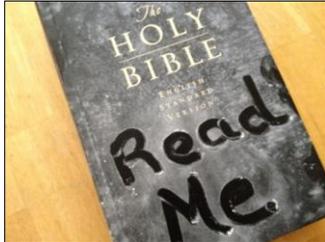


# Connect the Jots

## *Get aWay and Pray*

Part 6 – April 13, 2014



Welcome to a place where we're opening our ears and learning how to listen to the Lord! **Did you pray this week**, since last Sunday? **Did you open your Bible since last Sunday?**



If not, you're not alone. **Bible dust is a chronic problem among believers.** It's every congregation's dirty little secret. **Most feel convicted about it, yet rarely make time for more than a few verses on the run.** Why is that? We don't enjoy it. We don't relate to it. **We know it's God's Word, but it feels like an intrusion in our daily life.**

And that makes us feel guilty! **In short, we've been totally suckered by the enemy. We need our brainwashed brains renewed and reprogramed!**



Okay, enough feeling guilty about the Bible. Now let's feel guilty about prayer! And, our first jot will assist us in doing just that. **It's a NT verse from First Thessalonians (15:17) that's short, simple, and seemingly impossible to accomplish: "Pray continually"** So, have you prayed continually since last Sunday? **Do you feel bad for not being able to pray even for an hour?**

When I pray in a group I go blank. Others can pray non-stop on command. This person. That need. I just stand there anxiety ridden, "Come on, you know you have something ... someone; you're the pastor!" Blank. They're snapping off one obvious prayer after another. And I'm thinking, "I knew about that! I could've prayed for that! Why didn't I think of that?!"

Not only is this true, it gets worse. I heap guilt on myself in two ways: For not being able to pray off the cuff like that. Then, after a couple of minutes, for wishing those who can, would quit.

But, in my defense, **have you ever noticed how often Jesus would get away from His own disciples to pray alone?**



I'm not saying He hid from them ... on purpose, but sometimes He didn't tell 'em where He was going, and they had to track Him down.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house **[of Andy and his brother, Simon-Peter]** and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" – Mark 1:35-37 NIV

Doesn't that seem a bit strange? Was Jesus irresponsible? No. Was He unreliable? No. **Was there a huge difference in the way He prayed that would've made Him want to get away?** I think so! He tried to teach 'em His way just after calling them to follow.

**"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'" – Matthew 6:9-13 NIV**

**This new way to pray was so radically different from what they'd been taught by the rabbis, raised to respect, and reinforced by John the Baptist, that they simply couldn't.** Wouldn't. Didn't. Later, they'll ask Jesus to teach them to pray His way, (Luke 11:1) but for now, they've got their way and Jesus gets away to pray.



**What made this pattern of prayer so polarizing?** Our second jot! The traditional prayer of every devoted Jewish man: **The Amidah.**

**A 19-part, 9-minute, prayer** with bowing and back-and-forth-stepping choreography, and on weekdays **it was prayed three times each day.** It had been traditionally prayed this way for 500 years! And, **Jesus shockingly reduces the Amidah into next to nothing, cutting it into what we call, "The Lord's Prayer".**

**He summarizes a 346-word intro into: "Father, hallowed be your name". (Luke 11:2) Faced with 346 well-rehearsed words of praise, your Father would rather hear four heartfelt words of affection.**



I think Jesus had to get away from His young disciples because He couldn't stand to hear the way that they continued to pray! I think this because of our third jot, an OT warning regarding **the sacrifice of fools, a dire warning most of us aren't even aware of.**

Are you ready to start renewing and reprogramming your brainwashed brain regarding praying and Bible reading? Because, we're about to squash two 'guilts' with one scripture!



Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. [lit. "they do evil" (NAS, NKJ)] Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. – Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 NIV



**This doesn't mean God doesn't want to hear you speak. Just, not so much. Because He loves you, He wants you to listen more.** Imagine your child coming home from school, wanting to tell you about their day, and what they want to do, and what they want from you.

You love to listen to your child ... to a point. But, what if they never stopped? Never listened? Walked away when they were done talking and only returned to talk some more? You'd finally say, "Stop! Please. Just, be quiet." With His disciples, what did Jesus say just before offering His unique pattern of prayer? **"Stop Babbling!" That's not the way God's Chosen People should pray!**

**"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, [Why not?] *for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*"** – Matthew 6:7-8 NIV

It almost sounds like He's convincing them not to pray. But, He's teaching them to stop offering the sacrifice of fools! Jesus' disciples thought that prayer was mostly about speaking. Jesus taught that prayer was mostly about listening. The problem is, we're not sure how to listen to God. How do you open your ears to hear? How do you let God speak to you?



The answer to that is our Fourth Jot, and it's found in the Bible. No surprise. The surprise is: it is the Bible. **God's Word is prayer.**

This is where God will speak when we ask and knock and seek. And, **you'll begin to rewire your desire to read and reflect on scripture if you call it what it actually is: prayer. We think of prayer as talking, and Bible reading as studying; and then we justify not studying because it's not relational.**

The enemy has duped us into defining the 'sacrifice of fools' as prayer, and 'opening our ears' as optional ... unnecessary even! Get your Bible out of the non-relational, informational category, and get yourself into the habit of calling it prayer. Because, if you want to open your ears, you have to open His Word. It took the disciples a while, but they finally got a way to pray.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. [In His *certain way*] When he finished, one of his disciples [who was ready to respond to what Jesus had taught them early on, even though His teaching had gone completely against the way John the Baptist had pounded the importance of the Amidah into them] said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, ["your odd, new way"] just as John taught his disciples." ["The established, old way"] He said to them, [altering the pattern from the first time, to help them to see it as a pattern, a way to pray, and not just a verbatim replacement of the Amidah] **"When you pray, say: ["something simple, like"] 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'"** Then he said to them, ["There's a balance"] **"Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you: ["Learn the balance of boldness without babbling; speak a little, listen a lot!"] Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."** – Luke 11:1-9 NIV

**Did you pray this week? Don't say "Yes" if you only offered God the sacrifice of fools.**

**Begin to see praying as mostly listening, and listening as seeking, reading, pondering, and applying God's Word to your daily decisions, and you'll find that 'praying continually' is *surprisingly doable*.**

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The 346-word, 3-part opening of the weekday, 19-part, Amidah prayer ...

"O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth will declare your praise." (Psalm 51:15)

1. **Avot** (*patriarchs*) - praising the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Blessed are you, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the great, mighty and revered God, the Most High God who bestows loving-kindnesses, the Creator of all, who recalls the good deeds of the fathers and who brings a Redeemer to their children's children for his name's sake, in love. O king, helper, savior and shield. Blessed are You, O Lord, the shield of Abraham.

2. **Gevurot** (*mighty deeds*) - praising God as the ultimate power in the universe

You, O Lord, are mighty forever, You are the Reviver of the dead, You are greatly able to save. You sustain the living in loving-kindness, You revive the dead with great compassion, You support the falling, heal the sick, set free the bound and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust. Who is like You, O Master of mighty deeds? Who compares to You, a king who puts to death and restores to life, and brings forth salvation? And You are faithful to revive the dead. Blessed are You, O Lord, who revives the dead.

3. **Kedushat HaShem** (*the holiness of the Name*) - praising God's name

We will sanctify Your name in the world just as it is sanctified in the highest heavens, as it is written by Your prophet: "And they call out to one another and say: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And those facing them praise God saying: "Blessed be the Presence of the LORD in his place." And in Your Holy Word it is written, saying, "The LORD reigns forever, Your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah". Throughout all generations we will declare Your greatness, and to all eternity we will proclaim your holiness. Your praise, our God, shall never depart from our mouth, for You are a great and holy God and King. Blessed are You, O Lord, the holy God. You are holy, and Your name is holy, and your holy ones praise You daily. (Selah.) Blessed are You, Adonai, the God who is holy.

**Jesus replaces this 3-part opening in the "Lord's Prayer" with:**

"Father, hallowed be your name ..." *(Luke 11:2a)*

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name ..." *(Matthew 6:9)*