

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

SESSION #2: PRAYER AND DEVOTION FROM THE WHOLE HEART

Session 2: Prayer and Devotion from the Whole Heart

I. JEWISH TESTIMONY: DEVOTION TO GOD REQUIRES THE WHOLE HEART

A. The Shema: YHWH's unique requirement

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Dt 6:4–5 NRSV)

“This usage is comparable to that of ancient Near Eastern political terminology where “love” refers to the loyalty of subjects, vassals, and allies (see Comment to 5:10). In fact, one of the striking parallels between political treaties and the covenant between God and Israel is the requirement that the vassal “love” the suzerain—that is, act loyally to him—with all his heart.”¹

B. With all of the heart

³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Dt 13:3 NIV)

³ Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Sa 7:3 NASB95)

- **¹³ You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. (Je 29:13 NASB95)**

C. Gentile “Just talk to God” Prayer: Word formulas vs. Whole heart

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. (Mt 6:7 ESV)

II. PRAYER AND THE WHOLE HEART

A. God hears the humble

⁸ The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him. (Pr 15:8 NIV)

²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. (1Jo 3:21-22 NASB)

¹ Tigay, J. H. (1996). Deuteronomy (p. 77). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." (Jas 4:3–6 NIV)

B. Devotional Prayer is foundation for all prayer

¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. ¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; (Ps 66:17–18 NIV)

¹¹ ...give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (Ps 86:11 NIV)

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Ps 19:14 NIV)

III. PRAYER FOCUS: PRAYER AND WHOLE HEART

A. Devotional Prayer: Search me and know me

¹ You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely...²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps 139:1-24 NIV)

B. Devotional Prayer: Prayer like incense

¹ O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to You! ² May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering. ³ Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. ⁴ Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies. (Ps 141:1–4 NASB95)

- **³⁵ and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. ³⁶ Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. ³⁷ Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. ³⁸ Whoever makes incense like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from their people.** (Ex 30:35–38 NIV)
- **¹⁵ The priest is to take a handful of the finest flour and some olive oil, together with all the incense on the grain offering, and burn the memorial portion on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD.** (Le 6:15 NIV)