

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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TALKING TO GOD

Think about how often you personally talk to God. Is it once or twice a day? Once a week? Only when you are worried, or you need something? While we do not have two-way conversations with God, we do have an open line of communication and we do receive answers even if we do not realize it. But should you only talk to God when you are in need?

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. (Jas. 5:13)

It says if you are afflicted, pray. If you are merry (happy), sing a psalm. Communicating with God is not always just praying.

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It is all forms of communication. It is making sure that no matter what is going on in our lives, we know that God is a part of it and that we include Him in our thoughts. Communication is vital to success and having a healthy relationship.

How many times have you been in a situation that could have been improved if there had been better communication? It truly is the best way to keep a relationship alive and thriving. That is what we need in our relationship with God. To continually communicate. There are several examples of Jesus talking to God regularly.

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28)

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. (Mat. 14:23)

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. (Mat. 26:36)

Jesus' disciples realized the importance of prayer. So much so that they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he

from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:1-13)

This was not given as a word for word version of what should be done, but as an example of the way to approach a prayer and what types of things should be included in it. In fact, there are many times that we do not always pray for all that we should but the Spirit helps relay information to God.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Rom. 8:26)

There are other examples in the Bible of people talking with God.

Nehemiah, throughout his book, says short, quick prayers.

Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. (Neh. 4:4-5)

Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I

have done for this people. (Neh. 5:19)

Moses in Exodus, often interceding on behalf of others.

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses...And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. (Exo. 33:9, 11a)

And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance. (Exo. 34:8-9)

Or Daniel, defying an order from the king, openly praying in his house.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid. (Dan. 6:10)

Talking with God can help in many ways. By talking with God, we can gain peace.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Php. 4:6-7)

Prayer and communication are vital to the health of our relationship with God. If we want to have God as a part of our lives, we must make sure that He is included in every way. We should always make sure that we are not only thinking about God, but also talking with Him.

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing in-

stant in prayer; (Rom. 12:12)

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 The. 5:16-18)

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:4)

Let us revisit the opening questions. How often do you talk to God? Is it only when you are worried, or you need something? If the answers are not something that you think would be pleasing to God, try changing the circumstances around them. Prayer is personal, and you are the only one who can fix it.

A. D.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Whose father was prepared to sacrifice him on an altar?
2. How did the angel of the Lord appear to Moses, when he was a shepherd?
3. How did the Philistines discover the answer to Samson's riddle?
4. What form did the Holy Spirit take at the baptism of Jesus?
5. What happens to "*treasure laid up on earth*"?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. In Egypt, what did Joseph accuse his brothers of at their first meeting? BEING SPIES (Gen. 42:9)
2. Under the Mosaic Law, what was the punishment for someone who hit their father? DEATH (Exo. 21:15)
3. Which prophet said, "*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son*"? ISAIAH (Isa. 7:14)
4. Which book of prophecy was the Ethiopian eunuch reading from? ISAIAH (Acts 8:30)
5. What is "*friendship with the world*", according to James? ENMITY WITH GOD (Jas. 4:4)

FRUITS WORTHY OF REPENTANCE

Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (8) Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (9) And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (10) And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? (11) He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. (12) Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? (13) And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. (14) And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. (Luke 3:7-14)

Here John the Baptist is preparing the way for the Lord. He is preaching repentance and is baptizing for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3).

Many came to him; most of them were curious. He knew they needed salvation, but he fussed at this curious group of on-lookers, even called them a “*generation of vipers.*” Who told them to come here? Who told them that this was the place for answer? Their conscience? Their curiosity? Their sincerity?

In verse 8 of our text, they are commanded to bring forth

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fruits worthy of repentance. What exactly does this mean? What are fruits worthy of repentance? Luke 3:8 and its parallel in the gospel of Matthew (3:8) are the only places in the Bible where this phrase is found.

Fruit is what a tree produces. Similarly, fruit is what we produce (Mat. 7:15-20). Fruit could be our actions, our speech, our thoughts, our deeds, our works, etc. Therefore, fruits worthy of repentance refer to what we produce in our lives to show that we have repented of our sins.

John was telling the crowd to show they had repented of their sins by a reformation or change of life, to prove through their works that they had really repented. Just being sorry or regretting about sin does not constitute repentance in the sight of God. Nor does talking about doing it, then not following through with action. Sinners must stop doing the things that displeases God, the things that are wrong and disobedient to God's command, if they are to please Him.

Usually we tend to make excuses for our mistakes or blame someone else. Sometimes we deny our sins. In fact, John knew the Jews would immediately deny any wrongdoing on their part. He knew they would point to their heritage (v. 8). People today are not much different. We try to disclaim any guilt of sin upon ourselves. "Not me! I was raised in the church. My family is upstanding. I am a Christian."

To clarify what he means by "*fruits worthy of repentance*," John uses three different classes of society as examples. Let us note these carefully.

The first group of people found in verses 10 and 11 are well-to-do. They have the basic necessities to survive. In fact, they have enough to supply another family. So what kind of sins would they need to repent of? Not sharing, not helping others/needy, not being humble, not loving their neighbor. Don't we have more than we need? Can't we be more helpful to the poor, the needy?

The second group are business people (v. 12, 13). The publicans (or tax collectors) were known for charging more than

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necessary. Perhaps they needed to repent of being materialistic, being unfair in deals.

The third group are average workers, the military in John's audience (v. 14). They were told not to hurt anyone, not to lie, and not to complain. How often do we do all of these?

Note a few lessons:

1. Everyone needs to come to the Lord for salvation, just as the multitude came to John the Baptist. *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6).
2. We can't rely on family, traditions, opinions, money, positions etc. for our salvation, just as Jews looked to Abraham as their father, their ancestor.
3. We all have a duty/responsibility to repent of our sins and to prove it (to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance). Note that all the people asked, "What shall we do?"
4. Everyone has different things about them to change/repent. We are all different and have different weaknesses. I may have a problem with alcohol whereas you might have a problem with telling the truth. So we should be more understanding of our individual sins.
5. Notice that the three groups of people received different answers to the same question. It depends on who we are, what sins we are guilty of.

No matter which group we are part of, let everyone who claims Jesus as our Savior *"bring forth fruits worthy of repentance"* from our old life.

Adapted from a sermon by RAY MCMANUS
(Deceased)