



The Flame

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from GCCN Prayer Ministries

Retrained

My brother is the runner in the family. Marathoner, actually. Boston numerous times.

Not me! That will come as no surprise to anyone who knows me, but few people know that I once was as fit as he, just never as tall and un-wide. For years I trekked through the mountains and across rivers 500 miles back in the jungle of Papua New Guinea's Southern Highlands Province.

My first trek was one of my most memorable but for all the wrong reasons. Kusa village was at least 10 miles from my house. Well, maybe it was five miles. Alright, it was only a mile, but it was all *up!* Straight up!

I had only been in the country for a month, and I admit that trek was embarrassing. Frail little old ladies were passing me with gazes of genuine pity. With their vine-woven *bilums* filled with a couple bushels of sweat potatoes hanging down their backs, they extended their hands, offering to help me up the mountain. I was too winded to say anything so I just waved them on.

By the time I walked into Kusa, sweat drenched and bone weary, the villagers seemed surprised that I was still upright. But they were no more surprised than I was.

Months after becoming conditioned to my surroundings, I could cover that mile in 20 minutes.

You may be surprised that this experience reminds me of prayer.

Learning to pray takes some acclimation.

We live in a world that has taught us to live with self at the center. But prayer is about experiencing a relationship with God that places Him and Him alone in the center.

Some resources want us to learn technique and structure to develop the practice of prayer. If we are preoccupied with this formula or that, prayer too easily becomes little more than an exercise in how well we get it done.

But authentic prayer is the result of our acclimation to God's presence. It is not about how we feel or how well we manage to follow some prescribed outline, nor is it measured by our fervor.

Prayer is the expression and evidence of our relationship with God. Prayer does not provide us with a relationship with Him, but rather our relationship provides us with the privilege of prayer.

Taking Your Next Step

Your prayer life is the heart of your spiritual acclimation. Seek the mantle of grace to shift your focus more and more to the climate of true faith that is anchored in the Unchangeable One.

Be attentive with each task or phase of the day to that quiet voice of the Spirit that prompts you to acknowledge Him and the growing awareness of all things eternal. Invite the Spirit to interfere with the noise of the natural that deters a life of an uninterrupted relationship of reliance on the Lord of unfailing grace. Let Him retrain your heart to be more attuned to His, drowning out the daily distractions that lure us from His presence that is the very essence of prayer.

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