

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

How to Pray Through the Tabernacle: A Daily Encounter

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My son, Austin, is made to run. He readily embraces the famous line from the movie *Chariots of Fire* where Eric Liddell says, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.” Early Saturday morning, Austin and I met with a speed and agility specialist to take Austin’s running ability to the next level. As I sat in the stands to observe the intense sixty-minute session taking place on the football field, I was drawn to the passion and inspiration of the speed and agility specialist. He was hyper-focused on maximizing Austin’s God-given abilities. About forty-two minutes into the training session, the specialist looked into Austin’s eyes and articulated with radiant amplification, “If it doesn’t challenge you, it won’t change you!”

You are made to commune with God. You are designed by God and for God to know Him personally and intimately. The road to intimacy is paved with humility and painted with prayer. Prayer is like flying, when you stop, you drop. Kneeling in prayer keeps you standing. God created you for communion. When you are enjoying unbroken fellowship with God, you will feel God’s pleasure. However, you determine the level of intimacy. You can choose to drift from God or you can choose to draw near to Him. Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to intimacy with God.

How’s your prayer life? What is your current level of intimacy with God? Would you consider your relationship with God to be sweet, vibrant, intimate, and growing? Perhaps you have been through a dry season when your prayer life became cold, predictable, and robotic. Those seasons generate apathy, complacency, and lethargy. Maybe it is time to consider some speed and agility training spiritually to take your prayer life to the next level. Let’s explore how to pray through the Tabernacle and allow that spiritual discipline to become a daily encounter of God’s presence.

In the previous lesson, we examined seven distinct features of the Tabernacle: The Altar of Burnt Offering, The Basin of Water, The Table of the Bread of the Presence, The Golden Lampstand, The Altar of Burning Incense, The Curtain, and The Ark of the Covenant. In this lesson, we will make practical application for each of the seven features of the Tabernacle to guide our daily prayer. To help paint a verbal picture for our journey, I want to call these: *Seven Stations of Prayer*.

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Station 1: The Altar of Burnt Offering

Acknowledge the Sacrificial Death of Christ

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11-12 ESV).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (John 3:16-17 ESV).

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7 ESV).

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV).

As you begin your prayer time, go to the altar of burnt offering and make the connection to the cross. Verbalize in prayer to God your acknowledgement of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Begin to thank God for demonstrating His unconditional love by offering His One and Only Son on the cross to pay the penalty of your sin. Acknowledge God's initiative in building the ultimate love bridge to rescue you. In prayer, express your deep abiding appreciation for God's persistent pursuit of you with His redeeming love.

Express gratitude to Jesus for being willing to submit to the Father's will and for being willing to take on the full wrath of God for your sin. Thank the Lord for each wound in His body and what it redeemed you from. Express your appreciation to the Lord for His willingness to be obedient to death on the cross. Worship the Lord and adore Him for His generosity in removing your sin and imputing His righteousness. Ascribe worth to Jesus for your new identity and for the eternal security that He purchased for you.

Cry out to God by using the most intimate term, *Abba*. That's just like saying "Daddy" to your Heavenly Father. God loves you so much and He made it

possible through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross for you to come into an intimate relationship with Him. Consecrate yourself before the cross and acknowledge the sacrificial death of Christ that changed your current and future reality.

Station 2: The Basin of Water

Confess Known Sin

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14 ESV).

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy (Proverbs 28:13 ESV).

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9 ESV).

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:9-11 ESV).

In your prayer time, you move from praising God for His salvation gift to confessing sin and receiving His forgiveness. Look realistically at yourself in light of God's holiness. You may embrace Isaiah's response and say, "Woe is me!" Invite the Lord to search your heart and to reveal any unconfessed sin in your life. Be sensitive to His prompting. Don't seek to hide your sin or to try to convince God that sin doesn't exist in your life. God is all-knowing and He is all-seeing and nothing escapes His attention. Confession of sin is not to bring God up on your sin, but to enable you to say the same thing about your sin that God says about it. Confessing sin allows you to get honest and transparent before God.

Whatever you cover, God will uncover. Whatever you uncover, God will cover. Choose to uncover your sin by confessing your sin specifically and instantly. Name your sin before God and claim His forgiveness and receive His cleansing. Submit your body to the Lord by giving Him your hands, eyes, and tongue. Submit your mind to the Lord by releasing pride, greed, and lust. Submit your spirit by praying through the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Satan will seek to distract you by reminding you of your past failures and mistakes. Satan uses your memory to neutralize your power and to pollute your passion for the Prince of Peace. God uses your memory to remind you where you were when He rescued you. God has the capacity to remember our sin no more, but He allows us to retain memory so we will never forget our desperation for His dispensing of grace. Confess your sin specifically and receive God's forgiveness completely. Now walk in victory! You are a child of the Living God and no weapon formed against you shall prosper!

Station 3: The Table of the Bread of the Presence

Intercede for Others

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence (Hebrews 5:7 ESV).

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27 ESV).

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Romans 8:34 ESV).

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:24 ESV).

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6 ESV).

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2 ESV).

Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17 ESV).

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,² for kings and all who are in high

positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1 Timothy 2:1-2 ESV).

As you continue your communion with the Lord in prayer, be mindful that Jesus is Manna from heaven, the Bread of Life, and your daily bread. He will nourish your soul and complete your life. Experience personal renewal and refreshing as you approach Him in prayer.

You are not praying alone. As you pray, be reminded that the Holy Spirit is also praying and interceding. There are times when you will not know what to pray. So what do you do when you don't know what to do? Be comforted by the Comforter as He intercedes for you according to the will of God.

Victory is found in prayer as you recognize the awesome reality that not only is the Holy Spirit living in you and interceding for you, but Jesus is at the right hand of our Heavenly Father interceding for you as well. You can draw near to God since Jesus lives to intercede for you. As you pray, the Holy Spirit is praying and Jesus is praying. You have the privilege of joining in the sacred inter-Trinitarian communication that is taking place.

Maximize your prayer time by specifically interceding for others. You may want to develop a prayer list and choose to pray for others by name. Write down the exact date by their name on which you began praying for them. If you have something specific to pray about, then list the specific need next to their name. As you pray, the more specific the more dynamic!

You can spend an extended time in prayer at station three as you pray for people that God places on your heart. You will be prompted to pray for people specifically whom you have not even thought of in a very long time. That's why it is so important to be sensitive to God's prompting as you pray.

Station 4: The Golden Lampstand

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14 ESV).

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17 ESV).

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:7-11 ESV).

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:²⁹ that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell (Acts 15:28-29 ESV).

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them (Acts 16:6-7 ESV).

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV).

The Golden Lampstand illuminated the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. It provided light to the table of the Bread of the Presence and the Altar of Burning Incense. The lampstand had seven oil lamps that provided light for the priest to serve. A candle consumes itself whereas an oil lamp consumes the oil. Jesus has positioned us to be His light in this dark world. The Holy Spirit is the oil that fuels our gracious illumination.

When I get to this station of praying through the Tabernacle, I address the Holy Spirit personally in prayer. He is the third Person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit. As you pray, be mindful that you are the walking tabernacle of His Presence. The Holy Spirit lives inside of you. He is your constant Companion. Learn to fellowship with the Holy Spirit and commune with Him as you pray. He will guide you into truth and He will illuminate God's Word as you read the Bible.

As you pray, surrender to the full control of the Holy Spirit. Give Him access to every fiber of your being. Do not grieve Him. Do not quench Him. Do not put out His fire. Submit to His dominion in your life. Invite the Holy Spirit to make His Presence known in you and through you. Depend upon His power to mobilize you

to be on mission with God and to seize the opportunities God gives you to make Jesus known.

The moment you became a follower of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit moved in to become a permanent resident. He does not move in and then move out. Thank Him for His habitation. Ask the Holy Spirit to exhibit His fruit through your life to bless and benefit others.

Station 5: The Altar of Burning Incense

Make Yourself Available for God's Use

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1 ESV).

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 ESV).

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice (Psalm 141:2 ESV).

What are you giving your life to? What do you value? You will make room for what you value. As you come to this station in praying through the Tabernacle, offer your life up to God. Make yourself completely available for His use. Place your “yes” on the altar and say, “Lord, I’m Yours! Use me!”

As you pray, your prayer rises like burning incense. As you live out your faith in Christ, your life becomes an aroma pleasing to God. As you offer your body to God for His glory, you are expressing worship to God. Spread the fragrance of Christ by living a life of instant obedience.

Spend some time worshiping God and expressing your dependency upon Him and your availability to Him. Relinquish control of your life over to the Lord. Surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Embrace the posture of Jesus and pray, “Father, not my will, but Your will be done.” Make yourself available for God’s use.

During this portion of your prayer time, you may want to consider lifting your hands in worship to God as you pray. You may want to kneel before the Lord and lift up your hands and begin singing praises to His Name. Close your eyes and begin praise the Lord for who He is and continue by thanking Him for what He has done. Let your private worship be focused, passionate, and authentic. Open your heart as you open your mouth to declare His glory.

Station 6: The Curtain

Praise God for the Access He Has Granted

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22 ESV).

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split (Matthew 27:50-51 ESV).

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name (Hebrews 13:15 ESV).

In Christ, you have been given access into the presence of God. You have immediate and continual access to God in prayer. When Jesus died on the cross to satisfy the justice of God for our sin, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The curtain was not torn from bottom to top, but from top to bottom to symbolize God's initiative to bring us into a right relationship with Himself. God took the initiative to reconcile us to Himself.

Because of the completed work of Jesus on the cross, you approach the throne of grace with confidence. Jesus has opened a new and living way through the curtain so that you can draw near to God. Draw near with a true heart full of faith.

Praise God for the access He has granted. You are privileged to be a child of the King. There is no greater honor. There is no greater privilege than that of having direct access to the Creator of the universe. God has granted you access.

What are you doing with what God has made available to you? You can enjoy unhurried time alone with the Lord. You have been granted access to enjoy unbroken fellowship with God. Maximize the opportunity God has given you.

Invest the rest of your life bringing others into the privilege you now enjoy. Join God in His redemptive activity by shining His light and sharing His love so that others can come into a saving relationship with Jesus. Ask God to elevate your soul-consciousness and to give you the boldness and courage to share your faith with those who don't know Christ.

Station 7: The Ark of the Covenant

Listen for the Echo of God's Whisper

Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, ⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. ⁵Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail (Hebrews 9:3-5 ESV).

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation (Hebrews 9:8-10 ESV).

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10 NIV).

As you come to the seventh station of praying through the Tabernacle, transition from speaking to God in prayer to listening to God. Be still before the Lord and ask Him to speak to you. Rest in His presence and enjoy the peace that radiates from His sufficiency.

God will begin to speak to you by showing you truths from His Word to obey, people to pray for and to interact with. God will speak to you about solutions to problems you have been facing. God will prompt you to extend forgiveness to those you have harbored bitterness toward and those you have withheld forgiveness from.

Have a journal close by to record what God says to you and to indicate what God shows you. Sometimes His prompting is clear and intense and then sometimes His prompting is as gentle as the fluttering of a hummingbird's wings. Listen for the echo of God's whisper. Stay in tune with God's voice by eliminating distractions and staying clean before Him.

Henry Blackaby, in his informative workbook, *Experiencing God*, reminds us that, "God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways." Have a consistent intake of God's Word and seek to meditate on His Word, memorize His Word, and obey His Word. As you obey what God says, He will show you the way.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. Establish a daily standing meeting with God.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed (Mark 1:35 ESV).

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8 ESV).

2. Pray through the Tabernacle daily.

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV).

3. Practice God's presence throughout the day.

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (John 5:19 ESV).