

5-Day Devotional Series

Praying Scripture: Learning to Pray Prayers Designed to Give us Hearts More Like Jesus -From Psalm 119

Greetings

Hello Blairstown E-free Church family! Rebecca, Juliet and I say hello. I hope you are all well. I feel humbled and privileged to have the opportunity to lead you in God's word during this time.

Introduction: Where We are Going

This is a five-day devotional that is going to explore how God works to transform our hearts to be more like Christ. It will seek to demonstrate that praying Scripture is essential for our hearts to be transformed.

On day (1), we are going to start with discussing 1 Peter 3:15 and how it guides us in how we can be a witness during this time of crisis. We must share *our hearts*.

On Day (2), we will introduce David as a man after God's own heart, introduce Psalm 119 as a Psalm that shows his heart, and examine what Scripture says about our hearts... *Our hearts are very needy*.

On Day (3), we will examine that David's prayers in Psalm 119 reveal his heart and that they show us how much we need God to transform our hearts. This will convict us, but should also excite us for how God desires our hearts to be... *Our hearts need God to transform them*.

On Day (4), we will go through a suggested 8 Steps For Praying David's Hard Prayers which will include key things such as confession, but also faith and rejoicing... *Prayer: Our hearts expressing our neediness to God*.

On Day (5), we will focus on where we ended in day 4, and talk about having hopeful hearts that rejoice in Jesus. This day will be all about rejoicing with our hearts in Jesus and the Gospel. *Our hearts should rejoice always in Jesus: He is the Hope of our needy hearts*.

Day 1:

Sharing The Hope of Our Hearts

Our Present Times: Does Scripture really matter right now?

I want to start by having us consider a couple of verses from Psalm 119. With all the hardship that is going around us, the question could be asked: is now really a time to study Scripture? The answer to this is, yes! Psalm 119, the focus of this devotional, is all about David's love for the word of God. One thing that we see in this magnificent 176 verse Psalm is that David's meditation of God's word *never* stops. It never becomes irrelevant to him, even in suffering.

Look at what David says while he knows that his enemies are gathered together, conspiring against him. What would be your first response if you had enemies plotting your death?

Vs. 23 “Even though princes sit plotting against me, your *servant will meditate on your statutes*.”

David also highlights the importance of the word of God during his times of affliction.

Vs. 92 “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.”

For David, *Scripture* is what kept him from perishing. It is what sustained him. It should be the same for us. Only Scripture is sufficient to sustain us during this time.

Sharing The Hope of our Hearts During This Hard Time:

To segue us into a discussion of the heart, I want us to ask the question: How can we share our faith with unbelievers during this pandemic? I want to call our attention to 1 Peter 3:15. 1 Peter 3:15 says that we should honor Christ as Lord, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the *hope that is in you...*” Notice that the verse mentions *hope*. I want us to ask the question: where does *hope* come from?... The simple point I want to make about this verse is that: **Hope comes from the heart**. Notice that this verse is saying not just to be prepared to give a reason for our faith, but what is that reasoning for? The hope that is in our hearts. This means that in sharing the gospel, people should not just hear the truth we’re sharing, but they should also see *the response of our hearts* to what we’re sharing with them. This means that there are two things that we should seek to share when expressing our faith (1) the truth that we have, i.e. the gospel, and (2) *how our own hearts are responding to what we’re sharing with them*. This response of our hearts can manifest in comfort, encouragement, rejoicing, praise, proper fear, delight, hope, etc.

I think that what people need more than ever right now is what 1 Peter 3:15 says we should be relaying, the hope in our hearts.

This means, when seeking to share God’s word (with unbelievers or even with fellow brothers and sisters) we should think through: “How is my own heart responding to the truth that I want to share? Is my heart comforted? Rejoicing? Resting? Eased from anxiety? Less fearful? ...And we should also ask: “Am I relaying to this person my own hearts response as well as the truth that I am sharing?”

For example, if we say: “God’s word says X,...” and that is all that we say, we may miss an important opportunity to model for the person we are sharing with how their heart should respond to this truth. Both of these components together may sound something like: “God’s word says , and my heart is taking great hope in it. I am rejoicing in it! And I am sharing it with you because I want your heart to respond in the same way: I want your heart to be comforted and encouraged too.”

Analogy: Not Doctrinal Statements, but Burning Bushes

Two images can help represent the difference between how these two kinds of sharing truth may appear to those we are sharing with. The kinds of sharing are (1) just sharing truth and (2) sharing the truth with our hearts, and the corresponding images are (1) a Doctrinal Statement, and (2) a burning bush. How does our message appear? Our message should not appear to people as if they were looking at a Doctrinal Statement. It should appear to them as if they were looking at a burning bush. What drew Moses near was not lifeless, cold, dry tablets of stone, but a burning bush. God was in the bush, and Moses drew near to that heat-producing bush. In the same way, unbelievers are unlikely to draw near if we hold out our message as a Doctrinal Statement to them –mere statements of truth. Rather, as 1st Peter suggests, we are to relay the

truth with our hearts –like a burning bush– and let them see and feel the heat of a precious gospel set aflame in our hearts.. Sharing *hope* is different than sharing truth. Let’s share the truth with unbelievers during this time showing the amazing effects that God’s word has upon our hearts!

Some Questions:

This discussion is meant to be a segue in that it causes us to ask some further questions:

- What is the “heart” according to Scripture and what is God’s plan for my heart? (Day 2)
- Does God give any examples in Scripture of how He wants my heart to be? (Day 3 –Ps. 119)
- How do I get my heart to be more like how God wants it to be? (Day 4 and 5 –Prayer/Gospel).

Devotional Application:

(1) This is a time to examine what we are turning to at this crucial time. Do we need to confess because we haven’t been turning to God’s word? Regardless, all of us need to pray with David especially during this time (vs 36-37): “*Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*” Pray this for yourself, your small group (if you are in one), your church, and for unbelievers (that it would come to be true of them as well during this time).

(2) If we are to share our hearts and not solely truth, this should lead us to self-examination, asking ourselves: “How is my own heart responding to God’s word?” Is my heart responding with hope, joy, comfort, praise, etc? This question may be convicting, it has certainly been for me. But don’t despair, we’ll talk more about this, but for now, pray with David (vs 36): “I will run in the way of your commandments, when *you enlarge my heart!*” God enlarges hearts! Start praying for God to enlarge your heart and take hope!

(3) Examine the way that you share truth with others (believers and nonbelievers), do you think it comes across to them more like a Doctrinal Statement, or a burning bush? Remember, these statements look more like: “I am so encouraged by ___; my heart is comforted by ___; I was very fearful but then I was so comforted by ___” –rather than statements that are solely restricted to: “God’s word says ___”

Daily Encouragement from Juliet: “Happy belated Easter!”

