

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

April 21, 2020



“Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.”

Psalms 32:6 [Photo: North Shore, Oahu]

Prayer for Non-Experts

These times seem to be the ideal time for spending much time in prayer. After all, most of us have more time on our hands and many, if not all of us, are at least a little bit anxious about the immediate future. I’m a preacher so, *ergo*, I’m an expert on prayer — *not true*. It is one of those areas in life that I constantly have to work on. I know we’re commanded to pray, and I do, but I have to work at it harder than I feel that I should (I mean, I’m a *preacher*). One problem is that I have a hard time quieting my mind so that when I mention something in prayer, my mind starts wandering off into that area. Anyone else have that issue? Just me?

Another problem is that most of my education on prayer as kid came from listening to men pray in the assemblies, and that didn’t build any confidence in me. Many prayers were elegant, even beautiful. But often, the pray-er led the prayer with a voice that was different than his speaking voice and he used words that I never heard him use in regular conversation (e.g., “thees” and “thous” — even a “dost” now and then). And “prayer *cliches*” were abundant — pet phrases like “suit out our changes”; “guide, guard and direct”; or my favorite, “help us as we face the vicissitudes of life.” I couldn’t even pronounce “vicissitudes” and I certainly didn’t know what it meant. And some of the prayers were...*lengthy*. I’m not proud of this, but a friend and I used to clock some of the older

men’s prayers. The record, as I recall, was a bit over 12 minutes. *Twelve minutes*. So, what I learned about prayer was that it should be long and elegant and that there was a special “prayer language.” I was, apparently, supposed to use words that I never used when talking to my parents or my friends.

Several years ago, in another church, an elder made a comment after a young preacher led prayer at a gospel meeting. In the presence of several other men, some of whom had led a prayer during that week, the elder said, “I thought to myself, *‘wow, who is this? I need to meet this young man. That prayer was impressive.’*” I was envious of the young man who prayed so eloquently. But, as I reflected on the elder’s words, I said to myself, “is that what we’re supposed to be thinking when a man is praying? Are we supposed to be impressed by his eloquence?”

I say all this to encourage you to **just talk to God**. Talk to him for one minute or 12 minutes, privately, if possible, and in your own words. Start with expressing thanks about as many things as you can think of because that will cause you to think more carefully about you are asking God to do. And remember when you pray for something or for someone, think carefully about *what you are asking God to do*. Don’t get caught up in the mechanics of prayer. **Just talk to God** like you talk to a friend (albeit with more reverence and awe).