

Making evangelism a way of life

Prayer.

PODCAST OVERVIEW

Bullet points from Neville Barnes podcast.

1. Person of Peace and the role of Preparation and Power.
 2. How to help people journey towards Jesus.
 3. Establishing a culture of sowing, reaping, keeping.
- In response to the great commission the disciples uses again and again the model of person of peace.
 - The prior model was the temple model, a building with organised gatherings, rituals, culture. The people went from where they were and moved towards the temple, even from other nations. Outside of temple time local smaller gathering would happen in a synagogue. This was sometimes a person's home from within the community of faith.
 - Is the temple model similar to our church format today?
 - The great commission model was not **come** but **go**. There was no centre, no building, no programme. The ritual was going. The culture was demonstrate what the Kingdom of God is like and explain it to others.
 - The direction of travel had changed from one kind in the Old Testament to a new one in the New Testament.

What does on the go, day in day out prayer look like when it happens in the bible?

The famous go to prayer model, the Lords prayer in Matthew 6 or Luke 11.

- In Matthew 10 Jesus starts the sermon on the mount (this prayer is about half way through).
- His repeated lines are 'you have heard it said' followed by the accepted thinking of the day which he turns on its head or ups the stakes by saying, but I tell you...'
- By Matthew 11 he says to do two things in secret. Giving money and Prayer.
- He is drawing attention to attitude and motivation (see v5).
- He then addresses superstition in v7. Superstition can be a motivator even in practices of prayer. Its His motivation, His character, His commitment and His promises that our prayer life sits on.

What does on the go, day in day out prayer look like when it happens in the bible?

JESUS SHIFTS THE CENTRE POINT.

Centre point is not me, how often, where or how I pray. It is not need, circumstance or my commitment to prayer.

Jesus gives prayer a new centre point.

Matthew 11 v 7&8 he doesn't centre on the quality of my words or the urgency or the depth of need but places both the words and needs into a new centre/a new focus.

The presence of God is the centre point.

Read the Lord's prayer in v 9 - 13, it has words, it has needs but they are held/stitched together by the presence of God.

PENTECOST

They are waiting to receive power (as instructed by Jesus).

While they waited they prayed and attended to practical issues.

One practical issue they prayed about was replacing Judas. The prayers around the practical are in v24 and v25. It is good to see the church gathered, talking about practical needs and praying about them. That is normal life in a church.

Then Pentecost!

BUT BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT PENTECOST!

A few months earlier (Matthew 27 v 51) an event happened in the Temple. The Veil to the Holy of Holies tore when Jesus died.

- The temple had been the centre point for God.
- It is where people went to pray.
- It was the presence of God on earth.
- In Matthew 27 v 51 this centre point ends. No more centralised gathered centre.
- The role of a temple however had not ended but took a new way of being.

THE TEMPLE AFTER PENTECOST.

- Acts 2. By 09:00 in the morning the Spirit poured out = 120 'temples' in effect. By evening that became 3000 people/temples.
- The temple is a house/place of prayer.
- Any space God inhabits is a place of prayer.
- People get to encounter God's presence in the place of prayer.
- We no longer gather TO a place to prayer, we ARE the place of prayer.
- We ARE the prayer meeting.
- We ARE the space people get to encounter the presence of God.
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HOW IS YOUR TEMPLE?

In Matthew 21 Jesus clears the temple because the space was no longer carrying any possibility of people encountering the presence of God. It was no longer habitable as a place of prayer.

- He cleared it of the business transactional frantic life that had filled it.
- He cleared it from noise.
- He cleared it from congestion and clutter.
- How is your temple (English doesn't do justice to the singular and plural), its both you and the you community.

TEMPLE CLEARANCE A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME...

- In Matthew 21 after Jesus clears the temple, the open free space fills with people who otherwise would not have been there. It says it filled with the blind and the lame.
- It filled with Children singing Hosanna.
- A place of welcome.
- A place of healing.
- A place of noise (but a worship filled kind).
- A place surrounded by hostility (those offended in the shadows).
- A place for the least, the last and the lost.
- The presence of God and the Power of God resides in the place of prayer. Me. You.

Acts 3 v 1-11. The realisation of the things that were to come.

- Going to the gathered 15:00 prayer meeting in the temple as always.
- The beautiful gate was the boundary line to the temple.

Traditionally beyond the boundary was the presence and power of God. However about 2 months earlier the Veil torn open on the day Jesus died. The veil symbolic of the separation between God and us. The temple had other physical separation points that highlights those in and those out. Since Pentecost, the presence of God had taken residence beyond the beautiful gate in people like Peter and John.

- In Acts 1 we see a gathered church having a prayer meeting to deal with the business of church life. Its organised, ordered, it brings solutions for the internal life of the church.
- In Acts 3 we see a scattered church having a prayer meeting to deal with the chaos of the world's life. Its organic (in the spur of the moment), its reordering (rather than ordered), it brings solutions for life external to itself.
- Prayer for the internal life of the church looks different and has a different language to the prayers offered in a missional setting.
- The lame man initiates the connection and Peter and John had the good sense to allow the presence and power of God (now resident in them) to respond.

Have a look at Acts 3. Its full of variations of the word see. Horaó is the original word and signifies looking in order to see deeper, looking beyond what is initially seen. In the book of Acts you will observe that practice of seeing, hearing and releasing value (that is just a by the way moment).

Before they get to their prayer meeting in the old temple the presence and power of God has already been at work from the new temple in two forms, words and actions. That whole package of connection, presence, power, word, action becomes the activation point for the release of the Kingdom of God.

- While it is dependent on God working, it is also dependent on Peter and John's own spiritual posture. They were on their way to pray - good practice - but their posture was not ahead of them (we can easily live rushed as though already in whatever or whoever we are going to).

- Their posture was to be present to the time they were already in rather than the one they were going to be in. Their posture was that God was resident in them, the new house/place of prayer.
- They didn't need to draw down God's power, the power of God was in them.
- They didn't need to invite God's presence, the presence of God was in them. *I am not saying not to pray inviting God's power or presence. The words we use in our prayers are powerful for those hear them. Jesus does this in John 11 v 41 & 42.*
- Their posture centred on God, not the prayer, not the need, not being late for temple!

Acts 16. Thanksgiving. Praise. Worship.

We covered this a few weeks ago. Paul and Silas in prison overnight after being severely beaten.

- The vast majority of prayer in the New Testament has its focus on God (not ignoring need, difficulty, suffering, persecution, hunger, practicalities or rejection but the focal point is who God is). They are in danger and difficulty and face it through worship.
- Thanksgiving, Praise and Worship...
 - Is not passive.
 - Is not feelings (though feelings are part of it).
 - Is not neutral.
 - Is powerful, impacting & transformative both of the person and circumstances.
 - Finds its natural home in the temple (in the NEW temple).
 - Has a deeper, longer lasting impact than other forms of prayer.
 - Is the best posture for mission and evangelism to come from.
 - Is the best posture for the power and presence of God to operate in.

Acts 16. Thanksgiving. Praise. Worship.

SUGGESTED PRACTICES DURING ADVENT.

- 3 minutes of prayer in the morning before you get into your day.
 - 1 minute for thanksgiving
 - 1 minute for praise
 - 1 minute for worship
- I use the timer on my phone to keep to the minute.
 - this develops my practice of staying focused.
 - I don't stray or find tangent prayers or daydreaming.
 - It helps me know how long a minute actually is, it is amazing what you can cover in 1 minute.

- THANKSGIVING.

Thanksgiving draws us away from being negative, critical (even of ourselves), whinging, complaining or stuck.

- Hold something like a stone or simply open your hands from closed to open and as I do this I think about what is the thing or person who is most present to me other than God (*the thing or person most present will be the presence that shapes you, your reactions, your engagement*).
- Now that you are aware of the thing most present to you, set it down and begin to say thank you that you can lay it down at the cross.
- Thank Jesus that it matters to Him and thank Him that He is reliable with whatever you are giving to Him.
- Thank Him that He receives everything.
- Thank Him for being generous, thank Him for being eager to be with you right now.
- Thank Him using the bible 'He who began a good work will complete it' or I thank him for His 'fresh love, for His compassion and that they are new this morning'.
- Thank Him that He hears you, thank Him for listening to you.
- Thank Him that you don't need to carry _____ into your day.
- Thank Him for the freedom and that He knows you, He knows your mood and your need and nothing puts him off moving towards you to be present to you.
- You get the idea!

In being thankful I am not burying my head in the sand re whatever I am setting down. I'm actually shifting my focus from it to Him.

I now transition to my second minute and physically I move from the space I gave thanks in and also turn around. It helps me have a sense of leaving what I've prayed about with God.

- PRAISE

Psalms 22v3 paints the picture of God inhabiting praise, dwelling among the praises of His people.

- Having turned around I begin to praise, I usually start each sentence with I praise you... simply to keep me focused.
- I may hold my hands to my chest (for some people symbolism helps them focus).
- I praise the Holy Spirit for making His home in me.
- I praise Him that my room is full of His presence, that he is already present in the day ahead of me, waiting on me.
- I use bible verse, perhaps ones I've been reading...
- I may praise Him that I am a new creation, the old has gone the new has come.
- I praise Him that He will never leave me nor forsake me.

- WORSHIP

I Either leave the room or I move to the door and before leaving the room use my last minute to worship. Again if you find symbolism or an action helpful, you could get on your knees, stretch out your hands and bow your head. In praise I am aware of God who becomes present to me. In worship this is flipped, I am now becoming aware that instead of Him coming to me, I am actually

coming into His presence. In thanksgiving issues, needs or people are often where my energy or focus is. In praise that has shifted and is in transition but really it is still likely that I am most aware of me. In worship God is the centre, I am becoming most aware of Him. For this minute I am no longer focusing or thinking about what I left with him in my time of thanksgiving. In worship I am moving away from whatever I'm aware of in me (good or bad) and becoming aware of what is in Him.

- This includes
 - I often describe this part of prayer as knowing that when I enter the presence of God all other things that have been present to me have no choice but to change. Some things are forced away from or into silence in his presence. Some things become still in His presence. All things start to transform in His presence, most especially me.
 - I may describe his presence. How I see it, how it feels, describe its impact.
 - I allow affection in me to word things I see in His character or interventions I have seen him do.
 - If I haven't been doing this practice for a while, this is the minute I find hardest to fill. However when I'm more habitual its the one I end up running over in or I enjoy saying nothing in but simply appreciate I've nothing much to say other than to enjoy His presence.

- **MINUTE 4**

Go downstairs, have breakfast and get on with your day.

OVERVIEW

THANKSGIVING

Moves us to a posture of letting go and readiness to receive. It readies us to change.

PRAISE

Causes our thinking to be at rest. We get more in line with how things are and who God is.

WORSHIP

Flicks the light to on in our spirit. Our soul lights us. We are ready to connect and have something to give that is more likely to be overflow than residue!

3 MINUTES

Its like brushing your teeth, regularity is where the impact lies. In just 3 minutes the real me comes into the presence of the real God. My circumstances may not have changed but I have and I'm ready to go. (by the way... minute 4... normally that is when I read the bible, the 3 minutes before have positioned me well to actually engage what I'm reading.

Will you give two more minutes to pray for others?

In the last few weeks you and the others in your meet-up have begun to share the names of people or places you'd love to see come to know Jesus.

Would you be willing to pray every day for those people and for the others in your meet-up as they (and you) are available for connections and conversations to happen? I'm asking that you do this for 1 minute around noon and again for 1 minute around 18:00.

Why only a minute twice in the day?

God is so keen to answer our prayer. Our effort isn't a great measure of prayer. Habit, regularity, consistency and faith are a better starting point than length or drama!

We so often start a sentence with, 'I don't have time!' I'm guessing we can all afford a minute twice a day and its only during advent. Lets see if it has any impact.

How do we do this?

Praying for the others.

During the last 8 weeks you have been encouraged to take notes during your meet-up. It helps us remember what others say and what we said! In theory, you will also have written the names, places or connection points that the others have said. If not go back to them and ask them.

We will use Colossians 4v3-4 as our model. Even in prison Paul is asking for prayer (not to get out but to make the most of his location), he asks for some things in particular. We will use these for our 1 minute prayer. They are.

- Lord open a door (open up an opportunity)
 - **OPPORTUNITY**
 - We are asking for a natural opportunity for us to have a faith/Jesus conversation with another person.
 - This means that conversations are not forced, there is no manipulation, it is not contrived, It is not pressured.
 - It might be something going on in their or your life, or in the world at large that allows you to naturally reference your faith or speak about Jesus impact in that context in your life.
- Lord open their heart (that they be open to the opportunity and to the conversation)
 - **OPENNESS**
 - Lord you have got me ready to talk to them, would you get them ready to hear what I say and be open to it. That is basically what we are asking for. It also means we need to stay sensitive as any conversation is happening.
 - We are asking God to do some things in their hearts or minds or spirit (God knows what this is better than us AND knows the timescale) that would prepare them for the conversations we have with them.
- Lord open my mouth (that I can see the opportunity and openness BOTH present AND I speak).
 - **SPEAK UP**
 - The first two are largely God's work and in part ours. This one is surprising mainly ours to do though technically it is God speaking through us. We often try to do the first two in the hope that we don't have to speak but that somehow God will speak. This will burn us out and frustrate us. Saint Paul seems ready and relaxed all at the same time. Part of that is knowing what is Gods responsibility and what is ours and not to switch them.

- Sometimes opportunity comes but the person isn't open (or the reverse). When we see and hear both are aligned then we speak.
- In asking God to open our mouth we are asking God to give us courage.
- That we would have the right words.
- That God would give us the right approach.
- That a space/time/sense of timeliness would open up around the words spoken.
- That it would be God's Spirit speaking to their spirit as I speak (even if I don't know what God is speaking into them).

Example.

Easily in 1 minute...

Lord open a door and open the hearts of John, Amy, Ian, Ujjal and Caoimhe. Lord open the mouth of Neville to speak to them (*I thought I might as well stick myself in there*). Amen.

If I wasn't yet aware of people but knew the place where I felt God had for me to speak (*for Saint Paul this was the prison he was in*) then I'd ask the others in my meet-up to pray...

Lord open a door and open the hearts in Parson Cross (where I live). Lord open the mouth of Neville (*Yes, me again*) to speak there. Amen.