



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

March 11, 2018

Near to the Heart of God

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." —Jeremiah 9:23-24

The deep things of God are not theological or grammatical. Explanations from the Greek or Hebrew don't necessarily reveal profound truth. No explanation is of any value unless it helps us to understand. And what we most need to understand the heart of the One who made us and rules the world and governs all the affairs of everyone in it. We'll never comprehend God in all His ways, but His Word has revealed enough to help us know His heart, and trust that His intentions are good for everyone.

Our intentions, on the other hand, center on ourselves. Because humanity has determined not to trust God, obedience to His will is a foreign concept. We crave what we can get from Him instead of trusting His goodness in all things, at all times. We seek wisdom, so we can live without depending on God and admitting that His ways are better than ours. Power appeals to us, so we can take care of ourselves and be indebted to no one—not even God. We covet possessions, so we won't fear needing anything. Human hands are grasping by nature, and our imaginations incessantly invent things to desire.

Trust is such a relief. It's also a gift from God that doesn't come to us by nature. Neither do rest, repose, or relinquishing. These capacities come from God alone, who gives only good gifts. Drawing near to God really means responding to His tug on our lives and letting ourselves be His possession. Letting go—not temporarily but completely—is essential to intimacy with God.

But do we dare? Can we trust our God with ourselves? Do our concerns matter to Him? Human longings are so strong! Will anyone other than us be committed to satisfying them? Learning God's "Yes" to that question is the story of our lives and an adventure that keeps the angels spellbound.

Humans feel delight because the God who made us feels it too. Things exhilarate us, because the One who made us is able to be exhilarated. And His word tells us that He delights in three things: *steadfast love, justice, and righteousness*, and He has bound us to Himself in a covenant relationship (not unlike a marriage), so He can show us just how much He loves us.

God's *steadfast love* is His determination to keep His covenant bond intact. He simply won't let His children go. His love for us is inescapable, because His bond with us is unbreakable. That's why God hates divorce. It portrays Him as untrustworthy and His love as fickle. But nothing delights God more than to say, "I gave my Son for you, so you know you can trust me to provide whatever you need."

But can we trust God to manage the affairs of seven billion people fairly? Won't He neglect one person (most likely me!) and favor someone else? That's where God's *justice* comes in. Our omnipotent God has the capacity to manage the affairs of all the world and everyone in it with perfect equity for the good of everyone. But God does more than just manage things. He delights in perfect justice, so that no one can claim to be treated the least bit unfairly. Putting His righteous character on display, so all can see His perfect justice, brings Him glory and focuses every eye on how well He does all things.

And God's *righteousness* is the objective standard for all goodness and justice. Faith ultimately means recognizing that God, and God alone, does all things well. Faith trusts Him in all He says and does, and believes that He will sustain us in everything we go through and reward us in the end.

Get to know your God. Delight in the One who delights in you. Trust Him no matter what path He has for you, so He can reveal Himself to you. Get to know His heart, as He shares His delights with you. You will give up nothing you need and gain riches beyond imagining. God wants you to understand and know Him, so you can delight with Him in *the praise of His glory*.

Prayer for the Week

Sunday (Church): Pray for Terilyn Brown (Children’s Ministry Director). Seek God’s power for ministry and protection from spiritual, physical, and personal harm for Terilyn and her family.

Monday (Home and Family): Pray for your family and close friends who do not know Christ. Ask God to save them from their sins and lead them in His gracious will.

Tuesday (Job/School): Ask Christ to reveal Himself through you to your fellow workers. Ask God’s help you love Him with all your heart, soul, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

Wednesday (Neighborhood and Community): Pray for the she safety, integrity, and effectiveness of the local police, sheriff and fire departments.

Thursday (Our Nation): Ask God to turn America’s heart to honor Him and our wills to obey His Word.

Friday (The World): Pray for Spiritual transformation and physical healing for those suffering in the AIDS epidemics in Africa and across the globe.

Saturday (Praise and Rejoicing): List ten things that you enjoy. Tell the Giver how much you appreciate Him, as well as the gifts He gives.

Faith Is ...

Learning to love what God loves, so that what matters to Him matters to us, until we learn to live as He lives—for the sake of others.

Prayer Record

Record specific prayers you have below. Note when and how God answers your prayers. It will help you to see that He really is paying attention.

Date	Request	Date	Answer

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. –Proverbs 3:5-6*