



APPNOTES

Date: August 03-August 07,2020

Series: James

Ephesians 1:18-20 Why do we tell friends in hard situations that we can't do anything, but "All I can do is pray"? As if prayer is somehow the littlest thing possible. In fact, prayer is the best, greatest, and strongest thing we can do for anyone, when we are praying to the God of the universe. When we pray in the power that we have through Christ Jesus, we have access to all of it. Yet I find prayer difficult, like a kid first riding a bike without training wheels: unsteady and insecure and hesitant. Prayer is nothing more than conversation with God, the Creator of the universe and the Lover of my soul. But saying it's "nothing more" makes it sound as easy as making oatmeal for breakfast: a few minutes, something to sustain me until the next meal. But by golly, how boring! Prayer isn't oatmeal; it sustains the soul.

Hebrews 4:14-16 The famous philosopher L. Frank Baum once wrote, "There's no place like home." But Dorothy had to go to a far-off place filled with munchkins, talking scarecrows, and an evil witch before she could understand what home meant and where home was. When we feel like this world isn't where we want to be, when we're longing for home, for "something more," we understand that home for our weary souls is the presence of God. We don't have to click our heels to get there. We can come into God's presence at any time. This verse tells us so. Jesus' death made it possible for us to come to God, to communicate with God. We can do this with confidence, not worrying about God's anger or disappointment. We don't have to approach the great wizard of Oz; we get to talk with the lover of our souls.

1 John 4:16-18 Decades ago, I worked at a summer day camp, and Coach would come once a week to teach basketball. One week I had to play because there weren't enough kids to fill two teams. I played that day because it was part of my job. But what if I had changed the reason why I played? What if I had played for the "love of the game"? Or better yet, what if I had played for the love of my kids? In our world we do everything full tilt, and if there's the slightest chance we'll fail, we don't try at all. We're held back by fear. This mindset affects our walk with God as well. We don't pray because we're afraid we'll

do it wrong. Like a father with his children, God loves you and wants to hear from you! Let's live and play and pray in the truth of God's love for us.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Why do we pray in public? Why do we pray at all, when God can hear our hearts and doesn't need us to verbalize any of it? We pray because it creates intimacy and relationship with God, our Father. We pray in public because it improves fellowship with one another. To know someone else cares for your needs. To know you're not alone. To know someone is willing to stand in the gap when you're too weary, too sad, too angry to pray for yourself. This epidemic has wreaked havoc on my emotions, but I've had several people willing to pray with me at a moment's notice, and it has helped. When social distancing and isolation have passed – and they will – let's make a point to gather together and pray. In large groups, small groups, and with two or three together. It will strengthen our bonds with each other and grow our relationship with God.

Luke 23:39-43 Augustine, a famous man of God from many centuries ago, wrote about his life as a sinner and as a Christian. He had traveled around the Mediterranean Sea searching for purpose and prestige. He had gone so far, not in his travels, but in his sin. When he finally decided to turn to Jesus for salvation, he didn't have to travel that same distance back to God. All it took was turning around. That's still all it takes for a sinner to find forgiveness and grace from God. The man hanging on the cross waited until his final moments to turn to God for salvation, and it was enough, but what a blessing that we don't have to wait! If you have not already asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life, will you do it today? It may be the hardest prayer you ever speak. It will certainly be the sweetest.

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