

5-22-22

There were three houses of religion in a small town:

The Presbyterian Church, The Baptist Church and The Jewish Synagogue.

Both churches and the Synagogue were overrun with pesky squirrels. One day, the Presbyterian Church called a meeting to decide what to do about the squirrels. After much prayer and consideration they determined that the squirrels were predestined to be there and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will. In The BAPTIST CHURCH the squirrels had taken up habitation in the baptistery. The deacons met and decided to put a cover on the baptistery and drown the squirrels in it. The squirrels escaped somehow and there were twice as many there the next week. Not much was heard about the Jewish Synagogue, but they took one squirrel and had a short service with him called circumcision and they haven't seen a squirrel on the property since.

Armed forces day,

LET'S PRAY

Relationships, we all have different relationships with people and they vary in depth.

When it comes to depth, how would you describe the depth of your relationship with God.

I think this can be better understood if we evaluate how are prayer lives are. Think about your best window of time with prayer, how did that feel? would you be able to score that a 10? I'm a huge fan of prayer and I love listening to others pray. I really enjoy times when people have conversations about prayer and when others share answers to prayer. As Christians, we all have one thing in common. Nobody ever feels like they pray enough. We all know that prayer is real important and it's been on my heart to explore why it's so hard to stay prayerful in all things. It's also been on my heart to understand why it can be so hard for us to be comfortable with praying publicly. I think about Philippians 4:13 **13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.** Many people grew up in homes and churches that taught them to fear God. I'm talking about the "hail fire and brimstone" approach to God.

Ephesians 6:4 tells us **4 Fathers, [b] do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.** If God is telling us not to exasperate our children then why would we want to try and make God out to be this way to others. It saddens me to think of how many people are so scared of God. God wants us to be a part of His intimate family. I don't think that parents or Christians intentionally exasperate children but it's a terrible feeling for anyone to believe that they're not good enough or that God is a God of anger. Christ came so that we could be adopted into God's care and control. Christ wants us to feel His presence "always". Luke 19:10 **10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."** Jesus came to forgive and to walk with us through everything. When we come to believe, we're given the gift of the Holy Spirit. This allows us to have a God filled life. **Nowhere does it say that Christ came to condemn anyone who believes. Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.** In John 8:36 **36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.** I think it's safe to say that we all set a side private times for prayer. This is very important and we should want to bow our heads and close our eyes. It makes a great connection with God. It allows us to escape all of life's battles and it allows us to focus on just God. Prayer is a time of reverence and prayer is what continually reminds us of how much God is over all things. So why do some churches or people use fear as a way to teach others about God? I was reviewing some verses in proverbs and I'd like to share a couple.

Proverbs 10:27 **The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.** Proverbs 19:23 **23 The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.** Proverbs 22:4 **4 Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.** Proverbs 28:14 **14 Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.** Proverbs 15:16 **16 Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.**

But when I read 1 Thessalonians 5:16 **"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"**

The proverbs verses are telling us to fear God but Thessalonians is telling us to praise and to give thanks. "Yes", we need to fear God but we need to understand what kind of fear proverbs is talking about. It's not telling us to live our lives "scared" of God. It's telling us how powerful God is. God is above everything and can do the unimaginable. If we want to take a good relationship with God and make it better, then we must find a power greater than ourselves. For me, by asking God to help me with this, He started by helping me with gaining a more prayerful life. Learning how to elevate prayer lives or learning how to experience a more consistent prayer life isn't easy. We've all experienced extreme highs and lows in our relationship with God and this can drive us crazy. Highs and lows happen to everyone and it doesn't matter what level of spiritual maturity you're at. We believe that God adopts us. So I'd like to get everyone to think about how the adoption process works. Some children get adopted at an older age but it's more common that children get adopted as infants or at very young ages. No matter how old a child is, when they're adopted, their adopted parents treat them just like their own flesh and blood. They do

everything to care for them. When they get sick or if they fall and get hurt, the parents heart hurts and they use love and touch for giving comfort. If that child is being bullied or made fun of, the parents feel it internally. It's like it was being done to them and they quickly come to their defense. Adopted parents include all other family members in the child's life. When it comes to family functions, the child is welcomed and is considered a part of the family. Parents are committed to raising that child in Christ. Simply put, an adopted child is family.

For the child, when a child is adopted as an infant, they don't know anything different. They connect and feel just like a natural born child. Growing up, they have a bond with their adopted parents and that allows them to freely be themselves. When they get in trouble or they brake things in the house, they get yelled at or disciplined. If they want to play sports, they get everything they need to do that. Maybe they want to learn a musical instrument or get into dance classes. Mom and dad teach them morals and help to develop their character.

The child grows up knowing them as "mom and dad". When the child learns about having a biological parent, most adopted parents have a fear because the child now has to make a choice.

Will the child want to keep them as mom and dad. They've bonded and raised this child just like they were their own flesh and blood but now they have to wait and see what the child is going to do. In most cases, because of the bond and because of love, an adopted child chooses to keep them as mom and dad. They have a forever family and they've had the freedom to seek comfort and to talk to them about anything.

I'd like to shift gears a little and talk about Foster children. A foster child is usually older and foster parents are in a different position than an adopted parent. Foster parents truly desires to have a positive impact on them but, they know that it's a temporal relationship. Like adopted parents, they prepare their home for them and most foster parents start off wanting to do anything for them. A foster parent has been counseled and has accepted the fact that a foster child could have some major walls. Most foster children have been hurt real bad by adults. Foster parents are willing to love them in a way that gives the child hope but that can be challenged.

It takes a lot of hard work to connect with the child. Because the foster parent knows it's only temporary, they are limited in what they can offer and need to guard their hearts from falling in love with them. Protection and emotional support are given but, tremendous caution is used for discipline. Foster children see life different. They may have major walls up and don't know how to trust any adult. Adults are the ones that have exasperated them. They've experienced some really hurtful things. What is confusing to them is, even though their biological parents haven't been very good parents, they still have an internal love for them and want to go back home. They want to be loved and they do want to know how it feels to be in a healthy family but, they may have taught themselves to not trust anyone. The lack of trust is associated with too much pain. Both adopted and foster children have one thing in common. God is in their hearts and God desires to adopt both.

The reason I'm saying all this is because our relationship with Christ usually starts when we're in a foster child's mindset or environment. We've had life kick us in the teeth and we've established our walls. We come to God and we allow God to adopt us but do we really get it.

There isn't one person in this world, who can find Christ without receiving God's adoption.

When we read 1 timothy 2:4 - 5 we read that He **4 wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,** God desires that all shall be saved.

My reason for getting our thoughts centered around an adopted child or a foster child is to make prayer so personal that we knock every barrier down. Do we treat our prayer life with God the way a healthy adopted child would? Do we treat it how a foster child would treat a foster parent? We've been talking a lot about prayer and my prayer is to help add strength to all of our prayer lives. Anyone who knows God, naturally wants to be closer to Him. I do want to believe that we all would like to have a better prayer life. God is the best Father that anyone could have. Feeling adopted vs. feeling like a foster child makes a difference in whether we trust God enough to trust that we can pray in all things. One of the hardest parts of becoming a child of God is to accept God's unailing adoption. We can completely trust Him as the best parent anyone could ever have. We can tell God anything. We can count on Him to feel every hurt and we can trust Him to give us every need.

1 Thessalonians 5 is hard

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good, 22 reject every kind of evil. 23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us. 26 Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Walking with God instead of keeping Him at a distance is what Christ came for.

Matthew 11:28 **28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

This is a promise. No matter what life gives us, God is bigger. God will give us rest and He is the best Father anyone can have.

To end today's message I would like to ask 2 questions;

Can you let Him in completely? Can you let Him lead your prayer life totally?

Let's Pray