

▶ GETTING THROUGH THE DAY BY KEN WILSON

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Deep Roots *big reach*

Getting Through the Day

An adaptation from *Mystically Wired* by Pastor Ken Wilson

An Introduction to Ken Wilson:

Ken Wilson is the Pastor of the Ann Arbor Vineyard Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Pastor Wilson is active nationally in the area of creation care and a leader in the growing "Friendship Collaboration." Ken as a pastor is committed to prayer, evangelism, the arts, creation, and is one of the most imaginative and creative leaders in evangelicalism today. Ken speaks nationally at conferences, po-

litical and scientific gatherings, and is an accomplished author and writer. I commend Ken's new book, "Mystically Wired" to you as the best book I've read on prayer since "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire." I also commend Ken to you as a resource for major conferences at the graduate/faculty and undergraduate level. Enjoy Ken's adaptation from "Mystically Wired."

I foresee a time when people will come to the followers of Jesus, like they now come to the followers of the Buddha, because they want to learn how to pray and they know that the followers of Jesus can teach them. People will enter into the Christian experience of prayer and there find the master.

Why shouldn't it be so?

Human beings, like it or not, will pray. The human brain will see to it. Human beings--convinced theists, deists, secularists, atheists, or not--will seek connection with realities beyond themselves, if only to get a break from themselves. If only to get through the day.

What do we have to offer them? Much that is part of our neglected praying tradition: the calming of the heart before God, the sense of connection with loved ones before God, the marking of the day's intervals with prayer as much as with a time-piece, the silence in which we may know that He is God and we are not.

Students on University campuses talk with each other about what they do to get through the day. Imagine the conversations that might ensue in the event that the followers of Jesus had something to confide in with their fellows about how they manage the stress of college life with prayer? How they calm them-

Why Should We Care About Anything Other Than Souls?

"I understand that these things are important but when the students I send to your conferences come back caring more for the environment or slavery or clean drinking water than the gospel and evangelism, I have a real problem!" These were the frustrated words of a mega-church pastor as we shared lunch together after I had delivered evangelistic messages for his four services. The comment came as we were discussing the new face of evangelism and how addressing the gospel through the lens of justice has produced so much fruit in our ministry nationally. This pastor's concerns or not rare, there is a growing frustration with conservative evangelicals regarding the direction of the church, particularly when it comes to social justice issues.

Racial reconciliation, caring and loving the creation, AIDS, child prostitution, urban poverty, immigration-the list of issues and causes Christians are awakening to is long and growing and the pastor's "problem" is a good one to have. The questions of why we should and how we should care about the injustices and needs of the world around us need to be answered. Embracing causes without critique just because we think God cares about them is not a good trend. The short answer to why we should care about injustice is because God does, but the deeper question is why does he? Certainly, all causes aren't equal-caring for animals is not equal to setting children free from the brick kilns of India. Does God care about animals? Proverbs 12:10 says, "The righteous know the needs of their animals, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel," (NRSV). Certainly, God and His people do and should care for the creation. While finding passages that demonstrate God's love for animals is a bit challenging (even in my 'Green Bible'!), it is nearly impossible to miss God's concern and passion for the poor, the oppressed, and for those despairing.

There is a hierarchy of needs so to speak when it comes to things that we are to be about. The needs of peoples both physical and eschatological certainly are at the top of such a hierarchy but this is where the lines get fuzzy. If a family of farmers on the Malaysian coast can no longer farm because of the effects of climate change and are thrust into abject poverty and are thus at a greater risk to be trafficked into forced labor by the powerful, it is difficult to untangle their temporal needs from their eternal needs. Additionally, we can see from this illustration how directly linked the issue of climate change is to poverty, oppression, and ultimately conversion. This may seem like a leap for many conservatives, but I don't think it is an irrational

one. Charles Finney said that one of the greatest obstacles to salvation was the blinding that comes from being worldly, or preoccupied with the overwhelming temporal needs of



the world. Certainly, these Malaysian farmers need Jesus



WIKIFAITH CORNER

Evangelism on today's campus requires a lot more listening and relational connection--perhaps it should have always been this way. Practicing the love of listening, truly listening, demonstrates a commitment to the relationship and community and this is important. Having the opportunity to speak and being perceived as a source of spiritual authority depends on how we listen--so listen well. As we listen and become involved in students lives, we see both how near and far they are from the Kingdom of God. Through the stories of frat parties, difficulties with girlfriends, intellectual negotiations with class material, and passion for sports and video games, students today are not only telling us the story of their lives, but the story of how God is intersecting them in the mundane. Cultivating a careful listening ear and subsequently helping students see God in their story is an important part of becoming a skilled evangelist. Listening for God in the story of students helps us find the right jumping in points and helps us love them more as we see God's patience in the midst of brokenness and willful resistance to God's will. Practice the 2/3rds rule; for every hour of conversation, try listening interactively for 40 minutes and weave into the hour at least 20 minutes of pointed, guided instruction, prophetic calling, and persuasion. Practicing the 2/3rds rule will help cultivate your ability to hear them and to hear God.



Why Should We Care (cont.)

our concern for non-Christians? I think the concern for many, and legitimately so, is because so often one comes at the expense of the other or for many “evangelistically minded,” the care for an issue is really a cloaked mechanism to get a gospel presentation in with little or no real concern for the issue. Both concerns are important to note but should not prevent us from creatively and sincerely committing do both-to proclaim Christ and demonstrate His Kingdom. We should never even try to conceive of providing clean drinking water or AIDS relief or freedom for slaves without also thinking about the eternal needs of those we are seeking to help. This is not to say that caring for the poor or the earth does not have intrinsic value that is worthy to be expressed even if people don’t “get saved”—this is what worries some. However, it is often short-sightedness, a lack of creativity, and a stunted theology that prevents us from bringing the two mandates-proclaiming Christ and demonstrating His Kingdom—to bear in our expression of Christian evangelization.

Back to my pastor friend. What I shared with him was that we stand to lose on both sides if we allow the old dichotomization to emerge in our generation’s expression of the faith. If we don’t care for the earth and for the peoples of the earth, we lose our legitimacy in the eyes of the watching world and will perpetuate spiritual blindness through our complicity of inaction. If we continue to evangelize without demonstrating God’s Kingdom power and love, we may win individuals souls for Christ for a season, but end up losing the battle for the hearts and

minds of a generation. If we divorce our cause, whichever cause that may be, from the transformative power of the gospel, even at our best we will continue to perpetuate the spiritual damnation of the lost, God’s chief concern in sending Jesus to be our propitiation for sin. Human flourishing is God’s ultimate goal for us, eternal, abundant life and this starts with conversion. We must be saved. We must proclaim Christ, calling women and men everywhere to repent but we do so through the lens of demonstrating God’s Kingdom power and love as Paul says in I Thes. 1:5, “...the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.” The word of the Lord thanks be to God!



Getting Through the Day (cont.)

selves with prayer, for example, when anxious.

But this will require that we move beyond the standard evangelical prayer model, which simply doesn't work for many believers. We can adapt this model, or maintain it as one of many different ways to pray, but we cannot be limited to it, for the simple reason that the followers of Jesus weren't.

The earliest followers of Jesus, for example, prayed at fixed intervals through the day, much as we eat, and for the same reason: because they needed to. What do you think they were doing at 9 o'clock in the morning on the day of Pentecost? What was Peter doing at noon time when the vision to let in the Gentiles came on the roof top in Joppa? What were the disciples on their way to doing at 3 in the afternoon when they performed their first healing near the temple? They were praying as their people prayed, as Jesus himself likely prayed, at intervals through the day.

The earliest followers of Jesus meditated, if they were anything like Isaac, out in the field meditating one evening when his servant returned with Rebekkah. They routinely took periods of silence and solitude as did their master. They learned ways of calming themselves, like a weaned child, as did the psalmist (see Psalm 133.)

Rarely did they read their bibles, since they weren't wealthy enough to own even a single scroll. Instead they meditated on memorized portions of Scripture --the way Scripture was meant to be experienced, like fine wine, like honey from the comb, savored, not devoured like a textbook.

About ten years ago, after twenty-five

years of more or less regular praying, my father died and left me in a mild depression. Which meant that my normal prayer routine stopped working because it took more energy and effort than I had.

As though cheating, I bought my first prayer book, to say my prayers, if nothing else. This led me into the practice of several prayer disciplines I had only heard of before: fixed hour prayer, the Jesus prayer (the staple of daily prayer in the Christian East), meditating on Scripture, silence and solitude, among others. Over time, I slipped into a new (to me) way of praying. Prayer became more like going somewhere than doing something.

At the same time, I read some of the new cognitive research on the praying brain and became convinced that the human brain is adapted and designed for mystical experience. We are mystically wired and the biblical prayer disciplines are neurologically savvy, as they work with, rather than against, the way the brain wants to pray.

The fruit of the last ten years of my praying and pastoring life is a book to be published by Thomas Nelson in April, 2010 called *Mystically Wired: Exploring New Realms in Prayer*. It is an attempt to understand prayer as someplace we go as much as something we do, empowered by the ancient prayer disciplines, and understood in light of some of the exciting new cognitive science having to do with the praying brain. It is an expansion of themes first introduced in *Jesus Brand Spirituality: He Wants His Religion Back* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) in which I explored Christian faith in four dimensions: active, contemplative, biblical, communal.

SMARTER OUTREACH: Using Our Super Powers



Lon Allison of the Billy Graham Center says that all evangelists should be theologians and all theologians should be evangelists. This is good advice, even as we emerge from a heavy modernism hangover. The centrality of theology in evangelism cannot be overstated and staying committed to the Scriptures and on top of current theological discussions, debates, literature, and emerging views will help you and your ministry stay effective. Having a centered theology of the gospel will most importantly prevent those you are leading to Christ and the spiritual generations they will give birth to to avoid nuanced excesses or limitations of thought from derailing their faith. Practicing good theology has everything to do with evangelism so stay sharp!



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