



From Surviving to Thriving

Genesis 5:22–24; Matthew 6:5–18

When it comes to experiencing intimacy with God through prayer, follow the acrostic **P-R-A-Y**:

- **PRAISE**: Worship God for who He is.
- **REPENT**: Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.
- **ASK**: Petition for specific needs (spontaneous and planned) in your life and others' lives.
- **YIELD**: Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever and however He leads you.

When it comes to experiencing intimacy with God through fasting, follow the acrostic **F-A-S-T**:

- **FOCUS** on God.
- **ABSTAIN** from food.
- **SUBSTITUTE** the time with prayer and meditation on God's Word.
- **TASTE** and see that God is good (Psalm 34:8).

Sermon Discussion Questions – January 3rd, 2021

1. As you look in the rearview mirror at the year 2020, what are your reflections? What were your greatest challenges and reasons for hope? How did you see God at work in the year's circumstances? Now, what can you PRAISE God for at the beginning of 2021? What are your greatest hopes for this new year?
2. Thinking about the title of our series for this month, where in your life would you say that you are currently thriving? Where would you say that you are merely surviving? Are there any areas where you would say that you're struggling even to survive?
3. What tends to be your hesitation or reasoning for neglecting prayer and fasting in your walk with the Lord? What beliefs or attitudes might your reasoning expose?
4. Read Psalm 1 and Genesis 5:24. Consider a relationship you have (or have had) with someone that you would describe as intimate, close, or deep. What made that relationship so meaningful and enjoyable? How do we get to enjoy those same aspects with the Sovereign King and Creator of the entire universe? Do you believe that intimacy like this is possible with Jesus?
5. In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asked His disciples "...who do you say that I am?" How would you respond to the same question? Who is Jesus to you? How well is your answer to that question reflected in your daily walk with Him? What does your walk with this Jesus look like, at its deepest and most intimate levels?
6. Author, pastor, and theologian A.W. Tozer wrote the following:

“The temptation to make our relation to God judicial instead of personal is very strong ... Progress in the Christian life is exactly equal to the growing knowledge we gain of the Triune God in personal experience. And such experience requires a whole life devoted to it and plenty of time spent at the holy task of cultivating God. God can be known satisfactorily only as we devote time to Him. ... [T]o neglect communion with God is to hurt ourselves where we cannot afford it.”^[1]

In what ways are you personally tempted to make your relationship with the Lord 'judicial' (i.e., based on the fulfillment of laws and religious practices) rather than personal (i.e., based on intimacy with God, the Person)? What repentance (i.e., change of mind) is needed to cultivate and live in direct, personal relationship with Him?

7. Read Matthew 6:5-8. What might it look like to pray or go through religious motions and still not experience closeness or intimacy with God? Why might this be a danger? Have you experienced this? What steps can we take to avoid falling into empty religious activity?
8. As we learned this past weekend, fasting is a way we can grow in and express our dependence on the Lord. As we begin 2021, what are you depending on the Lord for this coming year? Are there any areas in your life that you need to practice a deeper dependence on the Lord that might lead you to establish a regular rhythm of fasting?
9. What distractions might you need to set aside or abstain from in order to dedicate more focused time on fasting, prayer, and time in the Word?
10. What is the one step forward you plan to take in your life regarding prayer? What is the one step forward you plan to take in your life regarding fasting? How can your group members hold you accountable in pursuing these steps?

NOTE: To view McLean Bible Church's 2021 Bible Reading Plan, visit mcleanbible.org/biblereadingplan.

^[1] “We Must Give Time to God.” *The Root of the Righteous*, by A. W. Tozer, Moody Publishers, 2015, pp. 4–5.