

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

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Prayer's Power Relationship

★Write down one new insight you received today...

★Thinking...

- What aspects of God in my life do I often take for granted?
- In what ways does my heart desire to be like God even if I cannot always live up to it?
- How does praying about God's perfect nature in detail change how I live today?

★Applying...

- Select someone with whom you have a close relationship.
- List five specific qualities of that person which attract you.
- Pay attention for expressions of those qualities and compliment the person for them.

★Praying...

- Father, I glorify you for being...
- Thank you for seeing my best. Please bring it out in me so that I may live like your beloved child today.

Psalm 45:1-9 – My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. You are the most handsome of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty. In your majesty ride on victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right; let your right hand teach you dread deeds. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

I) Take a Good Look...

Think of someone with whom you are close in life. Really close. Reflect on who they are, their character, the qualities that attract you. Think deeply, drawing out all the detail you can. More than the vague sense of a quality, say kindness, to particular ways that person expresses kindness. Small acts, the exact form of their smile, how their eyes shine. Those with whom we *relate* in life and the nature of those *relationships* affect us profoundly. Psalm 45 reveals how intentionality unlocks the power of our *relationship* with God and His anointed.

◆ **Half empty or half full?** We are tempted to be sensitive to the ways of others that negatively impact us. This should not surprise us. Our physiology is designed to desensitize to persistent stimuli. Most of us choose *relationships* with people we find pleasant. That means we are wired to take them for granted. Thinking well of others is a spiritual practice, one that strengthens the *relationship* and our resolve to nurture its health. Psalm 45 offers a model for opening our heart to the positive in another, noting specific characteristics. We find our “heart overflows with a goodly theme,” as we stay alert with our heart’s thoughts “like the pen of a ready scribe (Ps 45:1).”

◆ **Open the eyes of my heart:** Many seek *relationships* that serve our needs. The rare among us take an objective view, seeking to know the other’s inner being without filtering for our own desires. If we seek a God who fits our ideas and takes our command, we will be “one who hates” Jesus and His “Father as well (John 15:23),” because they will not conform. If we turn an open and attentive eye of our heart toward Jesus, we find Him “the most handsome of men,” with “grace poured upon [His] lips (v2).” Girded in “glory and majesty (v3),” riding “for the cause of truth and to defend the right (v4).” We see that He “love[s] righteousness and hate[s] wickedness (v7).” We see the Truth, that Jesus is the visible image of the Father, of whom the Father said, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased (Luke 3:22).” Psalm 45 opens a window onto the *relationship* between God and His anointed, Father and Son. A *relationship* that He desires to have with us, too.

II) **Unchanged in a Changing World...**

Relationships change how we feel, think, speak, and act. As our thoughts and feelings change, sometimes so does the *relationship* itself. Not unconditional *relationships*. *Relationships* founded on the unchangeable dimensions of our inner being. Only, there is little about humans that is unchangeable given extreme circumstances. Mysteriously, God sees an unchanging ideal of His anointed on which to base His unconditional *relationship* with them.

◆ **Never say never:** Many have experienced the comical situation of talking up a quality in someone else only for that person to act unexpectedly. Catch that always-kind person talking terribly about another. These tropes for television and movie comedies uncover a disturbing aspect of humanity: no one is pure in character. Yet through the Bible God expresses a pure view of His anointed. “Grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever (Ps 45:2).” He

sees His anointed “ride on victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right (v4).” His throne “endures forever and ever (v6).” These are statements of permanence written about imperfect people *being conformed* into their ideal selves. It suggests God sees our final version, either our *perfected* selves if we freely obey God or our *destroyed* selves having abandoned Him and *relates* to us as if we were already that.

◆ **Nurturing talent:** We are a little like God this way. We look for the ideal version of children. When we see prodigious talent, we nurture it. More books for advanced readers, private lessons for musicians, personal coaching for athletes. These children are imperfect at their craft, but we identify the qualities that indicate an ideal future. God has armed His anointed with sword and sharp arrows (v3, 5). He declares “Your royal scepter will be a scepter of equity (v6).” God “has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (v7).” Fragrant robes, joyful music, powerful courtiers (v8-9). God nurtures our ideal being, resources it, shapes it, tells us stories of it. As we will see in the next text, He then invites us to live our best life.

III) **Prayers of Relationship...**

Prayers of *relationship* are powerful when they begin with the Creator. These are similar to praise prayers. They allow us to meditate on God in detail. They go further. As we complete our examination of Psalm 45, we see that it turns toward us and makes His glory and grandeur relevant to our daily lives. In a way, they are the inverse of lamentations. Praiseworthy *relational* prayers start with God and His goodness, bringing us under His providence and care. Lamentations start with our complaints, moving into His long view of the world and realization that the justice we crave is assured.

◆ **Not for the weak:** God created an ideal version of each of us. In it He contains our purpose. When we open ourselves to this ideal through *relational* prayer, we are wise to prepare to confront our shortcomings. “If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives (1 John 1:9).” Enter the **good news** of the Gospel of Christ! As we praise Him for His perfection, His grace and excellence, His righteousness and justice, He reveals the presence of His “queen in gold of Ophir (Ps 45:9).” That’s us! God proposes that we be Jesus’s bride, becoming one with Him in Spirit. “On that day, you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you (John 14:20).” In Jesus we become God’s ideal version of us.