

## *Pk's Perspectives...* The Discipline of Prayer

There are seasons when I struggle with praying. Not so much the discipline of prayer but I struggle to know how/what to pray. I crave times of communion with God. I look forward to the holy quietness of simply being in my Father's presence; the silence of my prayer closet is a powerful experience for me. So I find myself hesitant to form and speak words into these holy moments of fellowship...not wanting to say things that are inconsistent with what God is actually seeing in my heart.

MercyMe recorded a song several years ago called "Word of God Speak" and the lyrics of the song have always resonated with my heart, especially these lyrics:

*I'm finding myself at a loss for words...and the funny thing is it's okay...the last thing I need is to be heard...but to hear what You would say...I'm finding myself in the midst of You...beyond the music, behind the noise...all that I need is to be with You...and in the quiet hear your voice*

My desire for prayer is strong and passionate, a craving deep within my soul. And while true that it is sometimes okay to be at a loss for words in the place of prayer, I also know that conversation is a two-way street... my Father wants to hear my heart, He wants me to trust His love in airing my soul, He wants me to speak words out of the turmoil of all that is rumbling around in the secret places of my mind and spirit. Finding words to pray for the needs of other people? No problem! In fact, I would rather offer words on behalf of the needs of other people than work at trying to form words to adequately and honestly express the tumult of my own heart and life.

For those of you getting ready to text me a link to Romans 8:26-27, don't bother! Trust me when I tell you I have struggled to grasp the full meaning of those verses for many years, especially as it applies to my personal experience of prayer. I absolutely believe there are times in prayer when I truly do not know what to pray and I know that the Holy Spirit translates my unspeakable/unknowable passions to my Father; I also know that I have used this verse to excuse myself from baring my soul to my Father because I was ashamed to hear spoken out loud what He was exposing in my heart. It is a daunting thing to speak words I hope are truthful in the presence of the One who is absolute truth; I cannot hedge on my sins, I cannot claim as need something that is borne of want, I cannot gloss over pride or ambition, I cannot hide my disgruntlement with God failing to intervene in my circumstances in the fashion and time frame that I had been expecting. Yep, it's much easier to just focus on speaking words on behalf of other people; intercessory prayer is not nearly so personal as speaking to God about my own heart!!

So there's a thing I do when I'm finding it difficult to form my own words of prayer: I borrow words from other people. Like Jesus. The prayer Jesus taught is often a gateway into deeper, personal conversation with my Father. Here are a couple of other prayers I use in my personal conversations with God when I find myself clinging to the silence even as God is inviting me into dialogue:

*"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Father, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; not so much to be understood as to understand; not so much to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we awake to eternal life." Francis of Assisi*

*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever and ever in the next." Reinhold Neibuhr*

I hope you are learning that the realization of Matthew 6:25-34, and every other biblical truth, is first nurtured in your conversations with your Father. Pray on...and use words, too! Cya in Sunday School and Worship, PK.