

One on one with God

Recap: In the first session of this series, we covered the “4 absolutes of prayer”: Last week, we studied the most impactful prayer recorded in the Bible, and we saw 4 things Joshua did to pray with such impact.

Today, I would like to look at prayer in the devotional sense: not just in the sense of what it can achieve against adverse situations, or against principalities and powers but prayer in its simplest form: personal communion with the Father.

Praying with impact has a lot to do with who you are with God, privately, in the holy of holies of your own soul.

- None of the people that prayed impactful prayers in the Bible, did it outside an intense, personal behind-the-scenes, relationship with God.
- None of the people with great faith, had that faith outside their own walk with God.
- Principles are important but prayer (in its simplest form) is relationship with God. No one will wake up one morning and say ‘sun stand still’ outside a regular and consistent prayer life. It just doesn’t work like that.

“One on one with God” is our message today. Of many great Bible characters we could talk about, I want us to look today at Isaac.

Opening text: Genesis 24:63-67 AMPC (Amplified Bible Classical Edition):

63 And Isaac went out to meditate and bow down [in prayer] in the open country in the evening; and he looked up and saw that, behold, the camels were coming. 64 And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel. 65 For she [had] said to the servant, who is that man walking across the field to meet us? And the servant said, He is my master. So she took a veil and concealed herself with it. 66 And the servant told Isaac everything that he had done. 67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

Introduction: This story starts in verse 1 with Abraham sending his servant to find Isaac a suitable wife. It is a story of love.

As Rebekah sees Isaac approaching, she asks:

V.65b - *Who is that man walking across the field to meet us?*

Well, the fact is that Isaac was not out in the field to meet Rebekah but the real reason he was out that evening was so that he could be with God. Obviously, in the process, Isaac also met Rebekah but he was there primarily for God.

V.63a - *And Isaac went out to meditate and bow down in prayer in the open country in the evening*

Reading the Scriptures, there is so much information about Isaac, about his public life, his achievements, his importance in the history of the Jewish people, as Abraham and Sarah's promised son, as one of the 3 patriarchs of the Israelites, even as an Old Testament type of Jesus. However, here in this one statement, we have a glimpse into another side of this man, a private side, something not as visible to others but very powerful in his life: his own relationship with God.

He had something going with God, he walked with Him personally, intimately.

There were 3 ingredients in Isaac's devotional life that I believe need to be rediscovered by many of us. These are 3 powerful spiritual disciplines we often neglect.

1. Isaac stopped

Isaac was the prince in the house of the greatest of the patriarchs. He was a man of amazing affluence who also lived a busy, nomadic lifestyle (his immense cattle herds constantly needed to move, in order to find fresh pastures). He would be the equivalent of a modern CEO of a large corporation. He had thousands of people working under him. His 'real estate portfolio' was as vast as a country - a land stretching from the Nile River of Egypt to the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia (Genesis 15:18-21).

In this passage, we see Isaac at the end of another busy day, coming to a place called *'The God who sees me'* (Beer Lahai Roi). He stopped there: he stopped to meet his God, the God who saw him – the God Who sees us. Have you seen Him lately? Have you stopped for Him?

I have heard people say, *"Oh yes I pray every day. I pray on my way to work"*. It is good to talk to God on the move, always, and in every way. However, we all need that time when we are not multitasking, but we stop and we stand still before the Lord, and He has our undivided attention.

Standing still is probably one of the greatest challenges of life in the West. We live hyperactive lives, and we are addicted to busyness. We fill every moment of our lives with activity and movement. We live overscheduled, overcommitted and driven all the time.

Our addiction to busyness and distractions is something we need to surrender at the foot of the cross. Sometimes we just need to stop.

Later in his life, Isaac had two sons, one of them was Jacob. Jacob was also a restless soul. Jacob's life only changed when he stopped. He was running from his past, running from father-in-law, running from his brother, running from his deceptive ways - but one day decided to stop. He stopped in the valley of Jabbok. He never walked the same way again and he was never the same person again after that encounter with Lord, when he decided to stop.

2. Isaac separated himself

V. 63a - *And Isaac went out*

Isaac went out from where he was and from whom he was with (his staff, his family) into the field. He separated himself from the company of others and the voices of others, to be with God and hear His voice alone.

Jesus Himself practiced this. He would go out before sunrise and would talk to the Father. He would separate himself from His disciples and from the crowds and would stand alone with the Father (Mark 1:35).

Jesus taught His disciples to pursue this same habit:

Matthew 6:6 - *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

- a) God will always *reward* those times in His presence. It is not a coincidence that Rebekah appeared to Isaac at a time of prayer. Hebrews 11:6 says that *God rewards those who diligently seek Him*.
- b) “*when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place*” - there is more impact in the secret place, then in any other external thing we can ever do. We need to learn to find the power of the secret place. There can never be outward impact of our declarations of faith, without private time with God.
- c) “*and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly*”- outward impact only comes from what happens in that secret spot.
- d) “*Our Father **who sees** in the secret*” – Isaac went to a place called “*the God who sees me*”. That place, according to Jesus, is one-on-one with the Father.

Let me put it plainly: Your spiritual life cannot be sustained or have impact over external circumstances, demonic forces etc without time alone with God.

3. Isaac meditated

V.63 - *63 And Isaac went out to meditate and bow down [in prayer] in the open country in the evening*

Isaac meditated – not in the sense that Eastern religions practice but in the context of his relationship with God.

- a) The biblical sense of ‘meditation’ is not introspection, and it is not about being alone with yourself, but alone with God. It is not to seek ‘nothingness’ like in Eastern religions but seeking ‘fulness’ – the fulness that comes from God. Biblical meditation is not about emptying your mind but renewing your mind with the thoughts of God.
- b) The word in Hebrew is *lasuach*:

Dake's Bible: *to bend in body and mind. It is godly meditation or praying in deep thought before God*"

Unger's dictionary: *"A private devotional act, consisting of deliberate reflection upon some spiritual truth (...) accompanied by prayer and by acts of the affection and of the will. It should be deliberate, close and continuous"*

The impact of prayer starts with what happens in holy of holies of our soul. Is our soul firmly planted in God, filled with His thoughts, attentive to Him? Is your mind fixed on God?

Max Lucado said, *"The mind that is full of God is empty of anxiety. Are you troubled, restless, sleepless? Then think of God more!"*

We need to change the diet of our overstimulated minds. We need to be intentional about renewing our minds, about taking control of our thoughts and setting them on God.

That is exactly what Isaac did at the end of each day: he would stop, remove himself from others and position himself before God – in prayer and meditation.

Conclusion

If we want to pray with outward impact, then we need to take care of our inner life, our personal walk with God.

As I said before, praying with impact has a lot to do with who you are with God, in the holy of holies of your own soul, in private, when no one is looking.

From my study of the Scriptures

- None of the people that prayed impactful prayers in the Bible, did it outside an intense, personal behind-the-scenes, relationship with God.
- None of the people with great faith, had that faith outside their own walk with God. They built their own behind the scenes history with God
- Principles are important but prayer (in its simplest form) is relationship with God. No one will wake up one morning and say 'sun stand still' outside a regular and consistent prayer life. It just doesn't work like that.

Extra material

Five powerful benefits of biblical meditation:

1. Good success

Joshua 1:8 - *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

2. Wisdom

Psalms 119:97-99 - *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my **meditation** all the day. ⁹⁸You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. ⁹⁹I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my **meditation**.*

3. Peace

Psalms 4:4-8 – *Be angry, and do not sin. **Meditate** within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah ⁵Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. ⁶There are many who say, “Who will show us any good?” Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. ⁷You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. ⁸I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

4. Life and health

Proverbs 4:20-22 - *My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; ²²For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Make meditation your medication.*

5. Spiritual growth

1 Timothy 4:15 - *Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.*