

## Chapter 7 - Excuses for Not Praying

### I Am Too Busy To Pray

- "We are not living in a contemplative age. When we stop rushing and performing and doing, many of us park ourselves in front of a television, possibly a television attached to a video recorder, and simply absorb what is dished out. The result is that we seldom take time to think, to meditate, to wonder, to analyze; we seldom take time to pray."
- Story of the man running out of gas, getting some aid, and then running out again down the road.
- What is God's perspective on this busyness?
  - Luke 10:38-42
  - 1 Cor. 7:4-5 - Husbands and wives suspend sexual relations with 3 conditions:
    - Mutual consent
    - To devote themselves to prayer
    - It must be temporary and for an agreed upon time
    - **What does this tell us of how highly Paul values prayer?**
- "It matters little whether you are the mother of active children who drain away your energy, important executive in a major multinational corporation, a graduate student cramming for impending comprehensives, a plumber working overtime to put your children through college, or a pastor of a large church putting in 90 hour weeks: at the end of the day, if you are too busy to pray, you are too busy. Cut something out."

### I Feel Too Spiritually Dry to Pray

- Hidden behind this excuse are two problematic presuppositions:
  - The acceptability of my approach to God in prayer ought to be tied to how I feel.  
**What's wrong with this?**
  - My obligation to pray is somehow diminished when I do not feel like praying.
- What is God's perspective on this?
  - Luke 18:1-8 - "The point is not that God is rather like a corrupt judge who responds only to constant badgering. Rather, the argument is a fortiori: if even a corrupt Judge responds to persistence, how much more will the righteous God respond to persistence? After all, the opening verse of the chapter reminds us that, "Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (18:1). Indeed, as far as Jesus is concerned the real question is not whether or not God answers prayer but whether or not we have the faith to persevere."
  - Luke 11:1-10 - The point is that "if even a lazy and inconsiderate neighbor finally does the right thing for no other reason than that he does not want to bring shame

on his name and house, how much more will God answer the prayers of his people? After all, he has his own name to keep up! He has pledged himself in covenant grace to meet the needs of his people, to prove utterly reliable and trustworthy. He cannot be less than trustworthy, or he would bring shame on his own name. Therefore ask, knock, seek.

- In all of these examples, there is an implicit possibility of delay in God's response. He wants us to learn to trust him and persevere in prayer.

#### I Feel No Need to Pray

- Why would anyone say this? Well, no one would come out and say it directly. Typically, we'll affirm the importance of prayer, but in reality it's mainly important for other people - the needy ones. I may not feel such a deep need for prayer in my own life, so I get along without it.
- Carson warns that if self-assured Christians do not learn better ways by listening to the Scripture, God may address them in the terrible language of tragedy. The examples abound of this in Scripture - God reveals himself to the meek and lowly of heart and brings down the proud and self-exalted. The Scriptures are full of examples of this. Take one case in point:
  - Joshua 9:1-15
  - What are some other examples of this? How do we avoid falling into this trap?

#### I Am Too Bitter to Pray

- When might this be an issue?
- When we've suffered under the sins of another, it becomes difficult to pray for that person. The breeding resentment, bitterness, and gossip squeezes out any possibility of real prayer.
- What's God's perspective?
  - Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25
    - Carson writes: "Christians must never approach God as if they enjoy an inside track with the almighty that allows them to experience his blessing but not his discipline. Precisely because we know ourselves to be sinners in need of forgiveness, we recognize that to ask for forgiveness while we withhold it from others is nothing more than cheap religious cant." (120)
  - Eph. 4:31-32 - what right do we have to withhold forgiveness in light of the forgiveness we've received.

#### I Am Too Ashamed to Pray

- What was the first human response to sin? Does this still happen today?
- What's God's perspective?

- Prov. 5:21; Heb 4:13 - we cannot hide from God, and rather than sink away in shame, this knowledge should encourage us to seek him out, the one who already knows and has shown us his grace anyway.

#### **I Am Content with Mediocrity**

- Carson describes this: "Some Christians want enough of Christ to be identified with him but not enough to be seriously inconvenienced; they genuinely cling to basic Christian orthodoxy but do not want to engage in serious Bible study; they value moral probity, especially of the public sort, but do not engage in war against inner corruption; they fret over the quality of the preachers sermon but do not worry much over the quality of their own prayer life. Such Christians are content with mediocrity." (121)
- What is God's perspective?
  - James 4:1-10 - these Christians, while trying to maintain a relationship with God in name, they are really courting a relationship with the world. They are adulterous.
  - He calls us to come clean, repent and humble ourselves before him.

#### **What other excuses do we use for lack of prayer?**