

40 Days of Prayer – Week One: Growing Up in Prayer

"Unfortunately, the people who most often preface comments by saying, 'Brother, I want to speak the truth in love,' are the ones who are the most insensitive and the most injurious in violating other people by acid and destructive criticism. But when we speak the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. To grow up into Christ, no longer to be children or adolescents in our faith but to grow up into all aspects of Christ, that is the goal." (R.C. Sproul)

I stumbled across this quote while searching for a direction for our first week of member submitted prayers and it was a hard pill to swallow. The root of this struggle has been on display during the last fourteen months perhaps more than any other period in our world's history. Personally, it has been so easy to let my approach or opinion about certain things transpiring or circulating dominate my attitude, conversations, and relationships at times as I continued to fall guilty of assuming my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions were superior to the ones of those around me. I found myself being quick to speak and slow to listen and quick to become angry or frustrated while James 1:19 speaks clearly against such behavior for the believer with James 1:20 explaining that those responses do not allow the production of righteousness that God desires from His children. The remedy is shared in verse 21: "get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent and *humbly accept the word planted in you*, which can save you (James 1:21, NIV)." These words fall at the heels of James' challenge to ask God for wisdom if we find ourselves lacking. And I find myself lacking often, if not perpetually.

Enter prayer. Prayer is the vehicle that the Holy Spirit uses to not only help me accept and apply the word planted in me but also make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. Throw in Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonian church to, "pray without ceasing," and the necessary pattern of prayer is made manifest for me to keep my head on straight and navigate turbulent times, relationships, and comments all the while I remain hopeful that those around me are doing the same so I may be shown the same grace when I stumble in my speech, attitude, or correction of my fellow brother or sister in Christ.

I think about this quote from RC Sproul and I think of how I spoke when I was a teenager, from the jokes I made to things I laughed at, from deeply rooted sarcasm to snide comments when my mood was less than ideal because I was living in sin. I'm thankful the Lord has brought me from that season, but I want to be able to say the same thing spiritually. I do not want to just, "be kind." I want my speech to be, "seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6) and "edifying and beneficial for others" (Eph 4:29). I want to be removed from abrasive arrogance, speaking the truth in love while growing in all aspects of Christ. And prayer is the vehicle carrying me to that growth in Him.

Lord, let me continue to accept the Word planted in me daily with its truth and promise of new life in the Gospel. Let me strive toward that growth in grace through application of your word and the empowering presence of Your Holy Spirit. May we, Your church, strive toward that goal to grow up in all aspects of the Head of our Body, Jesus Christ. Amen.