



PRAYER HABITS

CONVERSATION #2: TURN TO GOD FIRST

ICEBREAKER: LIFELINE TIME

On the popular game show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, when contestants don't know the answer, they use a lifeline - *Phone a Friend*. To begin our conversation, who would you call for a "lifeline" if you had a question about the following categories:

One- Hit Wonders	College Mascots	World War II
U.S. Coins & Currency	Facts About the Human Body	Common Idioms
Ancient Civilizations	Album Covers	The Periodic Table
Flags of the World	Historical Biblical Sites	Board Games
Things That Spin	Famous Quotes	Commercial Jingles

STUDY: YOUR FIRST MOVE

What's interesting about game shows and "lifelines" is that they are only used when you don't know the answer, or you've run out of options. They're not the first move - they're the backup plan. If we're honest, many of us approach God the same way. When a problem shows up, most of us don't pause and turn to God - we react. Our instinct is to take control and move fast. We try to fix it ourselves, look for someone else to fix it, distract ourselves from it, or manage the outcome as best we can.

None of those responses are wrong. They're human. But they reveal something important: we're still learning where our true source is. The hesitation isn't about whether God is powerful - it's about whether He's accessible. We might believe God cares in theory, but in the moment, we think, "*I'm not sure He wants this*," or "*I don't want to bother Him*," or "*I'll pray once I've tried everything else*." Without realizing it, God becomes our backup plan instead of our first response. Today, we are going to consider why turning to God first is always our best move.

READ 1 PETER 5:7

- Which word or phrase in this verse stands out to you the most right now and why?
- What makes it easier for you to worry about something than to actively "cast" or give it to God?

- Are there certain kinds of anxieties you're more likely to bring to God - and others you usually keep to yourself? What do you think drives that difference?
- If you believed that God really cared about the things you care about – how would it change the way you think about bringing Him your everyday pressures - not just major crises?

CHARACTER STUDY: HANNAH

To learn more about what turning to God first might look like, we are going to read about a woman named Hannah. As you read her story, pay attention to what she's carrying and where she takes it. Notice what changes in her before anything around her changes.

READ 1 SAMUEL 1:1-18

- What do you notice about how Hannah brings her pain to God? What feels honest or real about her approach?
- Before Hannah's situation changes, something in her does. What changes, and what do you think caused that?
- What does Hannah's prayer show you about the kind of things God invites us to bring to Him?
- Is there something you're carrying right now that God is inviting you to place with Him instead?

God isn't waiting for you to get stronger, more disciplined, or more put-together before you come to Him. He's inviting you to come so *that* strength can grow. Coming to God isn't the reward for maturity - it's the pathway to it. Many of us, especially in this phase of faith, tend to treat prayer like a backup plan instead of a starting point.

Spiritual growth begins when that instinct starts to change - when we learn to say, "*God, You're my first response - not my last resort.*" And each time we choose to come to Him first, we're training our hearts to trust where our true source really is.

CHALLENGE: PAUSE YOUR PROBLEMS

This week, the challenge is to create a list and write down **every problem, stress, or concern** that comes up. Instead of reacting immediately, we're going to practice a new rhythm. Here's how we will choose to respond.

- (1) First, **PAUSE.** Resist the urge to fix it, explain it, or avoid it.
- (2) Then, **PRAY.** Bring the situation honestly to God, even if you don't know what to say.
- (3) Finally, **PAY ATTENTION** to how God is leading you to respond - whether that means taking action, waiting, asking for help, or letting go.

Proverbs 3:5 says, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*" Each time you pause and pray, you're training your heart to lean on God instead of yourself - and that's where real growth begins.