

St. Margaret's Community Church of Scotland

Dunfermline

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"Lord, teach us how to pray." This is what some of the disciples asked Jesus on one occasion. Why? Why did they ask this question?

I believe that the first reason they asked the question is because they recognised that Jesus had an authentic prayer life. They recognised that Jesus prayed and that things happened.

The second reason that they asked is that I believe they saw and experienced a deficiency in their own experience of prayer. There was a genuine desire for them to connect with God and they felt their lack in this respect.

Does this ring a bell with ourselves? Are there any indicators that will help us to be able to develop a more meaningful prayer life? I believe that there are, and that prayer is not nearly as difficult as we imagine.

First of all, **TIME!** Think of any relationship in which you are involved. How can you possibly know someone unless you give time to the relationship? We live in a society of the immediate and relationships cannot be built upon the immediate – we need to get to the heart of who the other person is and fully understand who they are - that takes years – there are no quick fixes when it comes to relationship.

Time, in what respect? In the first place, time spent in the study, reading and contemplation of God's Word. More often than not that is how He speaks to us.

Time spent in the contemplation of what we read in God's Word – don't worry if there are things at this moment you do not understand – focus on what you can understand and ask what it is saying to you, and through it, what God is saying to you.

Humility. Prayer is not a meeting of two equals. Prayer is not there for us to manipulate God to our will. It calls for the humility of putting ourselves at God's disposal, under his will and subject to his leading and wisdom. You notice that Jesus always submitted to the will of the Father – should this not too be true of us?

The Psalms. In case it has escaped our notice, the Bible has within it, its own prayer book – the 150 Psalms, many of which are written by King David. We should become familiar with the Psalms because they have a habit of helping us to put life into perspective.

Sometimes the Psalms have their limitations. They were mostly written 1000 years before Jesus and there are times when the Psalmist gets so angry that he wants God to bring judgement down on people who hurt him [the Psalmist] rather than the forgiving, loving and praying for your enemies, as is the way of Jesus. But even that helps us to be honest before God with our feelings – something that is resonant in the Psalms.

My advice? Read a Psalm a day – listen to the praying heart and mind of the Psalmist and we will be schooled in prayer through this – very much like is evident in the life and faith of the apostle Paul and many of the significant figures in the Church since – prayer has to be learned, it takes time, patience and honesty.

Iain

Intimations

Ross Kerr is looking for articles for the Church Magazine – if there is anything you feel would be helpful/informative please contact Ross on 01383 726663, email him on rosskerr@me.com or send it to 75 Scotland Drive, KY12 7TW.

Services

Daily readings in John's Gospel on Facebook.

No Zoom on Wednesday at 6.45pm

Facebook at 9am on Sunday

Zoom at 9.45am on Sunday

Church Service at 11am on Sunday and the service is livestreamed on YouTube – go to St. Margaret's Church of Scotland Dunfermline.

Barrie tells us how, in the little house at Thrums, they used to tiptoe to and fro when his mother was upon her knees, awed by the knowledge that she was praying for them. And here and there in the New Testament, we blunder in on Christ and find Him on His knees; and, once at least, ere we can escape, cannot but overhear Him pleading our names. "Neither pray I for these alone," that is, for Peter and John and the rest, "but for those who will believe through them"—that is, for you and me. Hush! The Lord Christ is praying for you! And what is it He asks for us? That we be given such a spirit of unity and brotherliness and Christlikeness that people, coming upon us, will look at us, and look again, and then from us to Jesus Christ, seeking the explanation of us there – A. J. Gossip

We forget that God sometimes has to say No. We pray to Him as our heavenly Father, and like wise human fathers, He often says, No, not from whim or caprice, but from wisdom and from love, and knowing what is best for us – Peter Marshall

Your thumb is nearest you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C. S. Lewis once said, a "sweet duty."

The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.

The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the prime minister, leaders in business and industry, and administrators, as well as world leaders. These people shape our nation, our world, and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.

The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.

And lastly comes our little finger – the smallest finger of all which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.