

## Holy Habits 3-26-00

The Lord has been gracious to us to give us time to absorb the instruction from his word regarding Holy Habits. I know that term grates on a few of us, forgive me, I borrowed it from Oswald Chambers. Every time I say that if you prefer think guidance from God's Word. We develop personal prejudices against things we have seen that have trapped us and kept us from the life of Christ. Some have seen how the systems of men are a snare and so when I talk of habits that concern to not enter a system of man comes up. That is good. Don't let it keep you from hearing the plain clear message in the New Testament.

I am not recommending you do exactly what I or anyone else does. Each of us must individually walk in the leading of the Holy Spirit. These are things I see in God's word that instruct us in our behavior, to help us diligently add to our faith the things that God wants to work into our lives. 2 Peter 1:1-4 Here is that paradox that I mentioned before plainly expressed. Before I showed it to you in writings of the Apostle Paul, you are dead – but you must put to death. You once lived in these ways (sounds like it is done) but still you must take them off and put on Christ. You died but you must die daily. And now here in Peter in these four verses we have escaped the corruption in the world through lust... but let us read on verse 5-11. Why do we need to add anything to our faith? Because of what He has done for us and what He makes available to us we must go on to walk in these things. Vs 5 says give all diligence, add to your faith.

His word tells us how to do that and that is what I am pointing out to you in the Holy Habits. Are you glad He rescued you from darkness? Isn't it wonderful that He lives within us? Now you should in gratitude to all He has done see that these things of verses 5-8 abound so we won't be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus. We all want to see fruit in our lives and want to know Jesus better. Obedience to the Word instructs us in how to go about that adding, that diligence. I shared on accountability and a prayer partner. How are you doing there? Have you been led to do that? Has the Lord showed you who you can help and who can help you with prayer and accountability? A word of warning don't fall into the trap of "I'm more mature" see Ro 1:12. We all can encourage each other regardless of our maturity.

Then after a week break we talked about the Word, study, memorization, meditation. Has the Holy Spirit applied that to your life and instructed you to make that more a part of your life. I had stopped memorizing for quite awhile but after that message I began again. Allow me to repeat one thing from that, memorization is not just a gift or ability, it comes from consistency. If you are willing to keep at it then you can do it. Don't forget what He asks you to do He empowers you to do.

Then we had last week's break with Phillip sharing about repentance. Someone shared how timely that was for them. Now this week we are back to those tools the HS instructs us to use as continual instruments in our lives to add those virtues we read about in 2Peter 1. So now third in this series – you may have guessed it was coming – prayer. 1Peter 4:7

When Jesus cleansed the Temple courts He says that his Father's house is to be a house of prayer. What is the house of the Lord? You and I are. And would you say that describes us? Prayer – our place of speaking to and hearing from the Lord. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. And yet there are special times of prayer in solitude that Jesus demonstrated and taught. Three stand out in my mind. The night before He chose the 12 He was in prayer all night. Lk 6:12 After the feeding of the 5000 He sent the disciples on ahead while He went on into the mountain to be alone in prayer. Mt 14:23 And the Garden, calling the three to join him but going on a stones throw away from them, He wrestled with what was to come in prayer. Mt 26:36-41

In these three great examples we have a model of when we especially need prayer. The first is before major decisions. The second is after draining times of ministry. Prayer can renew and refresh us to go on. We can find there the strength of the Lord to continue. The third is the hour of trial. When Jesus was facing the betrayal and suffering to come, in prayer He committed his will to that of the Father and was strengthened for the battle to come. Here we see Jesus word's tell us alert prayer will keep us from falling into temptation. Watch and pray, he said. Like someone on guard, we are to watch for attacks of the enemy and stay in communion with the Lord.

We have the teaching of Jesus to his disciples in "the Lord's prayer". It has been used as a model by many as to how we should pray. It is interesting that this prayer is in the plural, which sounds as though we are to pray it together as many do. Books have been written on how it is an example prayer for us but let me very briefly summarize.

We address God the Father through Jesus the one mediator between God and man. He is in heaven at the throne of all which should assure us of His sovereignty. His name is holy and we desire that all consider it so instead of the vain way in which the world uses it. We pray for His Kingdom to come, that is His reign in the hearts of men. We are praying for souls to be won. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Just as Jesus prayed, we set aside what we would prefer for His will. We long to see everything bow before Him and submit to His wonderful will. We pray for provision, which can be physical and spiritual, a continuing revelation of God and of Jesus our Lord. We pray for forgiveness in the same way we forgive. That reminds us of the need to forgive those who offend or wound us. We ask to not be led into temptation and kept from the evil one. We close it reminding us that the Kingdom is about The Father and the Son, the kingdom is His, not ours. All power and authority is His. If we have any real power, it is His and returns to Him. Any glory He shares with us is all His. These things are not just for now they are eternal.

Prayer gets us in touch with the way things are. Prayer should get our eyes on eternal truths and that changes our attitude and understanding of what we are experiencing.

Prayer does not only include the speaking but should have to do with listening also. Someone once said that we have 2 ears and one mouth and should use them in that proportion. I would add that we should pray in that proportion too. Although God often speaks to us when we read his Word, He can also remind us of His word in prayer, give us pictures, or thoughts that direct us to His answers. Eccl 5:1,2

In prayer we can also just be still and contemplate the awesome God we serve. Ps 46:10 It is very difficult for most of us to be still and dwell on God and what He means to us. Part of the difficulty is we need to exercise another discipline which was mentioned earlier in 1Pt 4:7 – to be clear minded.

This is one of the great hindrances to prayer, our wandering minds. 2 Co 10:5 tells us that we are to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. We can't stop the first thought from passing by but we can refuse to dwell on that thought and consciously refuse to go somewhere mentally. But if we don't practice this throughout the day it is difficult to set aside a time to do so. It is not our normal way. Young people, this is easier to learn when you are young and will have benefits your whole life. What you allow yourself to think about often will result in your actions. Phil 4:8 Tells us what we should think on. Many of you have heard me share about my prayer for my thought life. I consider contemplation like an altar and I ask the Lord to light a flame of holiness there that anything that is not of Him will not enter in but be consumed by the heat of the flame before it comes near the altar.

This is a constant spiritual battle. I know things the Lord does not want me to dwell on but that the enemy often brings up to distract me. We must capture that high ground of the mind and hold it. Then we can pray clearly, and if there is a distraction we will be right back into that place of prayer immediately. Another thing that helps me is when I begin to pray I have a mental attitude that I am about to grab a zillion gigawatt power line. What is your attitude if you were about to do that? God is all powerful and this prayer time could change my entire life. Recognize the wonder of Who you are talking with and it will keep distractions at bay. Do you think Isaiah was distracted by his plan for the day when he saw the Lord seated on the throne?

One other Scripture that deals with our difficulty in prayer is for us men. 1Peter 3:7 If we are not treating our wives with respect and consideration our prayers will be hindered. I'm sure you men have experienced the reality of that. Go make things right and you will find that hindrance is gone. That is the mercy of God so that we will not go on thinking everything is OK.

We are going over disciplines that allow us to be changed into His likeness in an ever increasing way. In Col 4:2 Paul told the Colossians to devote themselves to prayer. Are we? This is where we will be led by God or end up another group led by men. Let us devote ourselves to prayer, not only to commune with God throughout the day, but to set aside time to be alone with Him in that secret place. That doesn't have to be a set amount of time or even a long time, but enough time to speak what's on your heart and to listen to any instruction. Mt 6:5-8 It should be unhurried, undistracted, and private. Give Him that time just as you would someone you loved dearly. It is an indication that you do love Him dearly. He waits to hear you there. SOS "Let me hear your voice."