

Your Questions about Spiritual Life

DARRELL DELANEY

Everyone has questions periodically during their faith journey. It is natural to learning and growing. As a community, it is beneficial to ask these questions of each other and discuss them together, because there is a strong chance that someone else is wondering too, and that someone else has wondered in the past. We can learn together from each other. Today, we will continue this practice by looking at some of the matters you have told us are pressing for your faith right now. Together, we will discuss the life of faith, looking at our personal faith development, discussing how we can live faithfully in the world, even when division and disagreements are daily struggles, and remembering our calling to share the gospel message, and how we can respond biblically when that message is challenged. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Darrell, we are grateful here at *Groundwork* and at ReFrame Ministries to get questions from those who listen to our program. You send these in through the regular mail, through e-mail, sometimes through our Facebook page or other avenues, but we are always happy to get those questions, and we are going to be looking at some of the ones that have come in recently.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is really cool to somehow assist people in their walk with God, and you actually have been contributing quite a bit; and we gather those things, and we want to make sure you know you are heard. We want to make sure that we can fan the flames to tend the gift of God, which is your faith; and anything we can do to encourage you would be great. So, I am glad that we can do these kinds of episodes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And our producer gathers up these questions and then kind of groups them, because inevitably you get questions that are related to each other. So, in this first part of this program, Darrell, we are going to talk about some questions of some who have requested: How can I develop a daily cadence or a daily rhythm for meditation? Someone else talked about: How can I improve my prayer life? Yet another person said: You know, I really want to understand better how best to do a daily walk with God. So, we are in the area of prayer, meditation, devotion, regular rhythms of life, and that is what we want to talk about in the first part of this program.

DARRELL DELANEY

Spiritual disciplines...okay. So, there are patterns of these things all over scripture. As far as meditation and daily walk with God...prayer life...we are actually seeing that even in Genesis, where God will come down and walk with Adam in the cool of the day, and have fellowship with him. Constantly, because our God is relational, he wants us to fellowship with him; and we even see that in Jesus' rhythms and Jesus' patterns. We see him walking around; we see him praying; we see him stealing away. We also have seen different

opportunities where structured and unstructured prayer life is happening with the disciples.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and I think that is an important point you make, Darrell. So, we can think of a passage like this from Mark 1. You know, in Mark 1 and 2, Jesus' ministry takes off like a rocket...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But Jesus also needed time for himself. So, Mark 1:35:

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what is interesting. Scott, is that he came back with this focus, even though the disciples were wondering where he was.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love the fact that Jesus comes back with pretty much marching orders. I think that sometimes when we go to prayer, if we take those times early, before the kids are waking up; early, before we have to go to work; early, before the day gets rolling; then God can give us a focus there. I think there is a pattern there. I have also seen a pattern in the Apostle Peter. In the book of Acts it says that he prays three times a day, as is his custom; and that is actually when he got the vision of the animals, and God said don't call these unclean, because he is getting called to the Gentiles; but that happened during his regular practice of praying three times a day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, there is some structured time, but there is also unstructured time.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and that may have been a practice that went back to Judaism, praying three times a day, but right; in Acts 10, when Peter has that significant vision, it happens during one of his regular prayer periods. So, we definitely want to carve out that focused time, Darrell, to read scripture, to pray, to listen to the Spirit's prompting. There is also in Jesus the example that he was praying all the time; and now I am thinking about John 11, right before the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus is dead. They are at the tomb, and in verse 40, Jesus says to the people: "Did not I tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

So, Jesus is praying as he goes along, too. So, yes; he does withdraw to a solitary place and has that focused time, but that is not where his prayer life ends. His prayer life goes as he walks along. Before everything he did, he is praying to the Father; he is in communication with the Father constantly.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, praying was so constant for Jesus, it pretty much could have been his breathing. He prayed so much the disciples asked him: Could you teach us how to pray like that? And these are guys who pray all the time, but

because of the way Jesus did that, he actually inspired them to want to pray even more; and I think John picked that up, because in 1 John Chapter 5, it says:

¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

When we pray according to his will, then we know we have the petitions we ask of him, because he hears us. So, God is paying attention, and God hears it; but I think practically speaking, Scott, for people who want to learn how to do this, it is not something that you need to go to school for or have a degree in. You just need to add it to the things that are happening in your regular day, as if you don't have the time to carve it out. So, Brother Lawrence is a monk, and he was the one who said you need to practice the presence of God. So, he would be washing dishes, he would be gardening, and he would be praying while he was doing these things. Like, if you are a mom, hey, while you are nursing, pray. If you are a dad and you are in the car, hey, pray while you are driving somewhere. Just add it into your everyday life because it is a muscle. If you strengthen it, it will grow; but if you don't, then it could get weaker.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like what you said earlier about Jesus...it was almost like breathing, because there is that hymn that some of us know. There is a line that, you know: As I breathe, I pray; which reminds me of Paul at the end of 1 Thessalonians. Paul is just firing off some advice to the Thessalonians...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And he says:

^{5:16}Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

So, pray continually. It is like respiration—it is like breathing. So, yes; it is important to carve out dedicated time, and it is important to know that we are always in the presence of God. As you were just saying, we are always, as the old phrase says, the *coram deo*. We are always before the face of God. God has always got a listening ear. The Holy Spirit is always ready to wing even our shortest little prayers while we are driving down the freeway; brings them right to Jesus, who brings them right to the Father. So, that is all really important. Before we close out this part of the program, though, Darrell, we might mention that in terms of those more dedicated focus times, we do have some resources here at *Groundwork* and at ReFrame Ministries we could mention.

DARRELL DELANEY

We have actually done series on these things before. We had a spiritual disciplines series that includes an episode on prayer. We have done the *Cultivate Your Faith* series. We also did a discipleship series; and we have Bible studies that we produce that accompany people and help them in their ideas that we have done in programs as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

At groundworkonline.com, when you listen to us online, you can have access to the Bible studies that we make available; and of course, ReFrame Ministries also does the daily Today Devotional; a very short but meaningful time...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, there are a lot of other resources that are out there for those focus times, but also to carry you through ordinary times of practicing the presence of God, as you said, Darrell.

So, that is all very, very important, and it really lays a foundation for our lives and roots us spiritually; but of course, the world in which we try to live faithfully is not always an easy world. We know that to be true these days as much as ever. So, we are going to think about that in just a moment. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are taking some of your questions on this particular program. All year long, our faithful listeners send in questions, and we just looked at one about prayer and devotion, Darrell. Now, we are going to shift the focus a little bit to questions along these lines: I am sometimes praying and burdened for our country and for the Church as a whole, that we would all draw closer to God; that God will come and heal our land and bring us back to himself, who should be our first love.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; I am burdened as well. I think that God actually has a heart for his people, and he has a heart for his creation; and that longing for us to be with him and him to be with us is all throughout scripture: I will be their God, they will be my people. He wants that for us. First of all, I would say to the one who wrote this question, God is not alarmed. God knows that this is an issue. God understands that because we are broken and we are human, we have human error attached to all of the establishments that we have on this planet, and he is aware of that. That brings us to a place where we need to lament; and lament, if we look at it biblically, we see it in the Psalms, we see it all over; we hold up two truths: God is good, and the world is broken. God, please make this make sense to us; and this is where your prayer begins; like, God, this is sad. This makes me angry. This breaks my heart, but I know it breaks your heart more because you care about all this stuff.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, another person wrote, you know, we are so divided among social, theological, gender, cultural issues. How can I walk so my life brings light to dark places? We want to talk about that as well; but you are right. Scripture is nothing if not realistic. Yes, God is good, and since Adam and Eve sinned, the world has often been a mess, and Israel was often a mess...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the Church is often a mess; and I think, you know, we need to consider all of those things when we look at the current divisions in our world. We both live in the United States, so we know what a mess the world has been through the pandemic. There was plenty of political turmoil even before that; and we also know that in the United States, we have a habit of thinking that maybe we once were a Christian nation, and so we have to become a Christian nation again. How can we make the whole nation Christian? I think, on that score, it is right to be concerned about whatever country we live in. We have listeners from probably all over the world.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, whatever country you live in, you need to be concerned about it; and there is a great biblical example of this, Darrell, in Jeremiah. Jeremiah 29, where God dictates a letter for Jeremiah to send to the exiles who were living in Babylon...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Of all places. So, they have been exiled to Babylon, and yet, God has some interesting things to say.

DARRELL DELANEY

He says pray for the peace and prosperity of the city, because when you pray for that and it prospers, you too will also prosper; and if that place was so bad and so inherently evil, I don't think he would have told Jeremiah to buy a field there and hang out there, because there is a specific time where he was called to actually live in that area and thrive there, but I think that it is important for us to understand that the question is how can I walk so that my life brings light to dark places? The Bible calls us in 2 Corinthians 5 ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors for Christ. So, if we literally walk out what scripture teaches us about loving one another, forgiving one another, and giving grace to one another, I think that that is where we start. In-house...inside...because there could be these things that God could be using to actually motivate...I didn't say he caused it; I said he could use it...to motivate us believers to do what he has been calling us to do the whole time, which is to be a light and a witness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and if God could tell the Israelites in exile to pray for Babylon's prosperity, WOW!

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, most of the countries where we live are a long way from being that bad off, but even there, God says be a light...be a light in Babylon even. Don't wish for its destruction. In that Jeremiah 29 passage, Jeremiah goes on to say there are some false prophets among you; and what were those false prophets saying? Destroy Babylon! Resist, you know; make life miserable for the Babylonians. God says: I don't want you to do that. You are going to be there for a stretch, so pray for the prosperity of the city, and let God figure it out. You be a witness. We see something similar in Mark 12. Remember when the Pharisees and the Herodians were trying to trap Jesus. So, they said: Should we pay tax to the Roman Empire or not? And Jesus says: You know what? Bring me a coin. Whose image is this? Whose inscription? Caesar's, they replied. Then Jesus said to them give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's; and they were amazed at him. But the point being, you do what is right. You be a light. Don't worry, you know, about the Roman Empire. Don't worry about Babylon in Jeremiah 29. Paul says something similar in Romans 13, right? He writes a whole letter to Christians living under the nose of the Caesar. He never mentions the Roman Empire, never mentions the Caesar, but in Romans 13, he says:

¹Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. (Then he says in verse 4): For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. That is the Greek word, *diakonos*, from which we get deacons. So again, the best way, I think, we can witness to our nation is to make sure we are the light, which brings us to the Church. The bigger question is how can we make sure the Church is doing what it is supposed to be doing?

DARRELL DELANEY

And you know what is interesting to me is that in the Old and the New Testament, God is not editing out all of the issues that people are encountering, and all the dysfunction and brokenness. He leaves that in the scripture so that we could learn from those things; because, I mean, we could have highlights and just: Oh, great. All the things they did were wonderful. But because God leaves that in, he lets us know that he can work in the midst of challenges...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

In the midst of trials; in the midst of broken circumstances. In social and theological and cultural issues, God has a history of being faithful through that stuff; and if that God never changes, it should strengthen our faith to know that that same God is here with us now. He is the God we are asking to strengthen us. He is the God whom we are asking to help us and encourage us to live as Jesus would in the situation; and therefore, maybe we even win more people to Christ that way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, exactly; bear the fruit of the Spirit...Galatians 5. Paul says: Look, bear the fruit of the Spirit. Keep step with the Spirit. And I think, Darrell, in recent times we could say that unfortunately we would probably get most people to agree the Church has not done very well with this. Through the pandemic, through all the turmoil, the Church has sometimes torn each other apart. We haven't been kind.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We haven't shown goodness, we haven't shown patience, peace, joy, love...the fruit of the Spirit. Look, if we want to be...as the one listener asked...if we want to be a light to dark places, then we have to have the light in the first place, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the Church...its witness has dimmed. A lot of people look at the Church and say: You are no better. In fact, sometimes you are worse than the secular society, the way you people go after each other and tear your pastors down and tear at each other. As Paul said somewhere in the New Testament: Stop devouring each other...

DARRELL DELANEY

Why are you devouring one another...

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, you cannot bring light if you don't have the light yourself. So, start at home; in the Church, make sure we are bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and then we can bring that light out to the larger culture. God...you are right, Darrell...God cares about the whole world, but in the New Testament era in particular, he wants to start with the Church...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then go out from there.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is really honorable, whoever wrote this. I think they are interested in growing their faith; they are interested in what it means to be a light and a witness. I think that is really spiritually mature and actually a good thing. I think we will just want to make sure that we mention that we will continue to revisit that as we study God's Word each week; but in just a moment, we want to dig into scripture and address one other

person's question about evangelism and sharing the gospel. So, stay tuned for that.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have one more listener question. We have been looking at listener questions on this program, Darrell. We have one more: I would like to know how to relay the message of God to non-believers, when I am told that any god who wants people to serve and praise him must be arrogant. So, how can we tell people we want them to believe in God if they have a bad view of God already?

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, I hear two different questions in that one: How to relay the message, and then how do we tell them about a God...the perspective is that they must be arrogant if they are saying God wants all the praise...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

First and foremost, I just wanted to say that we do have a biblical command to share the gospel, to make the great commission to make disciples of all nations from Matthew 28. We are called to do that as we go; wherever we live, our home, our school, our job, our extracurricular activities and on social media; but I feel like I don't want us to get caught up in arguing or selling or trying to convince folk, because the Bible, first and foremost, says we shouldn't be quarrelling about these things. We are actually testifying. If we are overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony, your story cannot be refuted, Scott. My story cannot be refuted...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is my experience, and so therefore, I can tell what God has done for me in a way that is not combative, that is not argumentative. I am not trying to sell it or make people believe it. Wrestle people to the ground—that is not what it is about; it is about me saying: Hey, this is what God has done for me; and anybody can do that if they learn.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the power of testimony. You tell your story. People can say what they want, but when I am sharing my heart and when I am sharing what has happened in my life, you know, you cannot argue with that. So, I think you are right. We just tell what we know; we tell what we love; but the Bible tells us that even when we do that as well as we can, there is going to be resistance. I mean, Jesus predicted it: They persecuted me; they are going to persecute you. They are not going to buy everything that you say. They are going to say: Okay, that is your story because you are a little loopy or something like that. But the question, though, was very specific: Is God arrogant when he asks us to serve him and praise him? It is a very interesting question that we will just kind of deal with a little bit. C. S. Lewis thought about this. Why is God, particularly in the Psalms, forever asking to be praised? Isn't that vain? I mean, if you work with somebody, Darrell, or if I work with somebody who all week long is saying: Hey, hey; tell me what a good job I did; hey, tell me you

like my sweater; hey, tell me...you know... If they are always sucking around for praise, this is a very annoying person...seems a little shaky, seems a little arrogant, full of himself. Well, why isn't God that way, because that is exactly what God does in the Bible. Well, C. S. Lewis says the problem is, it is not God's problem, but it is our problem.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We just...we don't have good spiritual eyesight.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think too that in the analogy you just said about the person who is at your workplace or whatnot, the reason why they are seeking that praise is something...there is a void there that they are trying to fill...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

That maybe makes them validated, it maybe does something for their self-esteem or whatnot and they need attention. Psalms 24 says the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. If he is the God...and Abraham Kuyper said that there is not one square inch in this universe that God does not say that is mine (God's). So, we are returning back to God what is due him. He deserves all the glory, honor and praise. He is worthy of the glory, honor and praise. We cannot take the creation's mindset and pin it on God and say that is who he is. That is backwards. We actually have to adopt his attitude...his heart...his nature that is generous, that is giving, that is not self-seeking, because he taught us that is what love is in 1 Corinthians 13...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

Love is not self-seeking.

SCOTT HOEZEE

My teacher, John Stek, riffed off of C. S. Lewis a bit and said: Let's imagine a single mom raising her son, Charlie, and this mom works herself, you know, sixty hours a week. She is a secretary by day, she scrubs toilets in an office building by night, all to scrape together enough money to give Charlie a good life, to save money for Charlie's education, maybe go to college; but then, suppose Charlie is just sort of an ignorant clod of a human being and he doesn't note his mother's efforts. He squanders the gifts that she gives to him; spends his time with all the wrong people. Well, what if this goes on for years, and what if this mother sits Charlie down one day and says: Son, I deserve better than this from you.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

A little gratitude is all I ask for. You could say thank you once in a while. Would you look at that mother and say: Wow, what a shallow, vain person!

DARRELL DELANEY

She must be arrogant.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No! You would say: Charlie, it is only fitting that you would thank a mom like that; and that, my professor said, is what God is like. If we could see every day, Darrell, everything God gave us, nobody would have to tell us to give thanks; we would be doing it...

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a no-brainer.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because we would see it, right? Psalm 107 rehearses the whole history of Israel, and it begins in verse 2: Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—and then they tell the story, and then it ends with verse 43 of Psalm 107:

Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.

We give thanks to God because it is the only right thing to do. Worship is also worth-ship. God is worthy.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes...that is a beautiful thing, too. I think it is powerful for us to be reminded that praise and honor and glory belong to God, and we return to him what is his. It is not ours to keep; it is not ours to hoard; but it is belonging to him; but the last thing I was thinking about, too, was the fact that the person who came against the one who asked the question and said that God must be arrogant...there is some opposition there in the opportunity that we are trying to share our faith.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, just to let you know that Jesus says in John the world hates us. They hate him and they hate us because we are his servants. We are going to endure opposition. It is not going to be easy. It is not supposed to be easy, but we still have to be faithful to testify to what God has told us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Being faithful, telling our story, that is all we can do, and we pray for the Holy Spirit to do the rest, thanks be to God.

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com, to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or ask questions, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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