decisions is God's plan.

Last week we talked about the things we pray for that are sometimes hard to understand. Call to mind the things you thought about last week, the things you want to happen.

You probably can't say that you know with certainty what God's plan for these desires of your heart are. Right?

Is it His plan for you to have this job, or that one? Who is the person you should open yourself to, and who isn't? Can you trust someone? Does the path you're on come closer to God or further away in six months, or a year, or ten years?

I don't do too well figuring out God's plan for me. I do my best and ask for His help in choosing, but usually when I'm in the thick of it, I still have doubts as to whether it's what I want or what I think He wants. Afterward, I can look back and maybe decide, but at the time, it's much harder.

But when it comes to the second kind of prayer, it's much clearer. I usually have a pretty good idea of what God wants me to stop doing.

How many of us have behaviors that we know God wants us to change? LET THEM RAISE THEIR HANDS.

When we know that God wants us to do something else, that's conviction.

Sometimes we don't see ourselves too clearly. We get caught up in what we're doing. We get sucked into circumstances at work or with friends where we start out sharing information and we end up being critical or gossiping. It's such a natural flow from something that's ok, or neutral into something that's hurtful to someone, and ultimately to us.

There will always be a messenger of some kind that convicts us, because our God is just. He won't allow us to sin in complete ignorance.

A messenger could be a person who calls us out for our sin, someone who sees our behavior from the outside and holds us to account, or a messenger might be a circumstance that causes us to pause and reflect.

David was the King of Israel. He spent his days judging the qualities of the people he put in leadership, planning and building a nation. He was admired by the Israelites and we can imagine he probably felt as passionate about the tasks before him as we feel about those before us. We get caught up in the world and lose our connection with God.

David's sin is well known. He slept with Bathsheba, stole Uriah's wife and had him killed to hide his theft and sin.

Did he know what he was doing was wrong? LET THEM ANSWER.

Of course, we know that he did, because he tried to cover it up twice that we know of. Once by bringing Uriah home, hoping he would spend the night with Bathsheba and he tried to cover it up again when he arranged for Uriah to be killed.

For a while David thought he'd covered up his sin. He would be convicted of his sins later, but have you ever wondered what David's prayers were like in the window of time that he thought he might have gotten away with his sin without anyone knowing?

We don't know what those prayers were like, but we can all probably guess, because we all do things we know God doesn't want us to do. Sometimes these are big things that hurt other people. Sometimes, the things we do that we know are wrong aren't big things. They're little things, like gossip, or complaining. Sometimes we sin against God, by ignoring Him or forgetting Him in our daily life.

We can guess that David's prayers before his conviction were meaningless. They wouldn't be rewarding to either David or God. They'd be like two people talking about sports or the weather, and avoiding a sensitive area. If a truth between two people is never discussed, only glossed over and hidden, the relationship becomes superficial and weak, doesn't it?

Until there's nothing worthwhile in it at all.

We don't really care much about those superficial relationships do we? We don't go out of our way to spend time building them higher, we just move on in search of someone else without investing ourselves.

God will send a messenger of some kind, a person or a circumstance to get our attention.

Nathan was God's messenger to David.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-9

God convicts David through Nathan. "You are the man."

God convicts us too doesn't he? He'll find something to point to you and your heart will hear, "you are the man."

PAUSE FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE ANYTHING.

I know God wants to see me change some my behaviors. Unlike trying to divine His path for me going forward, I see the behaviors I have as clearly as if Nathan was saying to me, "you are the man."

Sometimes I work at them. Other times they work at me.

We know God wants us to work on them. There's nothing clearer or more plaintive than the way David describes it himself.

Psalm 51

You can't read that and not feel how well God understands our heart. He knows the sin we're capable of and He knows what He designed our heart to long for.

What aspects of this speak to you? LET THEM RESPOND.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,

A broken and a contrite heart—

These, O God, You will not despise.

One aspect that reaches out to me is that God wants our offering to be clean.

Read Acts 8:22-24

None of us would give a gift that was dirty or ragged. We want to clean something up as well as we can before we give it to someone.

In the time between David's sin and his conviction, he showed up day after day with a gift to the Lord that was dirty and ragged.

We need to polish up our own gift as best we can every day.

That's what a prayer for repentance is. For me, it's the easiest prayer to make because I am sorry and ashamed and I'm convicted as clearly as if someone stood before me and said, "You are the man".

Our gift back to God is never going to be pure and white and clean, but we know that Jesus has this shining and perfect box. Whatever we put into it goes in still dirty and old, but when God opens it, it's brand new.

Other verses about repentance that I didn't use

2 Kings 22:19

because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 18:7-8

"At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.

Isaiah 19:22

The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.

Revelation 2:4-5

'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.

Revelation 3:3

'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.