

KIRBSTONES

ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kûrb'stôn') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed, and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served ^{to}to hold the material in the roadbed, ^{to}to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and ^{to}to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

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¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. ¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV



There is a great difference between saying our prayers and becoming people of prayer. Christians understand prayer matters. We pray before meals, when someone is sick or a crisis erupts, or when a major decision looms. However, intentional prayer slices much deeper than our routine prayers. It is defined as the determined decision to make room for God in the *busy*-ness of our lives before all the demands, the distractions, and the competing voices of an intense world crowd him out.

Jesus modeled this kind of intentionality. Mark tells us,

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. - Mark 1:35

Jesus did not merely pray when circumstances forced him to pray. He intentionally withdrew to pray. Before the crowds gathered, before the questions came, before the work of the day began, Jesus sought the Father.

There is a lesson here that we dare not miss. Prayer rarely becomes central in our lives accidentally. We must initiate it. We must choose the time, find the place, silence the noise, and turn our attention toward God. If we wait until life becomes quiet enough to pray, we may wait forever.

But there is another side that we may overlook. Prayer is not merely about speaking to God. It is about becoming available to God. We sometimes approach prayer with a list of things we want God to do. Heal this person. Fix this problem. Open this door. Change this circumstance. Give me wisdom. Protect my family. Meet this need.

There is nothing wrong with bringing our needs before God. Scripture encourages us to do exactly that. Genuine prayer eventually changes the question. Instead of only asking, "Lord, what will you do?" we begin asking, "Lord, what would you have me do?"

That is where prayer and obedience meet. James writes,

Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. - James 1:22

Those words are uncomfortable for us to hear because they leave no room for passive Christianity. Hearing without responding is incomplete. Knowing without doing is insufficient. Prayer that continually seeks God's direction but never takes a step of obedience can become another way of postponing what we already know we should do.

Perhaps we have prayed about forgiving someone, but God is waiting for us to make the call. Perhaps we have prayed for someone who is lonely, but the Holy Spirit nudges us to go and visit. Perhaps we have prayed for our congregation to grow, while God is still waiting for us to invite someone. Perhaps we have prayed for opportunities to serve, while we walk past the needs God has placed in front of us.

At some point, prayer must get up and walk! It is on us to take the direction and make something happen!

That does not mean rushing ahead of God. Our faithful obedience is not reckless impulsiveness. There are times when God tells us to wait, and that waiting becomes an act of obedience. But there are also times when we continue praying because prayer feels safer than action. We ask God for another sign when he has already given direction. We seek additional confirmation when the real issue is whether we are willing to obey.

Intentional prayer changes the heart because it places us consistently in God's presence. And a heart being changed by God becomes increasingly willing to say, "Yes, Lord."

That may be one of the clearest measures of a growing prayer life: not how eloquently we pray, not how long we pray, not how many prayer requests we can name.

The deeper question is whether our time with God is producing faithful obedience when we leave that place of prayer. So begin intentionally. Set aside time. Open the Bible. Quiet your heart. Speak honestly with God. Listen carefully. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where your attitudes, priorities, relationships, and actions need to change. Then, when God makes the next step clear, take it.

Prayer places us before God. Obedience sends us from that place into the world. We need both. For prayer without obedience can become spiritual conversation without transformation. And obedience without prayer can become human activity without divine direction.

But when intentional prayer produces faithful obedience, something powerful happens: we stop merely asking God to work around us and begin allowing God to work through us. A faithful prayer life calls us toward faithful action.

Pray intentionally. Listen expectantly. Then get up—and walk faithfully where the Holy Spirit leads.

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