

REMARKS
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THIS PRAYER BREAKFAST IS AN INNOVATION FOR THE COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION, AND I'M DELIGHTED TO SEE IT COME ABOUT. THOSE OF US IN GOVERNMENT HEAR A LOT ABOUT THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE BUT THAT WAS NEVER INTENDED TO MEAN SEPARATION OF GOD AND STATE. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO HAVE MEMBERS OF MILITARY MINISTRY WITH US TODAY, A BRANCH OF CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES THIS BREAKFAST IS HELD. AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE MY FRIENDS WHO CONSIDER JUDAISM THEIR RELIGION THAT WHEN I SPEAK OF GOD TODAY, I WILL BE TALKING ABOUT THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH, OF ISAAC AND REBECCA, OF JACOB AND RACHEL, AND OF YOU AND ME.

I BELIEVE IT IS FITTING FOR THOSE OF US IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS TO HAVE SUCH AN OCCASION AS THIS. MANY OF US PRACTICE WHAT WE CALL WHOLE PERSON MEDICINE AND LET ME TELL YOU WHAT THAT MEANS TO ME. I BELIEVE THAT MAN IS A TRINITY. HE IS A SOUL, HE HAS A SPIRIT AND HE INHABITS A BODY. IF WE MINISTER TO ANY ONE OF THESE OR ANY TWO TO THE EXCLUSION OF THE THIRD, WE ARE MISSING THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE CARE OF THE WHOLE PERSON.

AS I HAVE PONDERED THE QUESTION, I THINK THESE TIMES OF SPIRITUAL GET TOGETHER ARE CALLED PRAYER BREAKFASTS BECAUSE IT'S EASIER TO TALK ABOUT PRAYER, WHICH IS COMMON TO ALL RELIGIONS, RATHER THAN TO GET OFF INTO SOME DOCTRINE THAT MIGHT BE CRITICIZED BY OTHERS.

ONE CAN ONLY SPEAK FROM WHERE HE STANDS. I'M GOING TO SPEAK WHERE I STAND AND CENTER WHAT I HAVE TO SAY THIS MORNING AROUND PRAYER.

YOU HAVE HEARD ME SAY MANY TIMES THAT I HAVE NEITHER POWER NOR BUDGET, BUT I DO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF COMMUNICATION. WITH THAT IN MIND, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK A QUESTION: ARE YOU ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH GOD? IF YOU ARE, YOU ARE BLESSED AND IF YOU ARE NOT LET ME TELL YOU THE WAY YOU COMMUNICATE IS BY PRAYER.

ONE QUESTION PEOPLE FREQUENTLY ASK ME: IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN, WHY PRAY AT ALL? I HAVE NO BETTER ANSWER THAN THAT GIVEN BY THE GREAT BRITISH PREACHER OF THE LAST CENTURY, CHARLES SPURGEON WHO SAID: "YOU PRAY BECAUSE IT'S GOD'S PLAN." NOW, BEFORE I GET INTO A FURTHER DISCUSSION OF PRAYER, I SHOULD TELL YOU HOW I CAME TO BE WHERE I AM SPIRITUALLY.

I WAS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO WAS RAISED IN A CHRISTIAN HOME WITH DEVOUT CHURCH GOING PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS. I DID ALL THE THINGS THAT THEY DID, COULD HAVE ANSWERED PRACTICALLY ANY SUNDAY SCHOOL QUIZ YOU GAVE ME, APPROPRIATE TO MY AGE, BUT I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT I PROFESSED TO BELIEVE. I WAS 29 WHEN THAT DAY CAME AND IT WASN'T A SINGLE DAY, IT WAS A GRADUAL ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE THAT I EVENTUALLY APPROPRIATED FOR MY SELF OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS. AND IT WAS MORE THAN JUST SHIFTING GEARS FROM MY PARENTS' RELIGION TO MINE. IT WAS REALLY A WHOLE NEW REVELATION THAT BROUGHT ME TO UNDERSTAND WHERE I HAD BEEN, WHERE I WAS AND WHERE I WAS GOING.

AT THAT AGE OF 29, I FIRST UNDERSTOOD THAT A CHRISTIAN WAS A PERSON WHO BELIEVED THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS WHO HE SAID HE WAS AND THAT HE CAME TO DO WHAT HE SAID HE CAME TO DO. THIS IS THE SIMPLEST DEFINITION I KNOW ALTHOUGH IT MAY SOUND COMPLICATED. HE SAID HE WAS THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD AND HE SAID HE CAME TO REDEEM SINNERS. I BELIEVED THAT THEN. I BELIEVE IT NOW.

THE BIBLE HAS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT TO SAY ABOUT PRAYER, BUT TWO THINGS; ONE POSITIVE AND ONE NEGATIVE ARE WORTH REMEMBERING. ST. PAUL TOLD TIMOTHY TO PRAY WITHOUT CEASING BUT WE ARE ALSO TOLD IN THE 66TH PSALM THAT IF WE CHERISH SIN IN OUR HEARTS GOD WILL NOT HEAR OUR PRAYER. SO IF WE'RE INTERESTED IN BEING ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH GOD, WE HAVE TO MAKE PRAYER A SERIOUS HABIT, AND WE HAVE TO COME IN THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND.

IN ADDITION TO WHAT THE BIBLE MIGHT SAY, MEN HAVE SAID A GREAT DEAL MORE. NEVERTHELESS, AS I REFLECT ON THE RELATIVE AMOUNTS OF TIME PEOPLE SPEND ON THEIR BODIES COMPARED TO THEIR SOULS, CONSIDERING THE STAKES, I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYONE HERE WHO PROPORTIONS HIS TIME CORRECTLY. I KNOW I DON'T.

A LOT OF PRAYER IS HIT AND RUN. BY THAT I MEAN "LORD GET ME OUT OF THIS AND I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK". SUCH PRAYER COULD BE CALLED THE GIMMES.

BEFORE WE HAD THE 4 NEW WARNINGS ON CIGARETTES, YOU ALL KNOW HOW HACKNEYED THE SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING ABOUT CIGARETTES BECAME. NOBODY PAID ANY ATTENTION TO THE MEANING OF "THE SURGEON GENERAL HAS DETERMINED THAT SMOKING IS DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH", BUT IT WAS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED IN DERISION OR IN A JOKING WAY.

SO IT IS WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER -- I DOUBT THERE IS ANYONE HERE WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE LORD'S PRAYER. BUT HAVE YOU SAID IT SO OFTEN THAT IT HAS BECOME MEANINGLESS? IT REALLY IS THE DISCIPLE'S PRAYER, NOT THE LORD'S PRAYER -- WHICH IS FOUND IN THE 17TH CHAPTER OF JOHN'S GOSPEL. -- AND I DON'T THINK IT WAS EVER MEANT TO BE SAID REPETITIOUSLY AS IT IS IN SO MANY CHURCHES. THE DISCIPLE'S SAID: "LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY." JESUS GAVE THEM A SAMPLE, A GUIDE, A TYPE.

FOR YOU FDA'ERS OUT THERE, THERE ARE NO RULES OR REGULATIONS FOR PRAYER BUT THERE ARE GUIDELINES AND THEY ARE IN THE 11TH CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, AND THE 6TH CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL OF MATHEW BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE THE LORD'S PRAYER IS FOUND.

PRAYER BEGINS WITH A "P" AND IN ORDER THAT YOU REMEMBER WHAT I'M SAYING, LET ME BE ALLITERATIVE AND DO A LITTLE PLAY ON WORDS.

YOU'LL FIND THE LORD'S PRAYER PRINTED IN YOUR PROGRAMS. YOU MAY WANT TO JUST FOLLOW ALONG.

OUR FATHER, ACKNOWLEDGES WHO IS BEING ADDRESSED, WHO GOD IS, AND ESTABLISHES THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH WE KNOW FULL WELL BECAUSE WE HAVE ALL HAD A FATHER AND MOST OF US ARE PARENTS AND UNDERSTAND THAT RELATIONSHIP.

WHO ART IN HEAVEN, ACKNOWLEDGES WHERE GOD IS AND FIXES THAT IN RELATIONSHIP TO WHERE WE ARE.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME, IS THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WHAT GOD IS -- HE IS HOLY AND DESERVING OF PRAISE AND HONOR AND GLORY.

SO FAR WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT PRAISE TO GOD. IN THIS EXEMPLARY PRAYER, IT SAYS TO ME THAT CONVERSATION WITH GOD SHOULD BEGIN WITH PRAISE.

THY KINGDOM COME, HAS TO DO WITH THE ORDER OF THINGS IN GOD'S WILL. IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO MAKE HIS WILL YOUR WILL AND BRING ORDER TO EVERYTHING YOU DO.

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN, INDICATES THAT BECAUSE HE IS PREEMINENT THERE; HE SHOULD BE PREEMINENT IN OUR HEARTS.

REMEMBER I SAID WE WOULD BE DOING ALLITERATION IN P'S.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PRAYER, AND PRAISE IS WHAT I HAVE SAID COMES
FIRST.

THE NEXT "P" IS GOING TO BE PETITION, BUT BE VERY CLEAR THAT
PRAISE PRECEDES PETITION.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD, IS NOT BECAUSE THE LORD
DOESN'T KNOW WHAT WE NEED BUT IT MAKES US FOCUS ON THE ESSENTIALS
AND WHAT IS IN HIS WILL.

GOD WILL PROVIDE OUR NEEDS BUT HE WANTS TO BE ASKED. IN A PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP, THE PARENT WANTS TO BE MORE THAN JUST A PROVIDER. SO IT IS WITH GOD WHO WANTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CHILD.

WE HAVE BEEN PETITIONING WITH A "P" - FOR PROVISION WITH A "P". AND WE HAVE THE NEW TESTAMENT PROMISE THAT "MY GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS." - NOT WANTS, BUT NEEDS.

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS, IS THE CRUX OF ANY PRAYER. DEBTS ARE SINS AND ONLY GOD CAN FORGIVE SIN. AND WITHOUT THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN WE CAN HAVE NO EXPECTATION OF FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM HERE OR ABODE WITH HIM LATER. THIS IS A "P" FOR THIS IS PURIFICATION.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL, ARE PETITIONS ASKING FOR PROTECTION.

THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOR EVER, HAS SPECIAL MEANING FOR ME. JESUS HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE WILDERNESS WHERE HE HAD BEEN TEMPTED BY SATAN. THERE, SATAN TEMPTED HIM BY OFFERING HIM THE KINGDOM'S OF THIS EARTH, THE POWER TO RULE THEM, AND THE GLORY THAT GOES WITH IT IF JESUS WOULD BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP HIM. JESUS, WITH THAT EXPERIENCE SO RECENT, IS ACKNOWLEDGING TO GOD HIS FATHER, IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS DISCIPLES, THAT THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY ARE UNIQUELY HIS FATHER'S. I LIKE TO THINK THAT WHEN HE PRAYED THIS SENTENCE -- HE EMPHASIZED THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER.

AMEN, MEANS YOUR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF "SO BE IT".

TO RECAPITULATE THE "P'S". WE'VE BEEN DISCUSSING THE POWER OF PRAYER. THE ORDER OF EVENTS IN THE LORD'S PRAYER IS PRAISE, PETITION FOR PROVISION. THEN PETITION FOR PROTECTION -- AND REMEMBER PRAISE PRECEDES PETITION -- THEN PETITION FOR PURIFICATION.

THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF PRAISE HAS TO DO WITH PREEMINENCE -- THAT'S THE KINGDOM, WITH POWER AND WITH PERFECTION - THAT'S GLORY.

PRAYER IS HOW WE FIND COURAGE TO LIVE AS A CHRISTIAN, TO FIND A SPOUSE, TO BEAR THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, TO ENDURE REJECTION, TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN, JOBS, AND MUCH MORE -- TO KEEP IN CLOSE COMMUNICATION WITH GOD.

GOD IS REAL; GOD IS PERSONAL; GOD IS THERE. GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US THROUGH THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS, THROUGH HIS PROPHETS AND APOSTLES AND FINALLY THROUGH HIS SON.

THEOLOGY, WHICH IS THE STUDY OF GOD, CAN BE AS COMPLICATED AS YOU WANT TO MAKE IT.

THE LATE CARL BARTH, WAS A THEOLOGIAN'S THEOLOGIAN. HE WAS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLICATED THEOLOGIANS THAT EVER LIVED, AND I FOR ONE, FOUND HIM VERY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND. YET WHEN WE WAS AN OLD MAN OVER 90, HE GRANTED A RARE INTERVIEW TO REPORTERS WHO HAD BEEN TRYING TO SEE HIM FOR YEARS, THEY ASKED HIM THIS QUESTION: WHAT IS THE MOST PROFOUND THING THAT YOU HAVE EVER LEARNED IN YOUR LIFE? CARL BARTH VERY QUIETLY AND SLOWLY SAID WHAT EVERY CHILD LEARNS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL. "JESUS LOVES ME THIS I KNOW FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO".