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Title: A PRAYER WE ALL SHOULD PRAY

Text: Exodus 33:12-23

¹²"Moses said to the LORD, 'See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' ¹³Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.' ¹⁴And he said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'" ¹⁵And he said to him, 'If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?' ¹⁷And the LORD said to Moses, 'This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.' ¹⁸Moses said, 'Please show me your glory.'" ¹⁹And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.' ²⁰But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.' ²¹And the LORD said, 'Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²²and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

One of the things I really like about Old Testament characters is that they are so thoroughly human. These heroes of the faith are GREAT, and... At the same time, GREATLY flawed. I served under a pastor who died not so long ago. I read some of the Facebook posts following his passing and he appeared to be saintlike. I knew him in ways that some of those who posted didn't know him. Certainly, he had his giftings, BUT... He struggled in some areas as well. As we ALL do. Even the greatest leader of the Old Testament, MOSES, had his struggles. In the movie *The Ten Commandments*, Charlton Heston plays Moses as stoic, kind of like a statue/giant with a booming voice. But... When you read the book of Exodus, that's not really the Moses we see. Sometimes his timidity came to the forefront. He said of himself that he was of a slow tongue and slow of speech. Yes, he accomplished such great things. He led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt to the very edge of the Promised Land. And... While they wandered in the desert 40 years, through his leadership, they developed their identity as the people of God. He taught them the law of God. He developed an organizational structure. He trained leaders. He dealt with problems. He dealt with criticism. He dealt with disloyalty. And he dealt with HIS OWN mistakes and bad decisions. He had moments of great victory AND great defeat.

Our graduates have reached a significant milestone in recent days. Half completed at least 12 years of school and the other half 16 years of school. I suppose you all know that your education is not over. There is so much more to be learned. My dad called the next level of schooling – the School of Hard Knocks. Some of our grads have immediate plans. Some are facing uncertainty and don't know what is next. I'm here to say that is okay, BUT to make sure Jesus is your guide.

There were times when Moses faced uncertainty. Generally, he didn't know what was around the next corner. He didn't always know what he should do four or five steps down the road. He was just trying to figure out what to do next. God didn't give Moses a blueprint for everything that would happen. When Moses graduated high school, he didn't have any idea what was next. After taking his LAST college class, he still didn't know what lay ahead. I trust you know I am being facetious. There were many times when Moses was unsure of himself and of his future. Have you ever felt that way? I have. Even in the midst of doing what I believed God has called me to do, there have been times when I felt unsure of myself and the future.

There were also times when Moses faced fear. When he looked ahead and saw the Red Sea, and... Then he looked behind and saw the approaching Egyptian army. He was afraid. When they had been in the desert for

many years, and his people rose up in rebellion against him, HE FACED FEAR. How about you? Have you ever been fearful? Figuratively speaking, have you ever found yourself sandwiched between the approaching army and the raging sea, and you were overcome with panic? Or even worse, have you ever found yourself nowhere near the army and the sea, and yet you felt paralyzed by fear? Fear of the UNKNOWN. Fear of FAILURE. Fear of the FUTURE. Maybe even fear of SUCCESS. FEAR THAT THE PAST WON'T STAY IN THE PAST. Fear that your WORST fears will become reality. If you ever felt fear, then you're not alone. You're not the only one who has been afraid.

Speaking of being alone, Moses felt that way sometimes. Alone. He felt like he couldn't do what God was asking him to do, without someone WALKING beside him, and SPEAKING for him. Leadership can be very, VERY lonely. There are times when you feel like no one is for you and that everyone is either against you, or... Just not interested. Have you ever felt that whatever you must do, you have to do alone, on your own, without anyone's help, without even anyone's sympathy? There have been times when I have felt alone, and even abandoned. There have been times when I felt like: It's all on me, now. I can't depend on anyone else. If I don't do it, it won't get done. Have you ever felt that way? Moses faced ALL those feelings.

He also, sometimes, felt Weak. Powerless. Frail. And... Yes, there were times when God's power worked through Moses in a great way, and there were times his power simply gave out, and he could do no more. And that's the difference in the Christian life – whether you're walking in God's strength or your own strength. YOUR OWN strength isn't enough. Have you come to that conclusion yet? The conclusion that sometimes you are Frail. Weak. Powerless. You're not like that all the time, of course. We all have our good moments in which our strength seems sufficient. BUT... Sometimes we come to the point where we realize those moments of sufficient strength aren't enough to sustain us through all that life throws at us. I'd like to say that your roughest days are behind you, BUT... It wasn't that way for Moses. It hasn't been that way for me. This I know, I wouldn't want to go a step without Jesus! *"The steps of the righteous are ordered of the Lord."* Have you come to the point where you realize that you need power in your life? Again, I can tell you that I have. I know what it's like to feel weak and powerless and frail. Some of you will be taking on new jobs. Some have already started new jobs. A new job generally brings with it challenges.

Here's what I've discovered: Everyone who aspires to do something great for the glory of God soon discovers that their first and biggest obstacle is their own personal limitations. We see the same thing in Moses: a man with faults and flaws and limited power who did great things WHEN he walked in the fullness of God's power. Graduates (AND everyone else), God wants to use you like He used Moses. He doesn't want your life to be defined by uncertainty and fear and regret and self-pity and failure. He wants your life to be blessed. To be anointed. To be full of abundance, as Jesus said.... *"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10, ESV).

In Exodus 33, Moses had a conversation with God in which he asked some things of God. THREE THINGS. These are three things that every graduate, every leader – or to be more specific, every believer – should ask of God OFTEN, if not daily. Today I want to talk to you about these three things you can ask of God. Three simple requests. This prayer doesn't take much more than a minute to pray, but it has the potential to yield a lot of power in your life. So, let's look at Exodus 33 and the three things MOSES asked from God. I'm encouraging you to ask the same things. FIRST of all...

1. HELP ME TO KNOW YOU! (v. 12-13) *"Moses said to the LORD, 'You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.'"* And here's the part I want you to see... *"If you are pleased with me, TEACH ME YOUR WAYS so I may know you and continue to find favor with you."* Moses says, *"teach me your ways,"* because in learning God's ways, we learn about – the HEART of God, the MIND of God, the VOICE of God, the "PERSONALITY" of God, so to speak. When we know God's ways, we know what He is like. When you come to church you will hear that God is a God of mercy and compassion and grace and forgiveness. Above everything, we learn that God is LOVE. We also learn that God is HOLY. That He is GOOD. That He is PATIENT. That He is

FAIR. Now, I can tell you that THIS is what God is like, and... MAYBE you'll believe me and MAYBE you won't. Much better is when YOU discover it for yourself. How do you do that? You spend time with Him, in the Word. Through Scripture we learn what God is like. We learn what He LIKES and what He DISLIKES, what He LOVES and what He HATES, what He ACCEPTS and what He REJECTS, what He WANTS and what He DOESN'T want. The more that we know about Him and the more that we understand His ways, the MORE we know Him personally. That's really what it comes down to. God wants to be in relationship with us – you and me. The Christian life is more than just reading about God, it's more than just doing religious things. It's about having a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. The more you know God, and the more you know His way, the less you struggle with uncertainty and confusion. Many times, when I don't know what to do, I discover the answer is already in front of me, in the pages of Scripture. For example, should I get even with this person, or should I forgive them? When we know God's ways, we know how to answer that question. Which did God do – He FORGAVE. In His death, he cried out, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Should I take this job that will require me to cut some ethical corners, even though the money is good? When we know God's ways, we know the answer to that question. God is not a man that He should lie. Should I give up on trying to be good? Should I give up on trying to help others? Should I give up on trying to create better relationships with those in my family? When we know God's ways, we know the answer to that question. Yes, there are things that come our way that the Word hasn't been so specific about. What about marriage? Jesus attended weddings, BUT... He is still waiting for His bride. When I was asked about undergoing a clinical trial, all I wanted to know was WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? I was given 3 pages of possible side effects. Loss of hair and energy. Death was one of the side effects. I asked my Christian family doctor for his thoughts. He said I needed to seek the Holy Spirit for direction. I struggled most of a year to decide whether or not to participate. Finally, I basically asked God to walk with me in these uncharted waters. I took the first step of faith. I prayed often to God, "If You're not in this, let me know and I will stop immediately." To make a long story short, I participated in the trial for 5 years. On the last day of the clinical trial, I said something to Doctor Dawson that warranted a brain scan. That brain scan on my last scheduled appointment showed a tiny brain tumor. Because I was in the clinical trial it was caught early. It was the smallest tumor either of my surgeons had ever seen. I'm so very glad I had Jesus to hold my hand and walk with me. This thing we call life is very much a FAITH WALK. That's why we need to know God and His ways. A commitment to KNOWING God and KNOWING HIS WAYS brings clarity to your life. It is through walking in His ways that we experience favor with God. I want to live in God's favor. I hold that the more we know Him, the more we walk in His ways, the more we experience His favor. I can't imagine anyone NOT wanting to walk in His blessing. I trust that you want God to be pleased with you and with what you do. If that is true, then like Moses, you can pray each day: "Lord, HELP ME TO KNOW YOU, to know Your ways, and to know Your favor.

Here's the second part of the prayer.

2. LET ME WALK WITH YOU. (v. 14) God made this promise to Moses... *"The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'"* The word *rest* can also be translated *peace*. In other places the Bible talks about entering into God's rest. What does it mean? It means experiencing peaceful contentment. In our moments of uncertainty, we know that God is ultimately in control. Even in the Old Testament, God made it clear that He doesn't want His people to be nervous and anxious and on edge all the time. That's why the prophet Isaiah said... *"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you"* (Isaiah 26:3). Perfect peace. That's what God promises. Paul called it *"the peace which passes all understanding."* Jesus told His followers... *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27). AND... Jesus also said... *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). This is what God wants for His people, that we live in peace. He came as the Prince of Peace. Immanuel – God with us. Not JUST peace with others, though He does want that. He ALSO wants you to experience peace in your personal life. He wants you to live at peace with yourself. He wants to give you rest. How do we experience that rest, that peace? We experience it WHEN WE WALK WITH HIM. It is more than following His words; it's following His

steps. Some are guilty of wanting guidance but NOT the guide. God's wants more for you than dishing out guidance; He wants to BE YOUR GUIDE. He wants to walk WITH YOU. If you are lost and you drive up and see someone who looks like a local (at least you hope he's a local) and you ask him how to get to your desired destination. He says, "That's going to be mighty, mighty hard." So, he draws you this unbelievable map. You are looking at him. He looks at you. "I can let you have the map, but I'm going that way myself." He gets in the car. You got MORE than guidance; you got THE GUIDE. Of course, that's much, much better! You don't have any idea where you are, but it doesn't bother you anymore because YOU HAVE THE GUIDE with you. As a result, you're only getting the map in pieces. He says, "Go to that stoplight, and then turn left." That's all he tells you. He doesn't tell you the rest. After you make a left at the stoplight, you don't know what's next. Then he says, "Go here," and then he says, "Go there." Oh the benefits of having the guide. ILLUSTRATION: Elizabeth Elliott was a Bible translator and missionary in the jungles of South America. Her husband had been killed by the Auca Indians while serving as a missionary. While she was serving in the jungles, a couple of adventurers from America came and were determined to cut their way through the Amazon jungle. They came because they knew Elizabeth Elliott was an American, and that she spoke English. Upon their arrival they asked her for directions. She said, "Directions? You don't need a map. YOU NEED A GUIDE." "Oh no, no, no. We can make our way." AND... They went into the dangerous jungle. She never saw them again. She has no idea – maybe they made it and maybe they didn't. She was saying you need more than guidance. There are dangers in the jungle. You put your life at risk. The whole map won't do you any good because you won't understand that map. You'll eventually be upset by the map. You'll be overwhelmed with the whole map. The guide recognizes the dangers and signs of danger in the jungle. You need a relationship with a guide who is so constant that at every point you get the next piece and the next piece of instruction. YOU NEED A GUIDE. In other words, the Bible teaches us guidance is not so much something God gives you. It is something HE DOES FOR YOU! The Bible doesn't talk so much about how to get guidance. Rather it talks about the kind of person who IS guided. LET GOD GUIDE YOU! When you are walking in His presence (walking WITH Him), you can experience His peace, His rest, every step of the way. So, the second part of our prayer is... "Lord, help me to walk in Your presence and in Your peace." Praying this prayer helps develop another habit. As I move around throughout the day, going from one place to another, I say another little prayer, "God, thank You for being here with me." I know that He is with me because He promised... *"Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). And Jesus promised... *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). When we pray this prayer daily, we are saying, "Lord, I know that You are with me, because You promised to be. So today help me live my life like I know this is true." I love what Moses said to God about this. *"Then Moses said to him, 'If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.'"* Moses is saying, "If You're not going with me, I don't want to go. I don't want to go anywhere where You're not with me." Why did Moses say that? Because he knew that life outside the presence of God isn't worth it. This is why Solomon said... *"Better a little with the fear of the Lord, than great wealth with turmoil"* (Proverbs 15:16). It's just not worth it to go anywhere or do anything if you're not assured that God is walking with you. And... When you know He is walking with you, there's no place too distant, too dark, too dangerous for you to go. You don't feel lonely because YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE NEVER ALONE. You don't feel afraid because GOD'S PRESENCE TAKES AWAY FEAR AND REPLACES IT WITH REST. So, everyday let's pray: "Help me to walk in Your presence and Your peace."

Here's the THIRD part of the prayer.

3. SHOW ME YOUR GLORY (v. 17-23) *"And the LORD said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.' Then Moses said, 'Now SHOW ME YOUR GLORY.'"* Here's what happened. God said... *"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.' Then the LORD said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will*

see my back; but my face must not be seen.” This part of the story serves to remind us that we will NEVER FULLY understand the fullness of God. In this life, with our human limitations, we will never be able to see Him as He is. As Paul said, *“now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, but someday we will see him face to face.”* And... As the Apostle John said... *“But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2). There is another graduation day where we, as believers, will see the fullness of God. In this life we strive to see as much of God’s glory as possible, though we only get a glimpse. But... Here’s what I want you to see. That glimpse is enough to change us. In the next chapter of Exodus, after Moses comes down from the mountain, the Bible says that his face was radiant, because... HE HAD BEEN WITH THE LORD. It’s still the same today. There is something about people who spend a lot of time in God’s presence. You likely know such people. They are radiant. They are confident. They have an assurance that you just can’t manufacture on your own. It only comes from being in the presence of God. You would do well to seek out such people. There are two aspects of God’s glory. First, HIS POWER. A revelation of the glory of God brings an understanding of His power – that there is nothing that He can’t do. The revelation of the glory of God ALSO brings an understanding of HIS MAJESTY – that He is great, and He is good and there is none like Him. And so, the third part of the prayer is: Reveal to me Your glory – Your power and majesty – so that my life, too, is filled with Your radiance. When you feel powerless, you can rely on God’s power. It knows no limits. He can do anything – even if it includes changing you into a new creation in Christ. He can make you more than a conqueror in life, through His power.

CONCLUSION. This is a simple prayer, and it’s rather easy to memorize: Lord, help me to know You, to know Your ways, and to know Your favor. Help me to walk in Your presence and in Your peace. Show to me Your glory – Your power and Your majesty – so that my life is filled with Your radiance. Praying this prayer doesn’t take long at all, plus it sets the tone for your day. And not only for the day, but for your life. When I’m up against uncertainty, when I’m facing a decision, when I need to know the right thing to do, I say, “Lord, help me to KNOW YOU, to KNOW YOUR WAYS, to KNOW YOUR FAVOR.” When things get stressful, when I feel alone, when I feel afraid, I look up to heaven and whisper, “Lord, help me walk in Your presence and in Your peace.” When I feel powerless – that I have no power over my circumstances or no power over myself, when I feel that God is far away and I struggle with my inadequacies, I cry out to Him, “Lord, reveal to me Your glory, Your power and Your majesty, so that my life is filled with Your radiance.” This prayer reminds us that the Christian life is a relationship with God, a process of knowing Him, and walking with Him, and letting Him change us into His likeness. I encourage you to learn this prayer, to greet each morning with these words, to pray it again and again throughout the day, so that God can accomplish in your life all that He wants to do. GREAT THINGS.

Lord, help me to know You, to know Your ways, and to know Your favor.

Help me to walk in Your presence and in Your peace.

**Show to me Your glory – Your power and Your majesty –
so that my life is filled with Your radiance.**