

Do you ever feel like you need a little perspective? I was sent a delightful e-mail that brought a sense of perspective to me as well as a smile to my face.

It seems one Sunday, just minutes before the church services started the people were sitting in their pews and talking. Suddenly, Satan appeared at the front of the church. Everyone started screaming and running for the front entrance, trampling each other in a frantic effort to get away from evil incarnate. Soon everyone had exited the church except for one elderly gentleman who sat calmly in his pew without moving.

So Satan walked up to the old man and said, "Don't you know who I am?"

The man replied, "Yep, sure do."

"Aren't you afraid of me?" Satan asked.

"Nope, sure ain't" said the man.

"Don't you realize I can kill you with a word?" asked Satan.

"Don't doubt it for a minute," returned the old man, in an even tone.

"Did you know that I could cause you profound, horrifying, physical agony forever?"

"Yep," was the calm reply.

"And you're still not afraid?" asked Satan.

"Nope."

"More than a little perturbed, Satan asked, "Well, why aren't you afraid of me?"

The man calmly replied, "Been married to your sister for 45 years."

Now that man, had a sense of perspective on life!

That is what prayer can do, it can give us a sense of perspective on life. That is why we have been doing this sermon series, *O Lord Help! Learning How to Pray*. This has been a "how to" series, to give us some opportunities to experiment with different methods of prayer all in an effort to help us connect with God and grow in faith. All in an effort, to help us gain a sense of perspective, that life isn't about us.

In our scripture for today Jesus reminds us that if we "Ask, we will receive. If we seek, we will find, if we knock, the door will be opened to us." Because if we earnestly come before God, asking God to help meet our needs, the God who loves us, the God who created us is just waiting to respond to us.

Prayer, as we have been describing it over the last month and a half is all about building a relationship with God, so God can help us face the challenges of life. It is truly about putting life in perspective, with the help of God.

Today, I want to share with you two methods of prayer that I have found helpful. **The First**, I would call a form of Meditation. It is imagining coming into the presence of Jesus and simply asking, "what do I need to hear from you today?"

To do this type of meditation, you will want to get comfortable in a chair. Put both feet on the floor. Rest your hands comfortably on your lap. Take several deep breaths to cleanse your mind, body and spirit. It usually helps me to imagine that I am breathing in God's Spirit as I take these breaths.

Then I imagine walking over a hill and down a valley. I take my time in this. I take one step at a time, I notice what the hill looks like all around me. I imagine what smells I might smell and what the sky might look like.

As I cross over the crest of the hill and look into the valley below, I see a tree with a bench or a table, with someone waiting at it. As I get closer, I realize that it is Jesus, and he has been waiting just for me.

I imagine the joy of meeting Jesus, of sitting in the presence of my friend. When I sit down, I eventually ask, "What is it you want to tell me today?", then I just listen.

To my amazement, so many times, I will actually hear a message on something that I have been thinking about or troubled by. This is a terrific method for prayer.

The second method is the one I introduced last week in worship. It is the one printed in your bulletin. Personally, I have been using this method daily since February 8th of this year. I am finding it incredibly helpful as a way to look to God, to read scripture and to listen to God. In fact, I have found it so helpful that I am asking our program staff to do this and they have been actively involved in doing this method as well.

Here is what you do:

Life Journal

1. Find the scripture for today in the Bible reading program.

2. *Read the passages slowly and with an open heart. Ask God to open your heart and mind to what you need to hear from the scriptures today.*
3. *Pick one of the scriptures that speak to your heart and turn to a fresh page in your notebook. Remember to number your pages in the upper, outside corner. At the top of the page, write today's date. Remember to title your lesson. Use the following acronym.*
 - Ⓢ *S (Scripture) . . . record the scripture that speaks to you.*
 - Ⓞ *O (Observation) . . . Write your observation of the passage as the Lord leads you, keeping things in the larger context of the text.*
 - ⓐ *A (Application) . . . Make an application of this passage to your life. How does this address/challenge you in an area that you are working on right now?*
 - Ⓟ *P (Prayer) . . . Write out your prayer to the Lord to ask for God's help in applying what God has just revealed to you.*
 - Ⓨ *Y (Yield) . . . Write down one thing I need to yield to God, because of reading this passage.*
4. *Designate some pages as a Table of Contents and record your journal entry for quick recall. Write the date, scripture, topic, title, and page number.*
5. *Conclude your daily devotional time by turning to God in prayer. Pray for the church, for people from the church, for others you know in need of God's touch, for your family and for yourself.*

What I am discovering as I do this method is that I feel the presence of God leading me as I face the challenges of life. I find that I have a word from God to focus on as I face stressful times. I am finding this incredibly helpful as I seek to connect with God. That is what prayer can help us do. It helps us connect with God and in doing this, it helps give us a needed perspective on life.

A number of years ago, I listened to a Bishop of our church who had faithfully served the church. As a Bishop he was frequently traveling. As he concluded this sermon I was listening to, he told of an interesting experience in his life.

He had been on a long flight. The first warning of the approaching problems came when the sign on the airplane flashed on: Fasten your seat belts. Then, after a while, a calm voice said, "We shall not be serving the beverages at this time as we are expecting a little turbulence. Please be sure

your seat belt is fastened." As he looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming nervous. Later, the voice of the announcer said, "We are so sorry that we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The turbulence is still ahead of us."

Then the storm broke. The ominous cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightening lit up the darkening skies, and within moments that great plane was like a cork tossed around on an ocean. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air; the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash.

The Bishop confessed that he shared the fear of those around him. He said, "As I looked around the plane, I could see that nearly all the passengers were upset and alarmed. Some were praying. Many were wondering if they would make it through the storm."

And then suddenly, he saw a little girl. Apparently the storm meant nothing to her. She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat; she was reading a book and every thing within her small world was calm and orderly. Sometimes she closed her eyes, then she would read again; then she would straighten her legs, but worry and fear were not in her world. When the plane was being buffeted by the terrible storm, when it lurched this way and that, as it rose and fell with frightening severity, when all the adults were scared half to death, that marvelous child was completely composed and unafraid. The Bishop could hardly believe his eyes.

It was not surprising therefore, that when the plane finally reached its destination and all the passengers were hurrying to disembark, the Bishop sought out the girl whom he had watched for such a long time. When he found her, he said, "Why weren't you afraid?" The sweet child replied, "Sir, my Dad is the pilot, and he is taking me home."

There are many kinds of storms of life that will challenge us. Some will be physical. Some will be mental. Some will be financial. Some will be domestic. These storms will come and quickly darken our skies and throw our plane into apparently uncontrollable movement. We have all known such times, and let us be honest and confess it. But that is when we need to turn to God in prayer, trusting in the God who wants to be our pilot. Who wants to meet all of our needs.

May God teach us to pray. May God teach us to live. May God guide us through the challenges of life.

Amen