

Learning to Pray

It is through prayer that we come into personal relationship with our God, not only speaking to Him, but also hearing from Him. We've heard our pastor say that he doesn't hear God's voice audibly, but "much louder than that!" If you are walking with the Lord today, you know what that means. If you haven't yet discovered this to be true, you will- if you seek Him as we encourage you to do

Consistent prayer leads us into that same spiritual intimacy with God that Jesus, Paul, Moses, David and Nehemiah experienced. It's a matter of spending time with Him every day. We can't know another person without spending time with him or her-not just being in the same room but speaking to each other, responding to each other, being open with each other.

The Apostle John wrote that his fellowship (relationship, spiritual intimacy) "is with" the Father and His Son – and this was written years after Jesus left the earth (1 John 1:3). John had walked with Jesus as a disciple, and he continued in that relationship through the Holy Spirit long after Jesus ascended to heaven, just as Jesus promised that John- and all who belong to Christ-would do (John 17:23, 26; 2 Co. 13:14).

Jesus acknowledged the reality of this personal relationship in His prayer of John 17. He said, "This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent-Jesus Christ" (John 17:3, emphasis added). The word Jesus used for "know" means more than factual knowledge. It means knowledge through experience; knowledge gained progressively through intimate acquaintance, and could be translated "to become progressively more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him."

In other words, we can have a lot of biblical knowledge about God, but until we spend time with Him, we cannot become acquainted with Him in a personal way. We could say the same thing about our President. We can read his biography and learn many facts about him, but without spending prolonged time with him, we could never know him personally, intimately.

Some of us have confused service with intimacy. In fact, many earnest Christians spend so much time serving God that they crowd Him right out of their lives-and end up with no fellowship, no spiritual intimacy, with Him at all.

Jesus uses the word "know"- to know through personal experience-in another familiar passage: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep, and they know me" (John10:14, emphasis added). The question we must ask ourselves is "Do I know my Shepherd that way? Am I in a progressively more intimate personal relationship with Him? Is that how I know my Father?" And if not - why not? And if not-shouldn't begin now?

We must learn to pray; with the confident hope that Jesus our Master will be our Teacher, and will patiently guide us into that fellowship with Himself that He desires for us to enjoy.

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