

## 5 Step Prayers: Pray Without Ceasing

February 22, 2015

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

I was given a wonderful story about praying without ceasing. The title is called Messy Spirituality by Michael Yaconelli. “This may sound shocking to some, but spirituality is a home for those who don’t have life figured out, who don’t know the Bible as well as they could, and who don’t have their spiritual lives all together – the rest of us who thought there wasn’t a “rest of us,” Christians who are trying to follow Jesus the best we can.

A couple of years ago, my wife and I sat across the table from a woman we highly respect, a deeply spiritual lady who had profoundly impacted our lives. This woman spent most of her life resisting the noise and activity of the world to seek God in silence and solitude. She had spent hundreds of weeks in silent retreat. This was a woman so saturated with her faith; you could almost smell God when she came into the room.

We were talking about prayer. “It’s embarrassing to be sitting with you,” I blurted. “You spend days, weeks, even months in prayer. I’m lucky if I spend ten minutes. Compared to you, I am not very spiritual I’m afraid.”

Her eyes, flashing with anger, caught mine, and she fired back, “Oh, Mike, knock it off. First of all, you don’t spend every day with me. Secondly, I battle depression daily, and it had won during several periods of my life. I never told you about it. I don’t have a family; I like to be alone and silent. Trust me; I am just as “unspiritual” as you are.” Then she said gently, “you think about God all the time, right?”

“Well, sort of” I said.

“Thinking about God is being with God. Being with God is spirituality. Thinking about God is praying. So shut up with this guilt stuff; you have been praying most of your life! You are a spiritual person!”

What? I’ve been praying most of my life? What was she talking about? It never occurred to me that Paul’s “pray without ceasing” might actually be possible. It never occurred to me that praying could include thinking, that praying could be done with my eyes open, that praying could be done standing, sitting, driving, dancing, skiing, lying down, jogging, working... How could anyone accuse me of praying all the time when I didn’t pray all the time... unless my friend was right, unless I was praying without ceasing?

How could anyone accuse me of being spiritual unless spirituality comes in unlimited shapes and sizes, unless spirituality looks like whatever you and I look like when we’re thinking about Jesus, when we are trying to find Jesus, when we are trying to figure out what real Christianity looks like in the real world?

Spirituality looks like whatever you look like when we are thinking about Jesus, when we are trying to find Jesus, when we are trying to figure out what real Christianity looks like in the real world.

So I ask you... are you spiritual?

How often do you pray? When do you pray? What does it look like when you pray? When don't you pray? What would you change about your prayer life if you could? Why can't you?

So what is prayer? I would posit that prayer is trusting in God more than yourself. Prayer is putting worry into words. Prayer is a tear sent heavenwards.

This Lent we are following the theme of prayer. So through the Sunday services or Wednesday classes (7p.m.), we will learn new ways and reasons to pray. On this Lenten journey you are encouraged to pray. One way we will be doing this is through the symbolism of rocks.

Every time you come into the church building, you are encouraged to say a pray. This can be done by going up to the wooden cross and placing a rock at its base. There will be a basket of rocks next to the cross, or you may bring your own from home. The symbol of the rock is important for many reasons. First, rocks are prevalent. This reminds us to pray often. Second, they are firm and concrete. That shows the importance of the substance of our prayers. Third, we put our rocks (prayers) at the true Rock- Our Rock and Our Redeemer. Forth, rocks can be heavy. So as you place your rock, your prayer, at the foot of the cross, think of that weight being lightened from your life, as you give that prayer/concern to God.

Finally, I will leave you with these thoughts. A wise woman once told me: Prayer is effective not because we are good at it, rather, prayer is effective because God is good at the love. AND Prayer is a mystery. You don't always get what you want, but if you pray it changes you. If you don't pray – it also changes you.

So this week I challenge you: Pray without ceasing! Realize that you pray more often than you ever thought possible! Catch the time when you are praying – when you are singing, thinking about God, or even worrying. Pray without ceasing!