

Unlimiting God – Part 4

Climbing Higher

Sunday Morning, June 25, 2017

For the last three Sundays we have been talking about unlimiting God in our lives based on a book by Richard Blackaby. In my very first message in this series I very briefly mentioned the concept that as Christians we must draw near to God. I also mentioned that Christians who had lived their lives powerfully and effectively for God, like D.L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, a blind Pastor in Africa, or a woman with a great ministry to orphans all had one thing in common: intimacy with God. So today, I want to elaborate more on intimacy with God. I want to talk about each of us climbing higher in our relationship with Him, so that we can unlimit God in our lives.



Intimacy with God is like climbing a mountain. If you personally were presented with the opportunity to climb a mountain, how would you respond? _____

Would you think it was too big of a challenge? Too much physical activity? Not enough time in your schedule to do it? Maybe you don't have the right equipment or skills?



Many Christians come to the foot of the mountain. They look up at it, but they feel overwhelmed or inadequate to take on the challenge of climbing higher. So they remain where they are.



Many others may actually begin the journey. During the beginning of the climb they find the slope of the mountain is gradual, the path is wide and they enjoy the pleasant meadows and ice-cold streams they find.



They settle in camp for the night and enjoy the campfire and company of other climbers.



The next morning, the climbers wake up. Some awake to find their feet and legs are sore from the previous days climb. They choose to stay in camp and rest there.



Some made friends in camp and decide to stay with them in camp. They have things in common and are content to not move on in the climb.



A few climbers move on up the mountain side that morning. The slope is steeper, narrower. The views are more impressive as they climb. They miss their fellow climbers they left behind. They hope it wouldn't be long before they catch up and join them in the climb



As the days pass, each morning finds fewer climbers setting out on the climb. The pathway continues to narrow and is difficult at times to follow. The incline grows steeper and requires greater effort. But always, as the path becomes more demanding, the scenery becomes more spectacular.



It isn't hard to find reasons to turn back. There are plenty of aches and pains. Some of the travelers develop conflicts with fellow hikers. Others note despondently that the summit never seems to draw nearer. But a handful of dedicated and determined climbers continues to move upward, each one at his or her own pace. As they reach greater and greater heights and discover stunning new scenes of beauty, the climbers often cannot express what they're experiencing.



Finally, exhausted and spent, they slowly make their way up the steepest grade yet. The only thing pushing them upward is the thrilling realization that at last they're on the final ascent.



Painfully, but gratefully, they reach the breathtakingly beautiful crest – only to discover it isn't the summit after all. Ahead of them rise higher slopes crowned majestically in clouds. They keep going...



So those determined few press on. Knowing the Lord is like climbing that mountain. The ascent is available to all, but not everyone reaches the same level. Each of us decides how much effort to expend to reach the heights. Each of us ultimately decides how far and how high we'll go.

Certain aspects of the Christian life reveal clearly whether we've developed a deep and intimate relationship or walk with God. One of these is our prayer life.

Our prayer life will determine our intimacy level with God.

What does your prayer life mean to you?

_____ I can tell God my daily needs

_____ I can tell God my prayer requests for others?

_____ I have an opportunity to find out God's plans for me.

_____ I can get to know God and hear from Him, and find out His intentions and activity.

Prayer isn't merely for us to place our wishes before God; it's an opportunity for God to lay His heart upon us.

When we've truly prayed, we come away with a heart and mind like Gods.

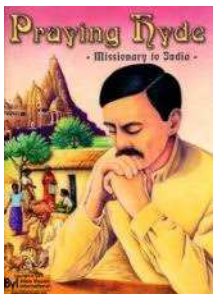
(2 Corinthians 3: 16 - 18)

16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Through our prayers, we do not conform God to our will, rather He transforms us as we abide in His presence.



John Hyde, a missionary to India in the 1800's, was known as "Praying Hyde". On one occasion, during a missionary gathering, Hyde shared a room with several others. One of those men tells the story of how he found Hyde down on his knees by his bedside soon after dawn. Each time he came back to the room throughout the day, he would find Hyde still down on his knees praying. At 6:30 that night, Hyde finally arose from his knees. The roommate asked Hyde what was the secret of all this. John Hyde then told him that he had a new vision of Christ and went on to tell him of the details. Step by step Hyde brought that roommate to see Christ that evening.

John Hyde was willing to pay any price, spend any amount of time, exert any effort to know Christ more intimately and personally. As a result, he grew to know Christ in ways his contemporaries did not. As John Hyde understood, one does not reach the profoundest moments in prayer in a few minutes.



We cannot rush in and out of God's presence and expect to have a deep, dramatic encounter with Him.

We must ready our hearts to meet with the Lord.

(Exodus 19: 10 – 11)

10 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.

11 And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

(Joshua 3:5)

And Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

The reason many of us do not hear God reveal more to us is that our time devoted to prayer is too rushed. Be prepared for sufficient time in prayer.



Jesus, our example, prioritized prayer. The disciples saw Him continually praying in secret and walking with spiritual power publicly. As a result, they asked Him “Lord, teach us to pray” in Luke 11:1.



Too often, however, we put the cart before the horse in our lives and make prayer an add-on. An afterthought. A bonus feature of what we’re already doing, placing our work ahead of Gods.



A deep devotion to prayer was always connected to the success of the New Testament church. Before the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost, the followers of Christ were “all with one mind”.

Turn to **(Acts 1:14)**.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.



The words “one accord” in NKJV or “devote” in other translations carries the idea of insisting on something and clinging to it. It’s the picture of a soldier staying close to his commanding officer or leader.

The Apostle Paul reminds us to be devoted to prayer in **(Colossians 4:2)**.

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

In this NKJV devote is translated “continue earnestly”.



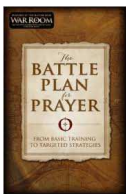
We need to remember we are interacting directly with the magnificent God of the Universe who is really right there with us when we pray. Sometimes we forget we’re in His presence when we pray. The Apostle John received great revelation from Jesus in His presence. Turn to

(Revelation 1:17)

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

From that point on John had God’s glory and the future revealed to him while in Jesus’ presence.

I love what the Kendrick Brothers said in their book, “The Battle Plan for Prayer”:



“If we could only understand what being in the presence of the Almighty is truly like, our mind wouldn’t be casually wondering. We wouldn’t be drifting in and out of sleep. We’d be fully alert and overwhelmed. All attention held captive. Stunned. Speechless. And when He did speak, we would be humble, reverent, and very careful what came out of our mouths.”

Prayer is communion with God in order to intimately know, love and worship Him.

Prayer is an ongoing, daily way to know God better and better – to comprehend more of who He is and what He does. And the more we know Him and experience Him, the deeper we grow in our respect and love for Him – Love that can never match the depth of His love for us.

(Ephesians 3: 17 – 19)

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul's prayer for the Church at Ephesus was that they would be able to comprehend God's love.

Priscilla Shirer said,

“Because praying – reaching outward and upward to Him – is the way His passion comes down. Even prayers that begin with the blunt edge of will power, dragging your heart along kicking and screaming, can soon begin to shine with the cutting edge of hope, faith and passionate confidence in Christ. Once the wind of God's Spirit starts blowing, you're no longer praying rote, innocuous prayers. Instead, you're praying deliberate prayers.”

Do you want to climb higher? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you want to draw nearer to God and have an intimate relationship with Him? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you want your passion to grow? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you want to have a prayer life that isn't rote and routine, where you are fully aware of God's presence? ☐ Yes ☐ No



It's up to you! You are the one who must determine to climb the mountain to see the majestic views despite any pain or sacrifices along the way. I challenge you to unlimited God in your life by climbing higher.