



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

January 10, 2016

Down to Business

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. —Luke 2:49-50

The weeks surrounding Christmas and approaching the New Year can be very productive. As a teacher, I don't have to go in to school and prepare lessons, so the year's end is a great time to reflect and plan and do some "big picture" preparation. This year, some good work got done for teaching, home and family, and for ministry. By God's grace, I believe I've started the year off on focus.

Focus is the point of prayer. We turn our eyes to our Maker and seek our good from our Savior and Lord alone. When we focus on the One who said, *Apart from me, you can do nothing* (John 15:5), we learn the truth that *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13).

This was the focus our Lord commended in His exchange with Martha. While Mary zeroed in on what Jesus had to say, Martha *was distracted with much serving* (Luke 10:40). Convinced that her activities were the proper priority, Martha complained to Jesus and asked Him to tell Mary to get down to business and help. We do well not to overlook His response. *"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her"* (Luke 10:41-41).

Time focused on our Savior is not wasted.

Time with Jesus—time in prayer—is a lot of things. It is a time of productive work. *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working* (James 5:16). It is a time of thanksgiving, rejoicing, and gladness. *Come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise* (Psalm 95:2). *Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing* (Psalm 100:2). It's a time when God teaches the Christian where strength truly lies. *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2nd Corinthians 12:9).

Prayer is such a powerful activity, a joy and a privilege. Yet we miss it so easily. Distractions from prayer are legion and a part of our fallen nature—even in these days when there is a growing sense of urgency, that things have gone off track, and that we as a country have lost something essential.

The United States has never been "a Christian nation," but we have historically been an outgrowth of Christendom. We've been a place where God's people have been free to seek Him earnestly and to prayerfully pursue the work of His kingdom. Christians have long sought God in prayer for the good of our country, and now our culture is refusing to have anything to do with the God who has blessed us so richly. Things seems to be going desperately wrong and we don't know what to do about it.

Prayer is the power of the people of God.

But there's so much to be done! Service in God's kingdom takes study, standing for the truth, caring for others, fellowship, regular worship, giving. Raising kids these days requires hours supporting academics, sports, extra-curricular activities, preparing for college, church functions, hours in the car. Focus on our Savior tends to slip into—and then through—the cracks. How do we hold it all together?

We don't. God does. That's the point.

That's the point Mary understood perfectly, while her sister Martha fretted with serving and preparation. Everything good comes from Christ.

When they lost Jesus on their trip to Jerusalem, it took Joseph and Mary three days to find Him. They didn't understand the focus of His heart. Mary even forgot who Jesus' Father was—and who he wasn't. *Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You* (Luke 2:48). But the Son reminded them that His heart was focused on the things of His Father, *who works all things after the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:11).

It's time to get down to business. It's time to pray.

To the praise of God's glory

