

Matthew 6

Read Matthew 6:1-4: Sometimes it is hard to know our true motivations. We think we are doing things for God. When we are *backstabbed or stepped on, slighted or mocked*, we might abandon a ministry in disgust. The question becomes: Who were you serving? Why would hypocrites and ungrateful recipients of your ministry cause you to bail? What if the people you helped mocked you? Would you wash your hands of them? Who cares if you do not like the people? Are you there to serve God, or do you require a certain level of appreciation? Ministry is often offensive, inconvenient and a messy business. How do you help someone who has self-defeating behavior? How do you help someone who hates you and God? Another telltale is when we get wrongfully credited with failures. Do we have an overpowering need to correct what was said; or are we confident that God knows? Let God be your counselor and advocate before all.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

We can only transmit what we have received. We have to be filled with the Holy Spirit daily. Why do some men go to a quiet place to get alone with God; while others enjoy being publicly identified? The Book of Acts records how the apostles literally became like rock stars. All kinds of posers tried to jump on the bandwagon.

Read Daily

Part of salvation is getting sick of yourself; and looking for God to flush out all of the lusts, anxieties, malice and fear. There are others who are just looking for acceptance and respect wherever they can find it. Religious crowds seek respect by trying to be an upstanding person of faith. A common substitute for true faith can be people seeking: intellectual recognition, respectability in public, etc...

The Pharisees were organized to teach the Hebrews their forgotten language and Biblical traditions which were forgotten abroad. This was good, originally. Unfortunately the Hebrews couldn't read; so they depended on these religious leaders for all godly information. Over time the Pharisees lost track of being sinners themselves; and became proud and self-righteous *spiritual police*. Some of the High Priests and scribes were on the take; and were puppets of the Roman Government. Perhaps Jesus allowed the phonies in religion to parade around as examples of what not to be like.

Read Matthew 6:5-13: Biblical prayer is talking to God; and not man. It has a flexible format; but there are some basics to keep in mind. Many times we have a pastor tell us to bow our heads to pray...then to only begin to preach or instruct us. That is not a prayer! Prayer * is when we talk to God...not to ourselves or each other. We don't pray in the King James vernacular. We just talk to God. Meaningless phrases and repeated terms are what God tells us not to do. Why do so many main-line churches do it? Prayers should not be too long. Here are some elements of a complete prayer:

- Praising God
- Ask for God's will in our lives
- Intercessory prayer for others needs
- Petitions for our needs
- Repentance

- Thanksgiving

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

The best prayer is conversational. If we ask questions to God as we read the Bible; we will frequently get answers. Ultimately we need to get to a place where our prayers are about God; not us.

Part of successful prayer has nothing to do with prayer. Our daily street actions either confirm our commitment to obey God; or they betray our empty words.

Read Matthew 6:16-23: Why would anyone try to appear to be a holy man; and that they have a real spiritual battle on their hands? Why would someone want you to know that they were up all night praying? Being associated with miracles is a powerful and dangerous thing. Billy Graham says this about God's miracles and power:

"Billy always encouraged us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought," Barrows says. "He warned us not to reach up and touch the glory of God."

Perhaps some want to be connected with the results as being someone working hard to make it happen. Prayer falls apart when it is used for anything other than bringing conversation and requests before God. Recognition now and acceptance among men is a bad trade for spiritual rewards.

Read Matthew 6:25-34: These verses came in the exact moment I was praying for God's help to reduce my stress at work. I seem to be in a season where things are piling up. These anti-anxiety verses refer to our daily essentials as things we typically worry about; but we can *fill in the blank* with our own causes of anxiety.

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil, often accompanied by nervous behavior. Anxiety is a normal human emotion that everyone experiences at times. Many people feel anxious, or nervous, when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test, or making an important decision. It is characterized by unpleasant feelings of dread over anticipated events, such as the feeling of imminent death. Anxiety is not the same as fear, which is a response to a real or perceived immediate threat, whereas **anxiety is the expectation of future threat**. Anxiety is a

feeling of fear, uneasiness, and worry, usually generalized and unfocused as an overreaction to a situation that is only subjectively seen as menacing. It is often accompanied by muscular tension, restlessness, fatigue and problems in concentration. Anxiety can be appropriate, but when experienced regularly the individual may suffer from an anxiety disorder.

The underlying thinking is: 'Does your life only consist of the struggle to survive'? One reason that we are called into ministry is to take our focus off of our own issues. Consider those who have nothing but time on their hands. Are they full of joy; or are they somewhat depressed? The commandments to bless others is really to get us out of our own *ruts* too. Something is way out of balance if we obsess about our needs being met. We are creatures to be pitied if this is true. God tells us to focus on other things:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Meditate on These Things Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9)

This verse has a solution. Christ will guard our minds and hearts with peace if we:

1. Commit all things to prayer and focus on God.
2. Focus on God and how he is blessing, more than ourselves, and
3. Take action according to God's goodness,

Freedom from anxiety begins with confession that it is not God's will. In fact, anxiety is a subtle insinuation that God is either unable or disinclined to see to our welfare. The words "be careful for nothing" have the idea of "stop being pulled in different directions". In my case it is being behind schedule with a parade of things coming up causing delays. It can also be saddled with technical things to work through without time to work through them. Worry is sin because it ~~is~~ keeps us from giving glory to God. It also keeps us from serving God and others to our full capacity. Making daily list is helpful as it reduces the stress of forgetting something on a long list of to-do items.

Firstly; we need to be careful of what we commit to.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. ~~All such boasting is evil.~~ (James 4:13-16)

It is one thing to not get caught up into setting completion dates prematurely. It is a whole other thing to be subjected to someone else's schedule and commitments.

The solution begins by focusing on God first. We need to break the continual bondage of daily events with time in meditation on God's word. We also need to make our daily priorities to God first. ~~Everything else falls in line behind that.~~

Unless the LORD *had been* my help, My soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold

me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul. (Psalm 94:17-19)

The second thing to notice here is that anxiety is our perception of what tomorrow (the future) brings. These verses instruct us not to worry about what will take place in the future. We need to commit the whole thing to the LORD. These verses also guarantee us that we will have problems every day.

We also should not try to cram too much into our schedule. Don't add time stress to event stress.