

WINDOW TOWARD HEAVEN

Daniel 6:10

(Read Dan. 6:1-10) This, of course, is what led up to the famous story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. But the key is the last part of v.10, "...Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

Daniel is a wonderful example of the practice of prayer. His faith and courage shine bright when his daily habit of praying to God was put to the acid test.

Threatened with his life, he kept his window toward heaven open. Jesus Christ kept His window to heaven open. As often as possible He withdrew for private prayer.

Before appointing apostles who would carry on His work, He sought the will of the Father. On the brink of His crucifixion, prayer sustained Him.

When He prayed others were uppermost in His mind. He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail, that His enemies would be forgiven, and that His disciples would be kept from evil and harm.

The attitude of His prayers was—"Not My will, but yours be done." Prayer was more important to Jesus than teaching and healing. Prayer was more important than rest. Prayer was more important than miracles, and even than preaching.

It's normal to pray somewhat selfishly. But we should also care, about the struggles of others—young people, needs in the nursery, or young adults, or, even, our senior adults.

Keep your window to heaven open—be a Daniel, be a Jesus—and pray. Understand what prayer really is.

1. Prayer is communion.

We can have a conversation—talk and listen—but it isn't always communion, it's just a conversation.

I can call your answering machines—then you call mine. Or, you can text me and I can text you. We exchange information, even personal thoughts, but it isn't the same as communion.

Communion is the wordless communication between a mother and the baby nursing at her breast. It is the close bond between the best of friends. It is a conversation between a man and woman deeply in love.

The people of the Bible prayed about many diverse things because they were in communion with God. They thanked God for their food, for their possessions, for His rulership over the universe, for healing, and even for His concern for every situation they found themselves in.

They asked God for wisdom to face important decisions, for fertility, for forgiveness of sins, for healing of sickness, for the salvation of others, for protection against danger, for forgiveness of people who persecuted them.

They prayed for God's blessings on governmental authorities, for wisdom to choose good church leaders, for boldness to witness, for Jesus' soon return, and much, much more.

They were able to pray this way because of their close communion with God.

Sometimes they didn't know what or how to pray. In that case they depended upon the Holy Spirit to pray for them. Prayer comes from a close relationship between you and God.

2. Prayer is a relationship.

There must first be a relationship before there is communion and a real conversation. You must first belong to God—be a believer in Jesus Christ—this is the starting place.

Your relationship with God begins when you ask Jesus Christ to be your Savior. You must recognize that you are a sinner and lost, and that you need a saving relationship with Jesus Christ?

If you have not yet accepted Jesus Christ, the only prayer God can answer from you is when you pray to receive Christ as your Savior. God is always waiting to hear that prayer.

When you say “yes” to Jesus and ask Him to be your Savior, from that moment on you are God’s special child, and you begin a lifelong relationship with Him. And, you have the absolute, inalienable right to talk with Him.

As you grow in your faith, more and more you are going to come face to face with God. This happens because God’s Spirit lives in you now. His Spirit will draw you to your open window to heaven.

You will begin talking to Him more and more just like Bible people did, about virtually everything in your life because...

3. God answers prayer.

Does God answer all your prayers? Simple answer—YES!—if you belong to Him. If you have a relationship with Him He answers every time. He may say yes, no, or wait.

(1) He often says “no.”

Remember what I told you earlier, that prayer is like a conversation between friends. Truly good friends are honest with you. They will not always give in to you with a yes. Sometimes, many times, they will tell you no, or that they will think about it.

Out of the Bible’s 650 recorded prayers, fully 200 or more were not answered in the way that the person asked. (Herbert Lockyer, *All the Prayers of the Bible*, Zondervan, 1959, publishers forward)

Why would God say “no” to us? Sometimes it’s because He wants to give us something better. Maybe it’s because He knows more than we do. It could be because we ask for the wrong reasons. (Jas. 4:3)

Sometimes He says “no” because He doesn’t always choose to overrule human choice. I have back problems because I didn’t take care of my back when I was younger.

Sometimes we just have to trust God and admit we plain can’t understand why God has chosen to say “no”. If God always stepped in to cancel all bad effects of all our bad choices, people would flock to become Christians.

Just like many flocked to Jesus because of His miracles. But when crunch time came and Jesus was facing the mobs and the cross, they deserted Him

True faith believes God can do whatever we ask, yet trusts and loves Him even when He says “no.”

If you pray because you expect, want, and demand that God answer you with what you want to hear, inevitably you will become angry, and Satan will use that anger against you

(2) Sometimes we drift away from God.

It could be because of sin in our lives. Sometimes it's because as in a relationship between friends there is a danger that you may let the relationship grow cold.

Sometimes you are just forgetful, or get busy and don't pray. Sometimes you are ashamed to talk to God because of your sin.

God doesn't move away from you. He's always there. We are the ones that move away from Him. It is up to us to make our relationship with God hot or cold.

And when it is cold, we are the ones who suffer. Often times what we call praying may be little more than thinking or talking to ourselves. We must come back to God through confession and forgiveness.

Sometimes we drift because we're not in His Word, or neglect the church, or don't listen to Christian friends, or circumstances. Sometimes, even when we know God is speaking to us we don't listen because then we must choose to obey or disobey Him.

You don't like it when God convicts you about your attitude concerning race, or the poor, or the rich or your next door neighbor. He may ask you to get involved in ministry. "Heaven forbid! I thought my job was to be a spectator!"

He may say to you, "Stop complaining about the way someone is dressed, and get to know that person." Or, "Go work with the youth and understand what's happening in their lives."

God answers. Sometimes He says no. We have to trust Him. He knows best. Sometimes He says wait, I have something better. Sometimes He answers with a yes, and you had better be prepared for the blessings.

4. Three good reasons to pray.

(1) Because Jesus and Biblical people did.

Prayer follows the biblical pattern. Jesus did it. Daniel did it. The prophets did it. The disciples did it. If they thought it important, then we ought to follow their example.

(2) To build your relationship with God.

True prayer is sharing a supernatural relationship with God, not only in words but in thoughts and silence. Prayer is the language of the soul with God himself.

It includes adoration, worship, confession, meditation, submission, intercession, thanksgiving, listening and even silence. It is communion with God. And talking to God expresses what's in your soul.

When building a relationship with anybody, you talk. Part of the enjoyment of a relationship is talking. Whether with God, my wife, or with friends, I talk.

A lot of times talk is not intended to convey information. Even when Luaine tells me what I already know, I love to hear her talk. We do lots of things to build our relationship—

We frequent antique shops together, go window shopping at the mall, go out for breakfast sometimes, watch a movie together. But a relationship without talk is impossible for me to imagine.

You see, God already knows everything we know, He already cares about everything we care about; but because we are made in His image, God likes to hear us talk to Him.

(3) Because God wants us to ask Him for things.

God seems to want us to ask Him for things. We may think it's not logical, but I sometimes suspect our relationship with God is not so much about logic as it is about relationship.

We may think He already knows everything anyway, so why talk to Him with our limited knowledge? Because God wants our acknowledgment that He is our heavenly Father, that we trust Him, and that our faith is in Him alone.

Application:

Open up your window to heaven. Talk to God and listen to Him. Let your relationship with Him grow. God sincerely desires a close relationship with you. Your relationship with Him grows as you visit with Him.