

Profiles in Prayer

*One of these things is not like the other
One of these things doesn't belong
Can you guess which thing is not like the other
Before I finish my song ...*

Is that limerick still a staple on *Sesame Street*? My kids have been grown too long. Still, you surely remember it? Four things appear on the TV screen. Three are alike in terms of type, size, color, *etc.* One is different. Can you guess which of the following *Profiles in Prayer* is not like the others before I finish my song?

1. *“Some people pray just to pray and some people pray to know God.”*
- **Andrew Murray**
2. *“Prayer - secret, fervent, believing prayer - lies at the root of all personal godliness.”* - **William Carey**
3. *“Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.”* - **John Bunyon**
4. *“I pray to God Roger Goodell doesn't come down hard on me.”*
- **Vince Young**

Apparently, someone irked the Tennessee Titan and former University of Texas quarterback by displaying the “Hook’em Horns” hand gesture upside down. Vince was embarrassingly caught on tape trying to wail the tar out of the man for the perceived sacrilege. He is currently awaiting the NFL Commissioner (Mr. Goodell) to weigh in. Now, I have battled my own temper and hyper-competitiveness all my life, but even I was left grimacing as I watched the video while *Mike and Mike in the Morning* insisted on clarifying that there is nothing wrong or illegal about Vince being in the strip club where the incident occurred. Apparently, one just has to be careful about getting into such volatile situations when there. (I question that “legal” is a high enough criteria to monitor morality or good sense, but that is not my point, though it does go to my point).

It is not my intention to depict Young as uniquely a buffoon. As a UT fan and a native Texan, I can extend a similar grace to him as I extend to my own kids. “If you're going to be a knucklehead, I guess you're my knucklehead.” (The commissioner may or may not concur.) On the contrary, I fear that Vince may serve closely and more often as the example for how many of us approach prayer than do Murray, Carey and Bunyon combined.

How often do we seek the face and heart of God in matters of how we will utilize great blessings, great opportunities, great freedoms and great privileges? How fervently do we pray about the usefulness of our choices in regard to recreation, downtime and disposable income? Or, are our most intense prayers typically reserved for acquiring the things we desire and for escaping the consequences of choices made that were devoid of any particular fascination with the honor, the presence or the will of God?

A life of intimacy with God will typically shelter us from making humiliating spectacles of ourselves as a result of our own ill-conceived choices about the situations into which we place ourselves or the impulses we choose to follow. Still, even that will not shelter us from every test and trial in this life. Nor can I promise you on God's behalf that you will escape those trials in any kind of a short-run. But, I can assure you, based on God's Own Word, the spiritual equilibrium required to stand up under trials while they last.

May God find us this day building that equilibrium as we live in His intimate presence. May we turn our backs on the notion of “faith in prayer” to get what we want or to escape what we don’t want. May we instead give ourselves to true prayer as a vehicle for drawing close to the One Who alone is worthy of our faith.

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