

Adult VBS –Hearing God’s Voice and Praying with God’s Word
Fr. Chad VanHoose

2. More on Relational Prayer, ARRR

a. Recap from yesterday

- i. We want/desire God, but he wants/desires us FIRST.
- ii. Relationship – Identity – Mission (Remain in me)
- iii. “For mental prayer, in my opinion, is nothing else than the intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.” (St. Teresa of Avila)
- iv. Method of relational prayer
 1. Silent time with God and Scripture (God’s Word)
 2. Six steps
 3. Curiosity and gentleness toward my heart
 4. Bringing thoughts, feelings, and desires (ARRR)
- v. Questions or comments before beginning today?

b. Relational Prayer

- i. Key things to know about God:
 1. He’s good.
 2. He knows you.
 3. He loves you.
 4. His initiative of love comes first.
 5. He desires to share his whole life with you.
- ii. Key things to know about yourself:
 1. You are loved by God and loveable.
 2. You are made for prayer.
 3. You are perfectly capable of a heart-to-heart conversation w/ God today.

iii. Relational Prayer

1. About prayer itself:
 - a. The goal of prayer = to be with God himself, right now, as you are.
 - b. The goal is not to receive some spiritual consolation and to experience good feelings.
 - c. Prayer is a personal relationship of growing intimacy with God.
 - d. Everything we know about relationship building applies to growing in relationship with God.
 - i. Shared experiences
 - ii. Consistency
 - iii. Honesty
 - iv. Vulnerability
 - e. Am I doing it right?

- i. Honesty and consistency are the only measures of prayer!
 - c. Why is it important to tell God about my thoughts, feelings, and desires?
 - i. Non-relational thinking is like a hamster wheel spinning inside my head.
 - ii. ARRR pulls my thoughts out of my head and relates them to the Father.
 - iii. Giving the Lord permission to speak into me.
 - iv. Thoughts, feelings, and desires are the spiritual grammar by which God wants to communicate with me.
 - d. A-R-R-R
 - i. Acknowledge
 - 1. This means to be aware of, pay attention to, notice, or name the interior movements of the heart (thoughts, feelings, desires).
 - ii. Relate
 - 1. I tell God about the prominent movements in my heart – the good, the bad, and the ugly. We enter into dialogue with him as a manifestation of our desire for relationship, in the confidence that he will answer.
 - iii. Receive
 - 1. Honest, consistent acknowledgement of one's inner state and relating the movements of the heart to the Lord dispose one to a generous receiving of all that God desires to give of himself. Reception of divine love is the most fruitful activity (Jean Corbon).
 - iv. Respond
 - 1. What we receive as gift calls for a response on our part. We decide in personal freedom to cooperate with the grace that is offered to us or to revert to self-will and self-reliance.

The Body of Prayer: Meditation and Contemplation

(From Timothy Gallagher's *Meditation and Contemplation: An Ignatian Guide to Praying with Scripture*)

"The greater part of our time in meditation and contemplation will generally be occupied in this: **calling to mind the truths in the passage, pondering them, and embracing them (*meditation*); or seeing the persons, hearing the words, and observing the actions in the scene (*contemplation*).**

At the heart of these methods lies a simple intuition: that we may enter the Word of God both *reflectively* and *imaginatively*. These methods are simply gateways, open doors into the richness of God's Word. In fact, Saint Ignatius of Loyola never attempts to specify what will happen once we have passed that door. Having entered reflectively or imaginatively, our hearts are utterly free to follow the drawings of grace.

Which method will we choose? In part, the choice will depend upon our personal inclinations and the promptings of grace in the moment...In part, it will depend upon the Scripture passage itself: texts that recount events (the Passion, the catch of fish, Jesus' encounter with children) offer themselves more readily to contemplation than those that state truths without narrative (the Good Shepherd knows his own, love is the heart of our vocation in the Church). At times, elements of both methods will mingle in a single time of prayer.

"We can picture ourselves standing in front of Jesus, and arouse in ourselves the liveliest sentiments of love for his Sacred Humanity; live in his presence, talk to him, ask him for the things we need, tell him about the things that are making us suffer, share our joys with him instead of letting them drive him from our thoughts; without looking for well-turned phrases in our prayers, but finding the words that express our desires and needs."

-Saint Teresa of Avila

"Do you think it is nothing to an anguished soul to grasp this truth, to see that she does not need to go up to heaven to speak to her eternal Father and enjoy his company, and that she does not have to shout to make herself heard by him? However softly we speak, he is so close to us that he can hear us; nor do we need wings to go in search of him, but merely to seek solitude and contemplate him with ourselves, without being surprised to find such a good Guest there."

-Saint John of the Cross