



## **A DISCIPLE'S PRACTICE**

One of my favorite things about being here with the preschool children is listening to the “stories” they tell. At least several times a year I hear a convincing four year old say, “We’re going to Disney World!” To the teacher’s “when,” he naturally says, “tomorrow!” So when mommy picks him up, the teacher wishes her “lots of fun at Disney” and asks, “When will Derick be back to school?” Of course, the family isn’t packing for a trip but mommy and daddy have been talking about it and Derick’s sure they’re going and why wouldn’t they go tomorrow? This is the best example of childlike trust in our heavenly Father; absolute confidence.

I think we have that; we have our moments of complete confidence. We hear something of the Good News of Jesus’ love for us, we read a promise Jesus makes and something in our hearts and souls says, “Yes, I trust that.” We’ll go along for years or hours with that trust but then something happens; something that proves that trust is silly. You could read a verse before breakfast that you trust and go out the door to work or to school and wham, the world slams you in the head and says, “What were you thinking?” A lengthy illness, a long time of unemployment or the death of someone we dearly love; in other words, all the darkness of the world shakes our childlike confidence and we doubt, deny or get cynical about God’s love and Jesus’ promises.

When Derick’s mommy explains that they’re not going to Disney tomorrow but someday, he’s angry that he’s wrong and doesn’t understand. Isn’t that how you feel when it seems God’s promise doesn’t match your expectation? All of the great followers and believers experience that very thing. I think Jesus experienced times of confusion, discouragement, the feeling of unbelievable betrayal. How did He stay on track, trusting God for everything promised even the hard stuff like sacrifice? Yes, He was fully God but while here, fully human.

Prayer; prayer was something Jesus set aside time for everyday and at regular times of the day. First thing in the morning before anyone else was awake, whenever He was about to teach which would be about mid-day, at the end of the day and at night. Many religious traditions have “set times” to pray, some are five times, some seven, some three. It isn’t meant to become a ritual that is done for the sake of doing it, but to bring the praying soul back to the God Who loves and cares. It’s a re-centering of the heart, mind and soul with Him. Life is simpler; making choices is simpler. Being a child of God has become the simplest role I’ve ever known. There are so many strings attached to human relationships but with God the only string attached is that He loves me, just as I am with all my imperfections and uses those imperfect things to grow my faith and His Kingdom.

Disciples, you don't have to pray five specific times each day, but you need to recognize specific times when you need to reconnect with God, to feel Jesus' love and to receive whatever you need for the task at hand. It's not the same thing as praying through the day, talking with God as you're actively doing things. It's a conscious stopping and taking time to reconnect with the only One who consistently has your best interest at heart. I suggest morning, noon and night.

The first thing I do when I awake is say; "Good morning, Lord. Thank you for another day and all the opportunities in it." Then I pray for those I care about. If you've asked me to pray for you, I tell you every day at 6 a.m. I bring you into my time with God, I name you and ask Him to hold onto you or hold you up. Then I pray to be a reflection of Him throughout my day. I use the Discipleship prayer but truthfully, the Lord's Prayer is perfect too.

At noon, lunch time, or whenever you get a break from your work day, I suggest you just sit still and hold the world behind you and let nothing come between you and God. Then say, "Lord for the next five minutes nothing is more important to me than You." Quiet your mind; sometimes it hard to shut everything out, so I suggest using a mantra. You could simply say, "Lord, God, Heavenly Father." And set a timer; don't watch the clock. At the end of the five minutes, say, "Thank You, amen." You'll feel your emotions, priorities, motivations realign with Jesus. It's calming and energizing; it becomes the fuel for the afternoon. Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on the word of God."

At the end of the day, we all need a refuge from the world, from the evil we've seen, heard or been part of; we all do. This prayer time is the time to run back home and find that child-like trust you started with. The world entices us to worship its darkness, so disciples of Jesus need to run back and worship the light. With an honest mind and heart, knowing the evil I've been part of, the doubts I've had, I run back to God seeking refuge from it all and worship Him. Thinking forward to the next day, I go over my schedule and ask Him to keep His hand on everything I'll do.

None of this needs to take any longer than five minutes; it's very doable. But most importantly it's what Jesus taught by example and what we are encouraged to follow. **Psalm 55:17 (NKJV)** Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. Amen.

