

5-Day Devotional Series

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

Day 2: *David's Heart, Psalm 119, and God's Plan Our Hearts*

Recap:

Last time, we focused on sharing the gospel during this time of crisis and how 1 Peter 3:15 suggests that unbelievers are to see not just our reasons but the hope within us. Because sharing truth *and also* sharing the response of our *own* hearts to unbelievers is the scriptural pattern, this discussion was meant to segue us into a broader discussion of the heart. One of the major questions we are seeking to answer is: "How do I get my heart to be more like how God wants it to be, to be more like Jesus?"

Today: To begin answering this question, we will introduce David, Psalm 119, and talk about God's plan for our hearts. We are moving towards looking at specific prayers of David in Psalm 119 (Day 3) and how to pray them (Day 4/ Day 5). This study (Day 2) is going to be foundational for the following days. Prayer, as we will see, is crucial to heart transformation.

David:

In seeking to understand "the heart" and subsequently pursuing the transformation of our hearts to be more like Christ (to be discussed shortly), King David assumes an important place in this discussion. Like some other characters in Scripture who are given very honorable descriptions—like Job (Job 1:8), Moses (Num 12:3), and John the disciple (Jn 13:23)—David is referred to twice as "a man after his [God's] own heart" (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). This is a very significant designation. But notice that these phrases are said in passing. The question remains: "If David's heart is most like God, then how can my heart become like David's heart? Has God said: "This is a heart that really pleases me" and then not shown us how our hearts can become like that heart? No, not at all! Rather, in the Psalms, God brings us deep down into the very heart of David. Consider, that of all the people in Scripture we know more about the *internal* thoughts, thinking, mindset, delights, fears, rejoicing, and prayers of David than any other character in Scripture. The Lord not only tells us that David has an extremely godly heart, but in the Psalms David's heart is unveiled to us. Consider also, that the majority of the Psalms are David's *prayers*. We know more of his prayer life than any other person in Scripture. Immediately, we see that the biggest heart in Scripture was the heart of the biggest prayer.

Prayer in accordance to God's Word, David shows, is the vehicle to heart transformation, and Scripture itself gives us godly prayers for us to pray

Psalm 119:

Psalm 119 is the largest chapter we have in Scripture (176 verses) and it is full of David's prayers that reveal (1) David's heart's responses to God's word (his delight, comfort, rejoicing, constant clinging to, etc) and (2) how David's heart perceives God himself, God's word itself, David himself, fellow believers, unbelievers, the world itself, and his circumstances. God has given us hearts with the capacity to be filled, like a jar of water. In Psalm 119 we see through David's prayers that every corner of his heart is filled with the water of God's word. If David's

prayers could be given an image, perhaps they could be pictured as David opening the lid of the jar, asking that his heart be filled with God's word. **Scriptural prayers open the lid of our hearts to be filled and conformed to God's word.** As David's heartfelt prayers, these verses are models for how our hearts are to pray. All of life, even how we pray is to be guided by Scripture.

God's Plan For Our Hearts: Transformation to Christ-likeness

Our hearts are very needy¹. How does the Bible describe our conversion? –as the giving of a completely new heart. Our hearts apart from God are so needy, so helpless, so rebellious, sinful and dead, that God's work of salvation consists in giving us completely new hearts at our conversion: "And I will give you a new *heart*... I will remove the *heart* of stone...and give you a *heart* of flesh" (Ezek 36:26). We must always remember how needy we were. Unless God made you alive and gave you a new heart, right now you would not know him. How gracious is He! God's first heart-transformative act upon us begins at conversion when we believe in the freely given redeeming grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must always remember and rejoice in this because this keeps at the forefront our neediness for God, but also how God has already graciously met our greatest need. Prayer is born when God's word reveals to us how needy our hearts are. In many ways, our first Scriptural is at conversion: "Lord, save my soul!" This first prayer is a cry out to God to meet our greatest need, and how amazing is our God –He saves.

Beyond conversion, what is God's desire for our hearts from all eternity? To be made like Christ: "For those he foreknew he also predestined to *be conformed to the image of his Son...*" (Rom 8:29). Our hearts made like Jesus is God's plan. The great neediness of our hearts however does not go away. It continues after salvation. Our hearts are *still* very needy. Just as our hearts were very needy for salvation (and so we prayed for salvation), are hearts are very needy for transformation (and so we pray for transformation). Perhaps the most foundational prayer to Psalm 119 is vs. 32: "I will run in the way of your commandments *when you enlarge my heart!*" If I may paraphrase: "Lord, my heart will be the way you want it to be in thought and action *when you enlarge it!*" David's prayer expresses his great need for grace and his heart's great neediness, but also his confidence and faith that God *will* do it. He says: "I will run in the way of your commandments." This understanding of ourselves, and of God as a heart-enlarging God, coupled with a prayerful confidence for God to make us "run," David models for us. Let's pray David's prayers with his same confidence and see God enlarge our hearts to be more like Jesus.

Devotional Application:

- (1) Take time to praise God for not leaving us without guidance in how to pray to him or have a godly heart, especially in David's example. Take time also to ask yourself: "Are the prayers I pray aligned with the prayers God wants me to pray?" Do you need to grow in this? Confess that, and ask God to help you to grow in it.
- (2) Pray and meditate on this foundational verse vs. 32 "I will run in the way of your commandments *when you enlarge my heart!*" Pray this for yourself, your small group (if applicable), your church, and unbelievers. Pray this verse for a specific area you struggle with.
- (3) Remember and praise God for how he has met your greatest need and given you a new heart in Jesus. Rejoice in that afresh! Let that give you hope. If God can save, he can transform.
- (4) Pray that God would help you to remember your heart's continued neediness for him, and pray that he would continue to make your heart more like Christ.

Daily photo of Juliet:



¹ CCEF Christian Counselor Ed Welch in his book Side by Side I believe has a chapter that is titled this, and he writes in this simple way in talking about the heart.