

A People Connected with God's Heart

Part 2 - The Call to a Life of Prayer

I. Review: The Need for Connecting with the Heart of God

1. It is the deepest desire of God's heart that we would be knit to His heart – joined with Him even as God is joined with Himself in perfect unity of heart within the Trinity (**John 17:20-26**).
2. It is the only way to fulfill the call of God in our lives. Our first call is always to follow – to have our hearts transformed so that we can know His will (**Matthew 4:19, Romans 12:1-2**).
3. God is looking for transformed vessels that can rightly steward His heart (**2 Chronicles 16:9, Matthew 9:17**).
4. God is interested in changing our desires first, and *then* satisfying our desires (**Romans 8:5,26-30**).
5. Our power to overcome lies in tapping into the strength of the heart of God (**Romans 8:37-39, Revelation 12:10**).
6. God's greatest glory is His heart – His perfect holy love (**Exodus 33:18->34:5-7**). He has given us the highest glory – to know that heart (**Jeremiah 9:23-24**).

II. Prayer: foolishness to men

Everything about prayer is offensive to the wisdom of men:

1. It's practice: the speaking of requests to an unseen God, who already knows before we ask what we need.
Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.
2. It's power: that God would give such power to men.
James 5:16 ...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.
3. It's premise: prayer can only exist if man is able to relate with God, and if that interaction is somehow important to God. The very existence of prayer is powerful testimony that man was created for relationship with God. The way that God interacts with humanity is part of His glory – what sets Him apart from all other gods of our own imagination.
Isaiah 64:4 For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him.
Psalms 65:1 Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; And to You the vow shall be performed. 2 O You who hear prayer, To You all flesh will come.

III. Prayer: the wisdom of God

1. Prayer exists because God ordained it in His wisdom. It is His perfect plan to satisfy His desire for a people after His own heart.
2. God desires to relate with us in the same perfect love and harmony that He relates with Himself in the Trinity.
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. 24 “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 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.”
3. God, who is entirely self-sufficient, desires. God is love, and love is desire. And God desires love. God in His wisdom knows that what causes us to love Him is getting to know Him at a deeper level. So He created us for a dynamic interaction and partnership with Him.
4. Prayer is based on relationship with God – we can only approach God because He desires us. Prayer is the basis of relationship with God – like any relationship, communication is what drives our relationship with God. Prayer is the nature of our relationship with God. He has invited us into love and into friendship. Into a dynamic partnership and interaction with His heart.

IV. The government of Love

1. What does it look like when Love Himself governs the universe? How does He do it? He does it in partnership through fellowship. God governs through intimacy.
2. God's primary means of government is through intercession. Jesus, the head of God's government, is the great intercessor.
Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
Romans 8:34 It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.
3. Jesus will receive His inheritance by **asking** His Father for it.
Psalm 2:7 “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
John 17:24 “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

4. Intercession is how the Father, the Son and the Spirit governed the universe from the beginning. It is a government of partnership – the Father desires, the Son speaks and the Spirit moves.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the... waters. 3 God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 9 God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together...and it was so... 11 God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass...and it was so... 26 God said, "Let Us make man in Our image..."

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.
5. In the exchange of desire from Father to Son to Spirit, love is manifested and creative power is released.

V. Reigning with God

1. Man was created to enter into that same reality of government through intimacy (**John 17:20-26**).
2. It was God's purpose from the very beginning.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 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."
3. We were uniquely created with everything needed to function as intercessors: the ability to interact with God as those created in His image (**Gen 1:26,27**); authority over the earth (**Gen 1:26,28**); and free will (**Gen 2:16,17**).
 - a. The essential requirements for prayer are a heart, a soul, a mind and strength. Prayer includes the words of our lips, but also the thoughts of our mind, the meditations of our hearts, the decisions of our will and the expenditure of our strength. Our ability to think, feel and then decide how to act is what we share in common with God, and it's what enables prayer.
 - b. God is sovereign, but because He loves voluntary partnership He allows our free will to have consequences. The very fact that our decisions have consequences bears witness to the authority that God has given us. When we use our free will to rebel against God there are negative consequences (the fall). When we voluntarily join our free will in agreement with God's the life and power of the kingdom of God is released.
 - c. God has never once repented for giving man dominion or for giving man a free will. They were part of His 'very good' creation and He will fully redeem them.

4. It is a fundamental part of New Covenant life.

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. 12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. 15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He **dwells with you** and will be in you.

5. It is the center of God's fully restored creation for all of eternity.

Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: “ You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

VI. The power of prayer

1. Because of love, God, by sovereign choice, has chosen to move when we ask. He so loves that exchange of hearts that when we pray, He sees and He rewards.

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... 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!

James 5:16 ...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

2 Chronicles 7:13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, 14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones...4 Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones... 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Luke 18:7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night?... 8I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

2. Because of love, God, by sovereign choice, has chosen NOT to move without us. He will starve us out of prayerlessness if He has to. He will withhold things that He longs to give because His greatest longing is for that partnership through intimacy.

James 4:2 ...you do not have because you do not ask.

Isaiah 30:18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him. 19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you.

Ezekiel 22:29 The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. 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, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. 31 Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,” says the Lord GOD.

VII. The practice of prayer

1. Intercession is practiced in weakness, not strength. If we don't understand the power of the power of prayer we won't embrace a life of intercession because we won't see it as meaningful. But if we don't understand the weakness of the practice of intercession we won't embrace a life of intercession because we won't see it as accessible.
2. Intercession is simply telling God what He tells us to tell Him.
3. Jesus forcefully denies any theology of prayer that makes it complicated or dependent on our prayers as opposed to His goodness (but we still have to ask).
Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.
4. It is deliberately weak to put it within the reach of everyone.
Psalm 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger... 4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? 5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have made him to have dominion...
Matthew 29:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
5. It is deliberately weak to put it out of the reach of any who would try to lay hold of it in their own strength.
1 Corinthians 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

VIII. The premise of prayer

1. At the heart of intercession, when we really grapple with its significance, is the outrageous premise that God desires friendship with weak and broken human beings.
2. The whole of Scripture is a testimony to that reality – a holy, sovereign God moving through fallen, broken vessels. God so yearns for hearts after His own that He will not act apart from finding one.
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.
Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.
Genesis 18:17 And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”... 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.
3. God's deepest desire is to have a people for Himself. A people won in love who love His heart and voluntarily embrace His leadership and His ways.
Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 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.
2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”
1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light
4. It is the great shift between Eden and eternity – the redemption of man's free will. When God comes to dwell among men in paradise once again He will come by invitation this time .
Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”
5. Prayer is the birthplace of that cry in our hearts.
Matthew 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.
6. Prayer is not just about dealing with problems. It's about a heart exchange with the Almighty God. He wants us to pour out our heart to Him, and He wants to reveal His to us.
7. The testimony of the existence of prayer is that God desires friends – a people who are passionate about knowing His heart and responding to it.