

## **Confidence: What does God think of us coming in prayer**

When I am in prayer, sometimes at the beginning and sometimes during prayer, I often check my heart to see where my confidence is at. I ask myself, Do I think God wants me to be here? Are these prayers doing anything? Is this time well spent? Usually I can sense a niggles in my heart that tells me I've forgotten what I'm doing and lost confidence in spending time with God in prayer. So it's time to preach to myself.

I remind myself that God wants me to pray (Matt 6:5,6,&9). He wants me to be confident that he is ready to listen (Matt 6:8), and that he treats my requests better than any human Father could (Matt 7:9-11). In fact, the writer of Hebrews specifically points out that Jesus has given us incomparable confidence to come to God for help (4:16, 10:19).

I find that my level of confidence in prayer will either give me energy if it is high and based on truth, or be my enemy if it is low because I have forgotten the truth.

Having confidence in God does not necessarily mean you feel happy. Your situation may actually be horrible. But confidence means coming to God with your situation, like King David does in Psalm 56.

- 1 *Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me;  
all day long an attacker oppresses me;*
- 2 *my enemies trample on me all day long,  
for many attack me proudly.*
- 3 *When I am afraid,  
I put my trust in you.*
- 4 *In God, whose word I praise,  
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.  
What can flesh do to me?*

So how is your confidence doing? Are you discouraged in prayer? If so, time to preach to yourself. Tell yourself the truth until your heart responds to it with increased confidence in your Heavenly Father.

## **Commitment: What does God want for us in prayer**

The Apostle Paul did a lot of prayer and encouraged his churches to pray a lot. And when he did, he usually told them not to quit. He says, be constant in prayer (Romans 12:12); keep alert with all perseverance, making supplications (prayers) for all the saints (Ephesians 6:18); continue steadfastly in prayer (Colossians 4:2). Jesus encouraged his disciples in the same way. Luke says Jesus "told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1).

So the message is clear from the Bible: God likes prayer; he likes spending time with you in prayer; he likes answering prayer; and he wants us to do a lot of it. But prayer isn't easy. We often give up. That's why we need so much encouragement. But the truth is that God is listening; God is there; and God will give grace for us to keep going if we ask.

So how is our commitment doing? Are we keeping our plan for prayer time? Do we have one? Did we start off strong and are tapering off?

## **Combat: What does God think happens in prayer**

It's easy to forget about things we can't see. So it's easy to think that prayer is just about me talking to God. That's what I can see: me, in a room, talking out loud. But there are other factors at play: there is my flesh, that old part of me that fights against me trusting God and being faithful to him; there is the world that tempts me and offers me distractions and pleasures that aren't God; and there is a spiritual enemy, Satan, who rules over the God-hating world.

That's why the Bible describes reality as two kingdoms: God's kingdom, the kingdom of light, and everything else, the kingdom of darkness. And they are at war.

Jesus taught us to pray, Your Kingdom come (Matt 6:10). In order for one kingdom to expand, another kingdom needs to be pushed out of the way. That makes prayer combat. Ephesians 6:12 says something similar:

*12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

In every battle there are attacks and counter attacks, victories and defeats. Our time of prayer and fasting is a time when we go on the offensive in an intensified way. We should expect a little blow back.

So how has the battle been? Have you felt extra tempted or gotten suddenly ill? Are you fighting with your spouse or kids or coworkers more? Take courage! You're in the fight. Don't put down your sword and head back to camp to nurse your wounds. Charge again, fire again. Regroup with some fellow soldiers and press your advantage.

## **Let's keep going**

Calvary, how good it is to be with our Father. It pleases him, changes us, and impacts the world. Let's not lose heart during this time.

In prayer for you as you pray,

Rob