

1 Prayer Changes Things

Philippians 4:1-9

2 Scripture

Not that I have already obtained all this [fully knowing Christ], or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

But one thing I do:

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

3 Scripture

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Scripture

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all.

The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

5 Scripture

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Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice.

And the God of peace will be with you.

6 Introduction

In the near future, at the beginning of one of our worship services, Rezia may direct everyone to put on an electronic headband found on the top of one of our tables, or in baskets at the entrance to the conference room.

She then might tell everyone to take a deep breath and during worship, give to God the cares and worries we've brought with us, so that the worship might infuse them with peace, encouragement and inspiration.

7 Introduction

Yes, it sounds very sci-fi, but such technology -- or at least the first generation of it -- exists.

It's called Muse, and it's a brain-sensing headband.

It is designed to elevate your meditation experience by helping you turn down stress and distractions.

8 Introduction

The current version works with a companion app on your smartphone called Calm.

But by the time these devices appear in churches (if, in fact, they do), they conceivably could be all-in-one units.

An iPhone and Headband in one. How cool would that be!

9 Introduction

The headbands have electroencephalography (EEG) sensors that detect and measure your brainwaves and convert them to data charted through the app.

Wearing the headband, you work through a provided exercise meant to calm you down.

10 Introduction

Muse graphs your mental state during the exercise, telling you how long you were . . .

"calm" (that is, your mind was focused on the exercise),

"active" (your mind wandered) or

"neutral" (somewhere between the calm and active states).

11 Introduction

The idea is that by using this feedback, you can train your brain to

extend the calm period,

stay focused on whatever it is you wish to meditate about,

and do so without the intrusion of worry and cares.

12 The Problem with Prayer

It would be a stretch, of course, to say that the apostle Paul had the Muse headband in mind when he wrote to the Philippians and said,

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

But anytime we're talking about private prayer -- the kind Paul was speaking about here -- the matter of a mind distracted by worries or other things is a factor.

In fact, some Christians say that private praying is one of the hardest parts of the Christian life.

13 C. S. Lewis

By any measure, C.S. Lewis was one of the strong voices for Christianity in the 20th century.

Yet in his autobiography, he tells about a struggle with prayer as a young person,

a struggle so filled with distractions that for a while,

it was one of the things that led him away from the faith.

In fact, he said that the technique he was using had rendered his private prayers "a quite intolerable burden."

14 The Lord's Prayer

According to Luke 11, the reason Jesus gave what we now call the Lord's Prayer was because the disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (11:1).

But why did the disciples need such help?

After all, they were all children of the synagogue.

They had grown up going to worship and hearing public prayers.

We have to conclude that the public prayers they had heard were not translating easily into the experience of private prayer.

15 The Lord's Prayer

Jesus' response to them was as follows:

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation."

I don't know if you recognize this but this was only two verses.

16 The Lord's Prayer

The very first point in our prayers is to remember that we are engaging in an audience before a King.

Even though we are part of God's family and He wants us to call Him father, we still need to show honor and use proper protocol.

This is why Jesus uses the phrase, "hallowed be your name," which means to honor God's name and the attributes of His character.

17 The Lord's Prayer

When the Lord appeared out of the cloud and stood before Moses, He said this about His own attributes.

He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD,

the compassionate and gracious God,

slow to anger,

abounding in love and faithfulness,

maintaining love to thousands, and

forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."

18 The Lord's Prayer

When we approach God honoring His name and virtues, we are expressing worship, adoration, praise, and thanksgiving all in one act.

Even though we can through Christ come with confidence to God's throne of mercy and grace (Ephesian 3:12), we still should use wisdom and proper protocol as we approach the King of Glory.

While we are God's children, let us show proper respect and honor His name with praise and thanksgiving.

19 The Lord's Prayer - Daily Bread

The second item in the Lord's Prayer is the request, "Give us each day our daily bread."

To tell you the truth this seems like a very modest request.

However, most people of Jesus' day lived life from day to day, where daily provision was a source of major concern.

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Which is the point in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where he tells people life is more important than worrying about food, drink, or clothing. [See Matthew 6:31]

What was most important, according to Jesus was for us to be about seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness as if we do all these things, it will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)

20 The Lord's Prayer - Conditional Forgiveness

The third item in the Lord's Prayer is the request, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. (Luke 11:4a)"

However, in this request, is the predisposed idea that forgiveness is based upon us forgiving others.

In other words, if we are to enjoy daily fellowship with God, we are going to need to "let go," of grievances, hurt, resentments, and bitterness or God won't forgive us.

In a society today that glories in being offended about everything, it makes you think how any of them will find grace from God concerning such an attitude.

Let us not be like them. If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:15)

21 The Lord's Prayer - Temptation

The fourth item in the Lord's Prayer is the request, "And lead us not into temptation (Luke 11:4a).

Matthew adds the phrase, ". . . but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13)

Jesus knew that we have an enemy and He specifically wants us to pray and ask God for help resisting the devil's sinful traps he puts before us.

Why? Because sin separates us from God and hinders our overall prayers.

For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless. (1 Thessalonians 3:5 NIV)

For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you . . . (1 Thessalonians 3:8-9 NIV)

22 Prayer

Prayer is not suppose to be something that is long drawn out, it is instead to be conversation with the King of Glory, who happens to be our Heavenly Father.

So when we come to him, . . .

acknowledge his position of high honor and praise the attributes of character.

communicate your needs,

ask for forgiveness as we give forgive those who sin against us, and

ask for His help and strength standing firm in the faith.

23 Prayer and Anxiety

If we go back and remember what Paul said to the Philippians, he told them "Do not be anxious about anything."
(Philippians 4:6 NIV)

He encourages them that "in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."
(Philippians 4:6 NIV)

If we do, then something very special—if not magical takes place.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:7)

24 Prayer and Anxiety

In 2008, Psychology Today, published an article, "How Big a Problem Is Anxiety?"

According to the article, 17% of Americans suffer from an anxiety disorders in a given year because of all the stresses of modern life.

Which can also mean that many people are also suffering from physical ailments such as sleeping disorders, hypertension, cardiac disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, respirator illnesses, back problems, asthma, and arthritis.

According to Psychology Today, "no wonder we are all nervous wrecks."

25 Prayer and Anxiety

Nevertheless, when we take the time to come before the Lord of both heaven and earth, using the proper protocol and simply have a conversation with God, something wonderful happens.

He gives us the peace that transcends all understanding where both our hearts (seat of our emotions) and minds (seat of our thoughts) are calmed and put at ease.

If we could bottle this and sell it at the Drug Store, we would be rich!

Why? Because people are seeking this peace.

However, through their unbelief they resort to self-medicating themselves with fleshly and worldly pleasures, which then loads them down with more and more guilt and anxiety.

26 Prayer and Anxiety

So then, why should we spend quality time with the Lord?

The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace. (Psalm 29:11)

I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints . . . (Psalm 85:8)

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

27 Conclusion . . .

So then, do we really need an electronic headband or do we need to spend quality time with the Lord in prayer?

I guarantee that if you are able to set aside special time with the Lord it will be time well spent.

In fact, the reduction of anxiety will keep you from fretting and do things that often make matters worse.

If the world just had this one thing (inner peace), half of the problems in the world would go away.

Yes, prayer changes things and most of all, it changes us, if we take the time to pray.

28 Conclusion . . .

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Romans 15:13)