



Prayer

Finding the Heart's True Home

Based on the book

by Richard J. Foster



The ideas and concepts of this presentation are based entirely on the work of Richard J. Foster unless otherwise stated.



A movement in three parts

- Moving Inward: Seeking the Transformation We Need
- Moving Upward: Seeking the Intimacy We Need
- Moving Outward: Seeking the Ministry We Need



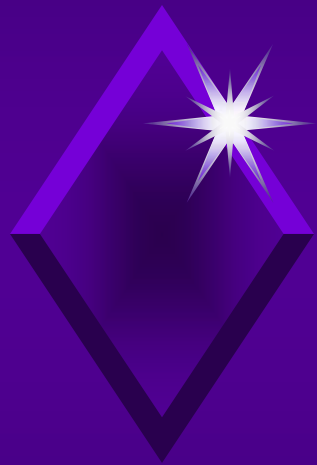
Trinitarian Aspects

- Movement Inward reflects role of God the Son as Savior and Teacher
- Movement Upward reflects role of God the Father, King of the Universe
- Movement Outward reflects role of God the Holy Spirit as the One who empowers and sends us out to evangelize



Moving Inward

Seeking the Transformation We
Need



An Invitation to Prayer

*True, whole prayer is
nothing but love.*

St. Augustine

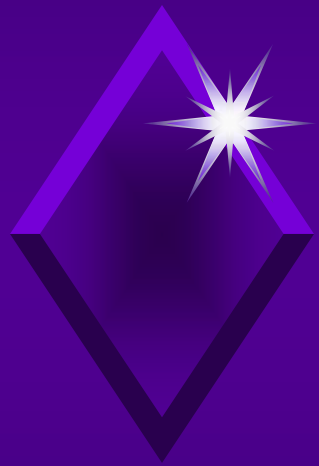


- Praying is like coming home to God
- Prayer is the key
- Jesus Christ is the door
- *Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love.*



Change is an intrinsic part of prayer

- “A disciple once came to Abba Joseph, saying, ‘Father, according as I am able, I keep my little rule , my little fast, and my little prayer. And according as I am able, I strive to cleanse my mind of all evil thoughts and my heart of all evil intents. Now, what more should I do?’ Abba Joseph rose up and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He answered, ‘Why not be totally changed into fire?’”



Simple Prayer

Pray as you can, not as you can't.

Dom Chapman



What Keeps Us from Prayer

- We believe we must reform our lives first
- We believe we must understand the theology of prayer
- We believe that our motives must be pure
- We fear using God as though prayer were magic



- *“The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives – altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. But what I have come to see is that God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture. We do not have to be bright, or pure, or filled with faith, or anything. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by grace, we live by it as well. And we pray by it.”*



- In simple prayer, we are children in the presence of our Father
- Our prayers will be full of pride, conceit, vanity, pretentiousness, haughtiness & egocentricity
- Our prayer will also contain humility, generosity, & unselfishness



- Simple prayer is found throughout the Bible
- “Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child,’ to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors?”

Num. 11:11b-12



- Contrast with Moses in another prayer:
“But now, if you will only forgive their sin – but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written.”

Exodus 32:32



- Ordinary people bring their ordinary concerns before God their Father
- The prayer of beginners
- The prayer of children
- “There is no stage of prayer so sublime that it isn’t necessary to return often to the beginning.” St. Teresa of Avila



“There is a temptation, especially by the ‘sophisticated,’ to despise this most elementary way of praying. They seek to skip over Simple Prayer in the hopes of advancing to more ‘mature’ expressions of prayer. They smile at the egotistical asking, asking, asking of so many. Grandly they speak of avoiding ‘self-centered prayer’ in favor of ‘other-centered prayer.’ What these people fail to see, however, is that Simple Prayer is necessary, even essential, to the spiritual life. The only way we move beyond ‘self-centered prayer’ ... is by going through it, not by making a detour around it.”



- Simple prayer begins where we are
- It is candid
- We are free to complain or argue with God like Jeremiah

“O LORD, you have enticed me and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me.”
Jer. 20:7



- “Lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.” C. S. Lewis
- Our God is an embodied God, born in a stable, crying with his friends, and dying on a cross



Keep in Mind

- Prayer is part of a growing relationship with God
- Even a lack of prayer, coupled with a desire for prayer may be the prayer of desire
- Begin with an amount of time that we can bear
- Bring even our sinful desires into the presence of God



“In the beginning we are indeed the subject and the center of our prayers. But in God’s time and in God’s way a Copernican revolution takes place in our heart. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, there is a shift in our center of gravity. We pass from thinking of God as part of our life to the realization that we are part of his life. Wondrously and mysteriously God moves from the periphery of our prayer experience to the center. A conversion of the heart takes place, a transformation of the spirit. “



Prayer of the Forsaken

*To come to the pleasure you have not you
must go by a way in which you enjoy not.*

St. John of the Cross



- The prayer of Jesus on the cross when he says, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matt. 27:46b
- The prayer to the hidden God, *Deus Absconditus*
- While God is never actually absent, forsaken and hidden reflect our point of view
- Biblically this prayer called a desert experience



Forsakenness is normal

- The prayer of Moses while he works for Jethro and waits in the desert for God to remember his people in Egypt
- The plea of the psalmist
- The prayer of Elijah when he cries out to God that he is the only faithful person in all Israel
- It is Mary as she watches her son die a cruel death



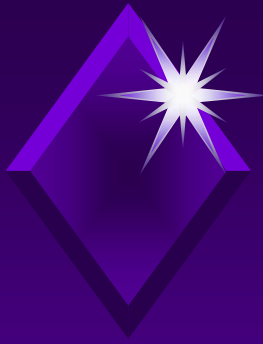
- This is the “dark night of the soul” described by St. John of the Cross
- These feelings of desertion by God are common to all Christians at certain periods in their lives
- These times do not mean that we have sinned in some way, but they may be a time of transformation



- Each person's faith journey is unique
- A wilderness experience may occur at any point in the Christian walk
- Is *not* correlated with maturity or the lack of maturity
- Reflects a relationship that is dynamic and personal



- Not only does God grant us freedom, but God maintains his own freedom
- God is like Aslan; God is good, but not safe



Purification in the Dark Night of the Soul

- We are stripped of our dependence on external results, or success
- Even the regular religious trappings of our lives are seen as limited
- “We become less in control of our destiny and more at the mercy of others.”
- We realize in a new way that God is not at our beck and call



Purification Continued

- We are stripped of interior results
- All of our beliefs about God may threaten to crumble
- Just what kind of God is God?
- Our personal spiritual identity appears full of hidden agendas and impure motives



“Through all of this, paradoxically, God is purifying our faith by threatening to destroy it. We are led to a profound and holy distrust of all superficial drives and human strivings. We know more deeply than ever before our capacity for infinite self-deception. Slowly we are being taken off of vain securities and false allegiances. Our trust in all exterior and interior results is being shattered so that we can learn faith in God alone. Through our barrenness of soul God is producing detachment, humility, patience, perseverance.”



What to Do

- The time to pray the Lament Psalms
 - Psalms 12, 44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 108, 123, 129, & 137
- All our bitterness, abandonment, & anger can be brought into God's presence
- The time to continue to ask and to seek
- The time to love God for himself and not only for God's blessings



Be Patient

- Wait for God
- Pray with Bernard of Clairvaux, “O my God, deep calls unto deep (Ps. 42:7). The deep of my profound misery calls to the deep of Your infinite mercy.”



The Prayer of Examen

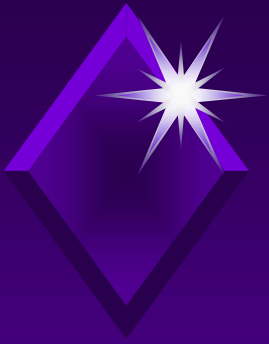
*Prayer is the inner bath of love
into which the soul plunges itself.*

St. John Vianney



Meaning of Examen

- Same root as examination
- Comes from Latin word for the tongue on a balance
- Denotes accurate measurement



Biblical Roots

- Deep, searching assessment by God familiar to the Psalmist and to Paul, the Apostle
- *O LORD, you have searched me and known me. Psalm 139:1*
- *For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. I Cor. 2:10b*



Types of Examen

- Examen of consciousness
 - God's presence to us
 - Our response to God
- Examen of conscience
 - Reveals areas of our life that need healing, cleansing, purifying



Examen of Consciousness

- *“God wants us to be present where we are. He invites us to see and to hear what is around us and, through it all, to discern the footprints of the Holy.”*
- We remember how God has been present to us in this day



Examen of Conscience

- An invitation to God to search and test us
- With God as our “examiner”
 - Correct assessment of our state
 - Merciful support for our weaknesses
 - An increased sensitivity to the ways of God



“Along this path of prayer, self knowledge and the thought of one’s sins is the bread with which all palates must be fed no matter how delicate they may be; they cannot be sustained without this bread.”

Teresa of Avila



“Paul, . . . , urges us to offer our bodies – our very selves – as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). This offering cannot be made in some abstract way with pious words or religious acts. No, it must be rooted in the acceptance of the concrete details of who we are and the way we live. We must come to accept and even honor our creatureliness. The offering of ourselves can only be the offering of our lived experience, because this alone is who we are. And who we are – not who we want to be – is the only offering we have to give. We give God therefore not just our strengths but also our weaknesses, not just our giftedness but also our brokenness. Our duplicity, our lust, our narcissism, our sloth – all are laid on the altar of sacrifice.”



- Practicing the examen of consciousness will lead us into the examen of conscience
- This journey inward does not stop within ourselves, but drives us through ourselves to find God



How To

- Keeping a spiritual journal
- Meditating on the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer



The Prayer of Tears

*Tears are like blood in the
wounds of the soul.*

Gregory of Nyssa



Penthos

- A broken and contrite heart
- Inward godly sorrow
- Holy sorrow
- The prayer of tears
- Keenly felt sorrow over our sin and distance from God



The Experience of Our Forebears

- Early American missionary David Brainard wrote of his tearful repentance in his journal
- *O that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people! Jer. 9:1*
- *I am weary with my moaning every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. Psalm 6:6*



An Experience of Joy

- In earlier times, those with dry eyes and cold hearts were pitied
- Contrition and repentance is accompanied by deep joy in our relationship to God



What the Prayer of Tears Does

- God wishes to touch all aspects of our lives, including our emotions
- Tears are an indication that God has reached us emotionally



What the Prayer of Tears Does

- Because we are sinners and separated from God (original sin), the prayer of tears aids us in acknowledging this
- Martin Luther recommended living a life of daily repentance
- Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes this type of repentance possible



Elements of Contrition

- Seek repentance as a gift from God
 - Jesus prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*
- Confess
- Receive God's gift of forgiveness
- Obey
 - Obedience not just avoidance of wrongdoing, but the pursuit of virtue



“The fire of sin is intense, but it is put out by a small amount of tears, for the tear puts out a furnace of faults, and cleans our wounds of sin.”

John Chrysostom



The Prayer of Relinquishment

The Spirit teaches me to yield my will entirely to the will of the Father. He opens my ear to wait in great gentleness and teachableness of soul for what the Father has day by day to speak and to teach. He discovers to me how union with God's will is union with God Himself; how entire surrender to God's will is the Father's claim, the Son's example, and the true blessedness of the soul.

Andrew Murray



- At some point Christians move from a childish, demanding prayer to relinquishment
- Like falling into the arms of Jesus in total trust



The School of Gethsemane

- Jesus' prayer in the garden reflects both his desire that the cup pass and relinquishment that God's will be done
Luke 22:39-46
- In the way of relinquishment, "My will be done" is subsumed by "not my will"



The Process of Relinquishment

- Struggle is an intimate part of relinquishment
 - Abraham relinquished Isaac and with him the Promise itself
 - Paul relinquished his desire for greater health
- Relinquishment is not resignation



The Process of Relinquishment

- Sometimes what we relinquish may be returned to us
- Sometimes what we relinquish needs to die so that God can accomplish his purposes through us
- *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
Gal. 2:19b-20



The Process of Relinquishment

- *“God creates everything out of nothing – and everything which God is to use he first reduces to nothing.” Kierkegaard*
- *“Crucifixion always has resurrection tied to it. God is not destroying the will but transforming it so that over a process of time and experience we can freely will what God wills.”*



Practicing the Prayer of Relinquishment

- Begin with the **prayer of kenosis** (self-emptying) in Philippians 2:5-11
- Practice the prayer of surrender asking Jesus to interpret “not my will” for your life



Practicing the Prayer of Relinquishment

- Practice the prayer of abandonment – into God's hands
- Practice the prayer of release, placing all that you hold dear into the Father's care
- Practice the prayer of resurrection, asking God to restore whatever would advance the kingdom of God