

## MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

### Talking With God

**Definition:** Good conversations involve both talking and listening. The same is true as we pray. Too often we focus on the how, when, and where of prayer. But better questions are: "How honest are our prayers?" and "How well do we listen?"

God can and does speak to us through people and circumstances. If we keep our eyes and ears open, we can hear Him often through these various sources. However, one important way to hear from God is His written Word. It is completely reliable. We know that anything we read in God's Word is a direct word from Him – and a truth we can trust.

**John 15:7-8** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

**Audio Segment:** *Listening to God's Word (Bobby Gruenewald)*

#### Segment Questions:

- Think of a life event you intentionally experienced with God through prayer. Share with your table your experience of the conversation with God:
  - how did you talk with God?
  - how was hearing from God a part of the conversation?
  - did God answer the way you originally asked?
  - did you change or grow as a part of the process?
- If prayer is a conversation, what are some ways you've learned to be honest with your expression *and* listen?
- Do you feel comfortable expressing your negative emotions to God? Why or why not?
- For things God doesn't specifically address in His Word, when there aren't definitive answers, is our expression of feelings important in our relationship with God? What are some ways we hear from Him?
- Does prayer require humility in your relationship with God? How? Why?
- How has your prayer life changed over time? Is there anything that you can share about where you are now that God is teaching you?

#### Action Questions:

- What are some ways you've found to keep an active running conversation with God that you can share with your table?
- How can you build listening into your ongoing conversation with God?

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:** Among other things, we need find ways to listen to God when we're praying.

## Talking With God

When we think about talking with God, we often think about the talking and asking. As I was going through the devotionals online related to this segment, there were two that resonated with me, and they both had to do with listening in prayer.

When I was young and young in faith, I feel like I was too focused on the talking and asking part of prayer... the 'technical' aspects... doing it right... asking according to God's will, and so on. I was inspired by biographies of George Mueller and missionaries like Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael. These were people who lived in faith and prayer and saw God provide in miraculous ways. The stories of their lives built my faith, a hundred years after they were gone.

I wanted to do the same; to "expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." Just like other areas of life, some of us are built with a desire to please, and maybe a bit of competitiveness... we're 'all in', we want to 'do it the right way', be 'the best', be the one willing to 'go the extra mile', and willing put in the extra effort.

Praise God that He is good, kind, and patient! When I look back on my life and prayer, I shake my head... and I'm sure you can probably look back on your life and do the same. I'm so glad we don't stay the same... we can grow and mature.

And prayer is the process through which we grow and mature; walking through the journey of life in a constant conversation with God... bringing us slowly to become more and more like Christ by experiencing life with Him.

The devotionals for this segment covered 5 aspects of talking with God:

- 1) **Prayer is a dialog of talking and listening.** We can feel free to talk to God honestly, holding nothing back, just like we would with a friend.
- 2) **Prayer is a relationship.** We can communicate like a child with their parent.
- 3) **Prayer doesn't need to be complicated.** We can have a running conversation with God; natural and continuous.
- 4) **Prayer is a conversation.** Sometimes we have to shut-out the chaos around us and focus.
- 5) **Prayer is listening to God.** One important way to hear from God is His written Word.

The last audio segment was Bobby Gruenwald, who developed a Bible app to make God's Word easily available on mobile devices. It was about listening to God through His Word as it relates to prayer as an ongoing conversation with God, and this is an excerpt from the devotional:

God can and does speak to us through people and circumstances. If we keep our eyes and ears open, we can hear Him often through these various sources. However, one important way to hear from God is His written Word. It is completely reliable. We know that anything we read in God's Word is a direct word from Him – and a truth we can trust.

God has much to say to you. His words will practically speak into your life and help you navigate each and every day. When you are not sure what to believe, His Word can give you clarity. And God's response to many of your prayers has already been lovingly expressed in His Word. As you pray to God, thank Him for the words He prepared long ago for you in the Bible. And feel the freedom to seek out His words anytime and anywhere.

**John 15:7-8** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

**John 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."