



INTERCONNECTIVITY

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I've spent the last three days troubleshooting the internet at the church office and residence, which was reduced to .2% of our projected download speed.

I have spent hours on the phone with tech support, built my own new cables, then crawled under the building to string those cables. I didn't do this between church projects; I did this INSTEAD of church projects! I missed both of my PastorCHATS this week. Consequently, I haven't had a spiritual thought in my head for days and my brain is fried.

Therefore, today's talk will be on interconnectivity.

Are you familiar with the old family game, "Telephone"? One person whispers a sentence to another, who whispers it to the next person, who whispers it to the next person, and so on, until it has made its way completely around the room. The last person to receive the message announces aloud what was heard. It rarely resembles the original statement! There's always something lost in translation, even when using the same language!

I was trying to get an internet service to talk to a modem, to talk to a switch, to talk to an access point and a router, to talk to five more access points, to talk to our computers and cell phones. The internet provider said the modem was at fault; the modem manufacturer said the internet provider was at fault. An internet technician came to inspect the installation. He identified a significant amount of signal leakage in the cable line, but didn't want to crawl under the building to fix it, so he left without resolving the issue.

My friend, Doug, had time to spend two days with me trying to sort out the problem. At last, we got things working better, so I crawled under the building to replace two cables. The cable certainly was old and in need of replacement, and in the course of that, I think I found the leak and fixed it. Overall, the project was exhausting—physically and mentally!

I would rather pastor any day!

Connecting and Conversing

Well, maybe I did have ONE spiritual thought... I got to thinking about interconnectivity—the task of connecting a variety of machines and getting them to talk intelligibly to each other, not just for the sake of conversation, but to function effectively.

See, that sounds a lot like pastoring! Getting a diverse group of people—spiritually, emotionally, intellectually diverse, generationally, ethnically, socially, politically, even linguistically diverse—to listen to each other long enough and thoughtfully enough to function together effectively, in mutual love for Christ and one another.

And if you've ever been frustrated by machines enough to want to cry or tear out your hair—well then, you know something of the experience of pastoring.

Communication is hard! It's hard enough to learn how to speak intelligibly about any particular subject; harder still not to come off like a blowhard when you do. And still harder to listen carefully enough in order to empathically understand what is being said. After all, communication is a two-way street. It's not a lecture; it's a conversation.

Proverbs 18:17

¹⁷ The first speech in a court case is always convincing—until the cross-examination starts!

It's not that lectures are natively bad; they're just incomplete, as far as communication is concerned. That's why Pastor Veronica hosts WordREFLECT on Thursday evenings to discuss the content and application of the Sunday lecture (sermon). This is what completes a lecture as a conversation. This is what transforms information into motivation.

Information Conversion

And if the information you receive from the Bible isn't converted into motivation and corresponding action, then your faith is in vain; in fact, your faith is dead. I'm not making this up.

James 2:17-18

¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself is dead if it doesn't cause you to do any good deeds.

¹⁸ Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

When you pray (if you pray), is your communication one-sided? Do you listen as much as you talk? Rather, in view of the fact that God made most people with two ears and one mouth, do you listen twice as much as you speak? You should.

Too many people think that prayer is all about telling God what He needs to know about you, your trials, your challenges, and the people around you. Too much of prayer is prescriptive, instead of inquisitive.

You haven't been saved because God was short on charity cases, and needed to find more people to help. You have been saved because you were in desperate need of God's help, not only to receive eternal life, but also to fulfill God's plan for bringing you into this world in the first place.

Galatians 1:15

¹⁵ But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace.

Psa 139:16

¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

Praying in the Spirit

This, to me, is one of the most beautiful features of praying in tongues (and if you haven't received that gift, with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, you should really have an earnest conversation with the Lord about it). Praying in the Spirit is prompted from your heart, rather than your head; therefore, it requires only your attention, not your intention.

Paul explained:

¹ Corinthians 14:2 When a person speaks in another language, he doesn't speak to people but to God. No one understands him. His spirit is speaking mysteries. ¹⁴ If I pray in another language, my spirit prays, but my mind is not productive.

So, when you pray in tongues, your "thinker" can relax; you don't have to form your thoughts or reasons, or even your words. The Holy Spirit will do that. You just let it flow.

Romans 8:26

²⁶ At the same time the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we don't know how to pray for what we need. But the Spirit intercedes along with our groans that cannot be expressed in words.

So, when you pray in tongues, you can actually listen deeply at the same time—you can express yourself with passion, while simultaneously listening for the voice of the Lord. It's wonderful!

It Takes Time

Moses was a timid man, a stutterer, and compassionate; God made him a leader of millions. Moses spent forty days and nights in the presence of God on Mount Sinai. Do you imagine that he

spoke the whole time? No, God did enough speaking to fill two stone tablets and five books of the Bible. If you want to know what God thinks is important, you've got to be willing to wait with Him, with your heart and ears open to what He will say.

After 36 chapters of groaning and speculating about why life happens as it does, God became weary of Job's words (and his friends' words, too), and He confronted them (38:2):

² *"Why do you confuse the issue? Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about?"*

Or, as it is written in Proverbs 10:19 –

¹⁹ *When words are many, sin is not lacking; so he who controls his speech is wise.*

David first learned to pray while he watched over his father's sheep in the field. He learned to sing in worship, he learned to pray in faith. And he learned to fight for the lives of his sheep. David wrote songs and he learned to fight—that's what prayer did for him.

David himself was a small man, the youngest of eight sons, and a shepherd (not a soldier), yet he became the greatest king of Israel's history—and "a man after God's own heart." That's not to say he was a perfect person (no one is, if you follow them long enough, except for Jesus). But prayer can change your life—in altogether unexpected and wonderful ways.

Jesus was also a man of prayer. I spoke about that last Sunday. But more than that, He had a habit of intentionally scheduling times of prayer before major decisions or major challenges. *I'm talking about Jesus here—the Son of the Living God!* If He felt it was important enough to schedule periods of extended prayer—waiting, speaking, listening, discovering, empowering—how much more, you and I?

Prayer Helps

What if you *don't* pray?

Many people have heard of "the battle of Jericho," where Joshua led Israel's troops to an unprecedented victory over a fortress considered impregnable. But have you heard of Ai?

Joshua 7:2-3

² *Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. ³ When they returned, they told Joshua, "There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don't make all our people struggle to go up there."*

⁴ *So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai*

⁵ *chased the Israelites from the town gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.*

Joshua made no inquiry of the Lord. Still glowing with pride from the stunning conquest of Jericho, he accepted the spies advice and launched the attack.

Now, they were as stunned in defeat as they had been in victory.

Their defeat was not a direct result of a lack of prayer, but had they prayed, God would have revealed the cause of their weakness—one of their men had stolen some of what had been dedicated to God (kept it for himself).

Taking for yourself what has been dedicated to God is no small thing. Would you agree? Marisol brought this up last Sunday, when she referred to the text in Malachi 3:8-10 –

⁸ *“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated Me!*

“But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat You?’

“You have cheated Me of the tithes and offerings due to Me. ⁹ You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating Me. ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in My Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put Me to the test!

Don’t steal for yourself what is due to God. It’s too costly. In ways you haven’t imagined.

Returning to the subject of prayer, especially prayers that were never offered, God had this to say through the prophet Isaiah (65:1-2):

¹ *The Lord said, “I was ready to answer My people’s prayers, but they did not pray. I was ready for them to find Me, but they did not even try. The nation did not pray to Me, even though I was always ready to answer, ‘Here I am; I will help you.’ ² I have always been ready to welcome My people, who stubbornly do what is wrong and go their own way.*

Don’t let such a thing be said of you!

Of course, the Bible does not enumerate the many times prayers could have been prayed but were NOT. It’s not that such things are unmentionable, but neither are they worth mentioning.

Prayer Promises

Instead, God’s Word is rife with promises to those who will choose to seek Him. Here are just a few:

Matthew 7:7-11

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Matthew 18:19

“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 21:22

“And all things you ask in prayer, trusting Me, you will receive.”

John 15:16

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

1 John 5:14

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

2 Chronicles 7:14

“If My people, who are called by My name, humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

When I searched my Bible software for the words “pray” and “prayer” it offered me 11,000 verses that included one of those words—11,000 verses! That’s nearly as many verses as you will find on the theme of “faith”!

Broken Connections

What are we missing here? Why do we talk so much about faith, but do so little praying? Surely, God is not fooled.

The costs of NOT praying are mostly temporal (having to do with this life only), while the costs of not trusting in Christ are mostly eternal. But most of our grumbling and anxiety are not about eternal matters, but temporal ones—and yet we refuse to pray.

Some will argue, “I’m just not good at it.” Well, it’s not involuntary, like breathing. And when initiative is required, regular practice is also required. If you cooked your own meals only as often or as briefly as you pray, some of you would starve to death, while others would be fat and happy!

I've noticed vast improvements in the field of interconnectivity. Smaller integrated circuits can carry more information, faster. A computer that used to fill a large air-conditioned room can now be carried in your pocket or worn on your wrist.

Praying to God our Savior may seem like a challenging burden at the first, but with the help of praying friends, and with personal practice, it becomes easier, more streamlined, and more effective. But you must start. And you must keep at it.

When you don't, you're not the only one to suffer for such broken connections.

Isaiah 65:1 The Lord says, "I was ready to respond, but no one asked for help. I was ready to be found, but no one was looking for Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am!' to a nation that did not call on My name.

If you don't start praying and keep at it (however you may fumble or stumble), you won't know the Lord any better next year than you do right now. You know that He saves, but do you know how He operates? Are you comfortable with His leading? Are you satisfied with His provision? Do you face opportunities of faith with joy? Do you lay your head down at night with peace?

All these and so much more await those who respond to God's generous invitation.

Proverbs 8:17 "I love all who love me. Those who search will surely find me.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen. ¹³ If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," says the Lord.

Do you remember that I said the internet technician identified a significant signal leak on our line. When I got under the building and traced the line all the way back to its beginning, I discovered a connector so poorly installed that wires were exposed, and when I tried to unscrew it, it came apart in my hand. The leakage was all the way back at the beginning of the line.

You may have noticed: faith leaks! And it's almost always associated with diminished prayer. Even a little prayer yields a little faith. More prayer yields more faith. And much prayer yields much faith.

So what are you waiting for? Make a good, solid connection with the Father in Jesus' name (which means, leaning in trust on Jesus Christ) and then, stay connected.

Practice divine interconnectivity. You won't regret it. I GUARANTEE it.