

Loving God With All Your Heart

Becoming Those After God's Own Heart

I. Uniting With God's Heart

1. As we begin living a life of beholding God, we quickly encounter the truth that stands at the center of loving God: God has a heart. He is filled with thoughts, emotions, dreams, desires and longings, He is an all-consuming fire of passion and compassion. God *is* love.
2. God's glory is His nature – His holy heart and the way that He loves.
Exodus 33:18 And he [Moses] said, "Please, show me Your glory." *34:5* Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. *6* And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, *7* keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty..."
3. Loving God is about a lifelong fascination with and pursuit of that heart. God created humanity for the glory of encountering and knowing the endless well of love in His heart – the depths of passion and compassion that burn in the heart of God.
Jeremiah 9:23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; *24* But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.
4. Humanity is unique in all creation in the place that we are called to. God has designed us for friendship and intimacy, not just worship and obedience. More than see God and adore Him, more than hear His commands and obey Him, we are called to know His heart and to be united to Him in it. To have the love that is in Him be in us.
John 17:26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.
5. God's dream and destiny for humanity is to raise up a bride who is one with Him. A bride who is filled with the very same heart that was in Christ, who has encountered His heart, fallen in love with it, agreed with it and joined herself to it.
John 17:20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; *21* that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. *22* And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: *23* I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.
6. It's the presence of that supernatural love being birthed inside human beings that will bring the witness of God's love to all the ends of the earth, and that will overcome the power of the accuser once and for all.
Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. *11* And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

7. In the end, there will be a people who have met Love and are filled with Him and who carry Him wherever they go – a people who are persuaded of the love of God and compelled by it who will turn the world upside-down.

Romans 8:37 *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Corinthians 5:14 *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

Titus 2:14 *who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*

II. Beholding and Becoming

1. God's plan for this oneness is the process of beholding and becoming. As God reveals more and more of the glory of His heart, our hearts come more and more open to being filled with that same love.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Ephesians 3:17 *...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

2. There is a process to this that Jesus refers to as abiding in Him and in His words that we must embrace if we are to see fruit come from the words of God deposited into our life. Every word heard is an **inspiration**, but it must be pursued until we receive **revelation**, and carried in prayer until we see **transformation** in our heart, unto this word gaining full **expression** in our lives.

John 15:7 *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

3. Jesus pictures this process in the parable of the sower. God sows seed (truth) generously, but depending upon the condition of the soil (our heart), it may or may not bear fruit. Jesus points out three specific ways in which the power of the Word can be lost.

Matthew 13:18 *Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

4. The first is perhaps the most common: the word is heard but not received into our spirit. It only lands on the surface and does not become implanted, leaving it vulnerable to being lost at the first distraction.

5. **Inspiration** comes from a wide variety of sources: hearing teaching, reading books, seeing godly examples, seeing ungodly examples, seeing our own darkness, God highlighting Scriptures, God speaking something directly to our hearts, etc.
6. To receive **revelation** we must take the word we've heard from the Lord and pursue it unto true understanding. God deliberately saves this for those who come to Him.
Mark 4:10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 11 And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'"... 33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. 34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.
7. The second speaks of soil that has actually been cultivated and the word finds entrance, but deep down there is resistance – strongholds in our hearts that disagree with what God has to say. If we fail to break up and remove those strongholds, the word flourishes for a season, but eventually a trial comes and the stronghold causes the word to lack the strength to survive the testing.
8. To see **transformation** take place in our hearts, we must respond to the words God has given us and fight the good fight according to them – taking captive our thoughts and coming into agreement with the thoughts of God.
2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ
9. The final warning is that even the implanted word can be choked out above the surface when it is not allowed to grow and bear fruit but is instead forced to compete against other pursuits.
10. God's love within us comes to full **expression** as we sow our strength into what the love of God within us motivates us toward, and not into the lusts of the flesh.
Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
11. Paul at the end of his letter to the Philippians on the pursuit of fullness – a love that abounds still more and more – calls them to three responses: meditation, prayer and practice.
Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

III. The Need for a Transformed Heart

1. The effect of sin and living in a fallen world is that our hearts are filled with stony places – deep down disagreements with the truth of God's word. Those hindrances must be broken up through persistently bringing our hearts before the Lord in agreement with His words if those words are to get rooted within us and bear fruit.
2. Jesus came demonstrating the heart of God, and calling people to repentance. It is the continuous message, both of His life and His teachings, especially the Sermon on the Mount – you need a transformed heart.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ... 23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

3. Jesus came to crush a false hope and to give a new and better one. He came to expose the emptiness of outward 'good behavior' and call people to a real inward transformation.
Isaiah 29:13 Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, 14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.”

4. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for using outward 'good behavior' as a cover when in their hearts they had never developed faith or learned to love justice and mercy.
Matthew 23:23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.”

5. Jesus came to show us what light really looks like so we could see the darkness of our own hearts and get desperate to be transformed. The one who comes into the light and sees his lack is better off than those who think they can live righteous without encountering God on the inside.
John 9:39 And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”

6. Jesus came to provoke in us a longing for radical transformation. It is the inevitable result of beholding Jesus *if* we understand the hope of His calling and what's available to us. We will see in Him something that we want, and long for it.

7. That's the context of the Sermon on the Mount. The people are beholding in Jesus what it looks like to be united with the heart of God. They see in Him the joy and peace and genuine happiness that comes in that place, and they want to know how to get it. So Jesus opens His mouth and teaches them saying “Blessed...”.

Psalms 45:7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

8. Jesus begins dealing, then, with the issues of the heart. The desires and posture of our heart (*Matthew 5:3-10*), the spirit of the law (*5:17-48*) going beyond behaviors to thoughts and motives, the attitude we're to have toward spiritual disciplines (*6:1-23*), and the central competition over the dream and desire of our heart (*6:24-33*).
9. God wants to confront us with His ways and thoughts that are so much higher than ours. *Isaiah 55:8* "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."
10. His desire is not that we would despair or even that we would only worship Him knowing our heart does not love half so well. It is to provoke us to seek the righteousness of God and the promise of the New Covenant – that we would be given a new heart. *Ezekiel 36:26* I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. *Matthew 5:6* Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.
11. The heart that has seen Jesus and longs to be with Him is a heart into which God can pour the grace and power of the New Covenant. *Matthew 9:15* And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

IV. Asking, Seeking and Knocking

1. Jesus leaves us with this great hope: God is a good Father who loves to give good gifts to His children. He does not hold out the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount as a standard to which we will never attain, but as a promise of where He wants to take us. We are to see it and desire it, then ask, seek and knock for it. *Matthew 7:7* Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!
2. Paul comes to the same conclusion at the end of his letter to the Philippians exhorting them to fullness. He calls them to desire to have in them the same heart that's in Christ, to consider all else rubbish compared to knowing Christ Jesus, and to press on to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of them. And to make *those* requests known to God. *Philippians 4:6* Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

3. Our response to seeing the heart of Christ must be a life of prayer, knowing that our inheritance is to be joined to Him, and His is to be joined to us.
***Ephesians 1:18** the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe*
***Romans 8:16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together... 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*
***Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*
4. Prayer (supplication and intercession – asking, seeking and knocking) is the inevitable result of seeing, if we have a revelation of our place in God's creation. God made us as the one creature with the ability to choose Him, and He's been zealously pursuing our choices ever since. We are the one creature created with the ability to love God as He loves.
***John 4:23** But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit [pneuma - possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting], and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*
5. To choose Him means giving our all in a pursuit of obedience and service, but it must also mean a diligence in pursuing the fullness of our inheritance in prayer. A life of prayer is a confession that we are not capable in ourselves of giving Jesus the kind of love that He is due. To give Him our best would fall far short of His worth. Our only hope is to give Him His best.
6. God gave man dominion over the earth as a setting for us to choose love. He put power in our free will because He's looking for voluntary love. Just as Adam's choice to disagree with God's desire for him brought death and destruction, our every choice to agree brings life and power.
***Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion... over all the earth..." 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*
7. The Father has promised the Son an army of those who will see Him, determine that He is worthy, and out of love voluntarily enlist in the fight to see Jesus receive the reward of His suffering in us and in the nations of the earth.
***Psalms 110:1** The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." 2 The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." 3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.*

8. It's a battle fought within our hearts as we take captive our thoughts and desires to the declaration that "I am His and He is mine," and join Him in insisting that everything that hinders love must go.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*
- Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...*
9. A life of prayer is about God getting our attention, not about us getting His. It is the vehicle through which God arrests our hearts for an agenda greater than ourselves, and through which we engage in partnership with Him in the conquest of our hearts. Through a life of prayer, we engage in the war taking place on the inside and fight for God's conquest of our hearts.
- Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ... 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*
10. As we wrestle on the inside to conform our heart to His love and His desires, God is able to release greater grace and power in us and through us. Through the place of prayer God raises up hearts loyal to His own through which He can release His kingdom.
- 2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*

Loving God With All Your Heart

Keeping the Fire - A Life of Prayer

I. The Fire Shall Never Go Out

1. A life of prayer is the means by which God sustains the fire on the altar until the sacrifice of our heart is consumed. God works in partnership with His people – He sends the fire, but it's up to the priests to keep it going.

Leviticus 6:13 A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.

Leviticus 9:23 ...Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, 24 and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar...

2. A consistent life of prayer is essential to a consistently burning heart. God is faithful to send fire – He will speak words, touch our hearts, and stir things in our spirit – but He's looking to us to faithfully carry those things that He has deposited.
3. Jesus exhorts them just after the parable of the sower – be careful how you hear. God is deeply interested in what we do with the revelation that we receive. Those who treasure what God has spoken and carry it in a life of prayer and obedience will hear more.
Luke 8:18 Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.
4. Without a life of prayer, we are destined to forever be trying to relight the fire that once burned inside rather than to maintain the fire that is now burning inside. It takes way more energy and effort to keep lighting new fires than it does to keep the first one burning, and it leaves us constantly fluctuating between hot and cold, fiery and dull, rather than a consistently burning heart.
5. In a very practical sense, more regular prayer times are therefore much more important than more lengthy prayer times. Ten minutes a day slipped in during commutes and break times is far more effective than a one-hour prayer meeting after a prayerless week.
1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

II. Seeing and Responding

1. A life of prayer is about responding toward God to what we're seeing. The things that fill our prayer times come from what we've encountered both in life and in the Scriptures. Our prayer list should include both supplication (prayer for ourselves) and intercession (prayer for others), and it should consist of long-term prayer focuses, current prayer focuses and spontaneous prayers as we encounter things.
2. My long-term prayer list consists of:
 1. An ongoing reach for a Biblical expression of fullness (Prayers for Fullness handout from Session 4) built around the Apostolic Prayers recorded in the New Testament.
 2. Prayers specific to my calling and my vision for my life gathered from things the Lord has highlighted to me and prophetic words spoken over me through the years.
 3. Intercessory burdens that the Lord has put on my heart particularly strong that I want to carry well over the years.

3. My current prayer list changes on an on-going basis and consists of:
 1. What the Lord is currently highlighting to me in my own life.
 2. Current needs in my life: upcoming events, decisions, opportunities, etc
 3. What the Lord is currently highlighting in prayer for the Church and the nation.
 4. Needs of others that I'm aware of and praying for.

4. The third part of a life of prayer is the ongoing response to life in prayer. We want to develop the habit of watching and praying (**Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33; Ephesians 6:18**) – living with our eyes open and responding in prayer.
 1. Watch your own heart. Never let a temptation or stumble go by without using it to search out what's out of alignment in your heart (**Psalms 139:23-24**) and asking the Lord to change it. Never let a right response go by without thanking God for what He's doing in your heart.
 2. Watch (with your spiritual eyes) those you're interacting with. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers (**Ephesians 6:12**). We become far less offendable and far less offensive when we respond in the realm of prayer, praying for eyes to be opened and hearts to be set free rather than defending ourselves in the natural realm.
 3. Watch current events. We should get our perspective on the news from the Word and the Spirit, and respond to what's happening in the news in prayer.
 4. Watch for needs around you. Jesus experienced so much of the kingdom breaking in because He saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion (**Matthew 9:36**). We need to get our eyes open and our hearts responding to the great need (both physical and spiritual) around us.

III. Perspective In Prayer

When Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray it wasn't because prayer was unheard of, it was because Jesus prayed so very differently than anyone they had ever heard, and His prayer life had power on it. He set out for them a very different perspective on prayer than what had been known previously. His teaching on prayer serves as a guide to how we pray – we want to pray in a way that honors and keeps alive in our hearts what Jesus says prayer is all about.

1. Relationship: “Our Father” The Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of intercession (**Romans 8:15-17, 26-32**). We pray with confidence as beloved children of God and heirs of God, knowing our Father loves to give good gifts (**Matthew 7:7-11**).
Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs...

2. Access: “in heaven” We have access with confidence (**Ephesians 3:12**) to the throne of heaven (**Hebrews 4:16**) where Christ stands interceding for us (**Romans 8:34**) and where we too are seated in Him (**Ephesians 2:6**). Every time we pray we step into the eternal prayer and worship around God's throne in heaven (**Revelation 4**).
Ephesians 2:6 ...made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

3. God's worth: “hallowed be Your name” God doesn't answer prayer because we're worthy, but because He's worthy. He is glorified by our coming into fullness, by the lost coming into salvation, by His power being released, by His mercy being displayed.
John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You...

4. Fullness: “Your kingdom come” Prayer is about getting a prophetic vision of fullness. God poured out His Spirit on all flesh that we might prophesy (*Acts 2:17-21*). Prayer is about speaking life to the dry bones (*Ezekiel 37:1-14*) and calling into being what is not (*Romans 4:17*). He wants to catch us up out of seeing only what is into seeing what could be, should be and will be.
Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ
Revelation 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” ... 6 ... “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.”
5. God's desires: “Your will be done” Prayer is not about persuading God to do things He doesn't want to, but about responding to God's desire (*John 17:20-26*) by partnering with God to release His will. We pray knowing that He does these things because He delights in them (*Jeremiah 9:23-24*) and so when we pray according to His will we have confidence He will answer (*1 John 5:14-15*).
1 Timothy 2:1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men... 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
6. Standing in the gap: “on earth as in heaven” In intercession we stand in the gap between the mercy God is willing to give and what man has been willing to receive (*Isaiah 30:18-19*), and between the glory that God is worthy to receive and what man is actually giving (*Malachi 1:6,11*). We stand in the gap between things as they rightly should be in heaven, and things as they are on earth.
Ezekiel 22:30 So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land...
7. God's provision: “Give us this day our daily bread” God does not give a call without giving provision. He will provide what is needed on the journey – the knowledge, the words, the gifts – according to His riches of His glory (*Ephesians 3:16*) which He has given us. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (*Ephesians 1:3*).
1 Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift..
8. God's mercy: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” Prayer is a mercy ministry. It's never about condemnation or frustration with where we are, but rather about God's delight to show us mercy in our weakness (*Micah 7:18*) as He teaches us how to walk (*Hosea 11:3*) and leads us into freedom and the promised land.
James 2:13 ...Mercy triumphs over judgment.
9. God's guidance: “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil” We pray with confidence because we have a great High Priest who was tempted in every way as we are and who fully understands us (*Hebrews 4:15-16*). Therefore we can call upon Him to make a way out (*1 Corinthians 10:13*), trusting Him to shepherd our souls (*Hebrews 13:20-21*).
Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

10. God's power: "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" Prayer is about shifting our trust from us and our strength to God's exceeding great power on behalf of those who believe (*Ephesians 1:19*).

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

IV. Prayer and the Word

Because prayer is about responding to what we're seeing, we especially want our life of prayer to be grounded in the Word and our life in the Word to be grounded in prayer. There are several practical disciplines that help accomplish that:

1. Pray-reading the Scriptures

1. As we're reading God's Word we should always be responding to what we read, not just taking in information.
2. The three basic ways we respond are in worship, obedience and prayer.
 1. We praise God for the truth a verse reveals (whether about Him or His ways or His promises).
 2. We commit to responding to that truth in the way that we live (and ask Him what that looks like).
 3. We ask Him for greater revelation, and for grace to change our thoughts, ways and heart to come into agreement with that truth.
3. This simple practice of responding to the Word keeps it from becoming just a mental exercise and engages our heart and our life with what we're encountering in the the Word.

2. Praying Scriptural prayers

1. Using Scripture as our guide when praying is the best way to keep our prayers in line with the will of God where we have confidence that we will be heard (*1 John 5:14-15*).
2. Scripture gives us the ability to pray prophetically rather than critically – seeing what God wants to do rather than simply pointing out what's going wrong. Prophetic prayer is where the power is.
3. Bringing the perspective of Scripture to the things we're praying for keeps us engaged with the real spiritual issues we're wrestling against (*Ephesians 6:12*) rather than the visible issues of flesh and blood.
4. The easiest place to begin are the prayers recorded in Scripture. These are God-breathed, Spirit-inspired prayers that God chose to record for all the ages as a witness of things that are on His heart that He longs to do. (See Apostolic Prayers handout)
5. The idea behind praying Scripture is to take these verses, meditate on them and make them a part of our own language and desires, and then pray them to God from our own hearts in our own way.

3. Meditating on Scripture through prayer and worship

1. One of the best means of diving deep into a particular passage and getting it alive in our spirit is to sing it and pray it.

2. There are many benefits to actually opening our mouths and engaging with a passage:
 1. Actually opening our mouth and responding to the Word takes us out of the realm of reading and into the realm of **encounter**. We want an actual conversation with the Spirit, not just a Bible study.
Ephesians 5:18 *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*
 2. Singing the Word engages our **emotions** and not just our thoughts. Music and expressive language has the ability to engage our hearts that simply reading the text does not.
 3. The Word gets into us deeper as we focus and take the time to search for language. Rather than just running through our mind, it comes to **inhabit** our hearts. When we're praying and singing we are naturally more focused, and the *phrases* that come out will stick with us far more easily than *concepts* will.
Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*
 4. Praying and singing the Word lets us immediately give **expression** to what the Spirit is speaking to our hearts. Our hearts were designed to flow (*John 7:37-38*), and they grow far more naturally when there is both an intake and an outlet.
Luke 6:45 *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*
3. The process is very simple:
 1. Read it – Pick a passage about a truth you want deeper revelation on and read through it. This method of meditation is aimed not at stories, but at truths. It works best with short passages, often just a single verse, that contain deep truths particularly about the big questions: What is God like? How does He feel about us? What does He want for us?
 2. Write it – write out the passage at the top of the page. This forces us to slow down and actually catch the language used and not just the truth stated.
 3. Sing it – as we begin to sing the Word we're forced to begin coming up with our own language. That search for expression makes us dive deep into what it actually means, and what it actually means to us. The goal is to find language that makes the passage come alive to *you*.
 - Most people are not comfortable singing acapella (except in the shower or in the car, which are both great places to do this) so find an instrumental CD or sing along to the webstream from the International House of Prayer (ihop.org).
 - This takes some patience to develop – it's very unnatural at first, but you learn to love it and it becomes a natural habit.
 - Use the language of the verse as well as language from other Scriptures that come to mind on that topic and the thoughts of your own heart.
 - Sing prayers to God as well as words from God spoken to you, rather than singing only truths about God.
 - Work through the passage phrase by phrase and thought by thought.
 - As you're singing, listen (with your spirit) for the 'Amen' of the Spirit in your heart. When a particular thought or phrase quickens your heart, stay with it for awhile.
 4. Say it – now restate the verse using the language developed while singing.
 5. Pray it – respond to it in prayer. Thanking and praising God for this particular truth, asking Him to write it on your heart, and asking Him for grace to live accordingly.