

Discipleship Dimensions

Essential to the Christian life are praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a *way of life*. In other words, the follower of Jesus Christ should not merely pray, worship and give thanks at some times but not at others. Praying, worshiping and giving thanks are not mere "activities" in which the believer is to engage. They are instead a part of the fabric of living out the life of a disciple.

Thus, the every day life of a believer and the believer's life in Christ are "one" life. There is to be no separation between the sacred and the secular. A. W. Tozer writes in *The Pursuit of God*:

One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas - the sacred and the secular. As these areas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we live a divided instead of a unified life. (p. 109)

Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus ..." In short, **all** our lives are His;

everything we think, feel and do are under His rule. Therefore, those practices and activities that we normally think of as pertaining to discipleship, including praying, worshiping and giving thanks, are not and should not be relegated solely to the sacred. These three activities are not to be confined to the church building, worship service or ministry setting. Rather, *the life of the disciple should be infused with them.*

It is God's will that His children are to be praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a way of life. I Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray continually." Romans 12:1 says "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship." Ephesians 5:20 says, "Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything." These verses could not be more clear: they speak of daily living and constancy; they speak of a way of life.

How, then, does an individual follower of Jesus go about praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a way of life? The "how" starts with the mind. As believers, we are to be "renewed" in our minds and in our thinking. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) In other words, we are to think about the doing of these things, and to consider how we live and what we do in our daily lives as being worship. Again, A.W. Tozer writes:

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... If we would escape from the toils of the sacred-secular dilemma, the truth must "run in our blood" and condition the complex of our thoughts. We must practice living to the glory of God, actually and determinedly. By meditation upon this truth, by talking it over with God often in our prayers, by recalling it to our minds frequently as we move about among men, a sense of its wondrous meaning will take hold of us. The old painful duality will go down before a restful unity of life. The knowledge that we are all God's, that He has received all and rejected nothing, will unify our inner lives and make everything sacred to us. (*Id.* at pp.113-14) Believers need to regard praying to be like breathing, and as important as breathing; something one does all the time for living. Believers need to regard worshiping as the daily, moment by moment offering of one's attitudes and actions to Him. (Thus, how would I do whatever it is I am doing to honor Him? What might I do differently next time?) Believers need to regard giving thanks as happening over and over every day. (Thus, "Thanks for the air I breathe, for the life I have, for my spouse, for my kids, for my job, that You are with me in this moment, etc.) Believers need to train themselves in this way of *thinking* such that it becomes a way of *living*.

How, then, do follower of Jesus corporately go about praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a way of life? First, Scripture tells us that all

believers are part of the "community of faith", and that they need to participate in the life of the community. Romans 12:5 says, "so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." Second, Scripture tells us that we are come together and participate together in community. Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing ..." Third, Scripture tells us that the life of the community of faith includes praying, worshiping and giving thanks. (Acts 2:42-47; 4:23-35; I Cor. 14:26) And we do this by glorifying God together (Rom. 15:5 & 6), serving one another (I Peter 4:10), praying together (Eph. 6:18a; I Tim. 2:1), worshiping together (Heb. 12:28b & 29), and giving thanks together (Heb. 12:28a). Thus, believers are to "practice" community as a way of life, in tune with God, engaging together in praying, worshiping and giving thanks, and being built up in Him in the process.

So how are you doing on your essentials of Christian living? Are you praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a *way of life*? And how about the local assembly of believers with which you are identified? Is that assembly living in community and involved in praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a *way of community life*? These are important questions for the true disciple of Jesus to ask. More important, however, are that the answers be, "I am doing well, and my church is doing well."

Of course, we can all do better in our walk of obedience to God's will and commands. To that end, commit as an

individual, and encourage your church and the smaller fellowship groups you are in, to be renewed in the mind and consider praying, worshiping and giving thanks as a way of life; commit to keep trying and practicing this way of life; commit to helping and encouraging others to practicing this way of life; commit to listening to the Holy Spirit as He prompts you in this way of life; and commit to doing it - to living a life in which praying, worshiping and giving thanks are part of the fabric of your everyday life. God will bless you in these commitments with a closer walk with Him.