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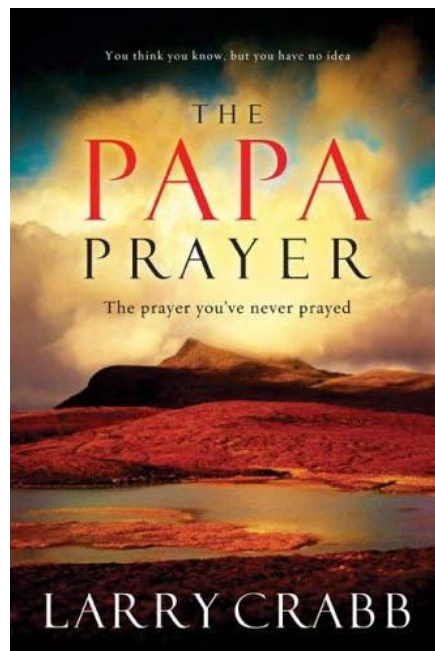
FINDING YOUR "RED DOT"

["P" – PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD]

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

MAY 4, 2008

LESSON #2 FROM THE **MASTER WORKS** SERIES STUDY OF:



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FINDING YOUR "RED DOT"

["P" – PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD]

I want you to fill in the blank on the sheet of paper I handed out to you this morning: *"For me, the most important thing in life is _____."* Now, let me tell you this, If your answer was anything but YOUR relationship with God... you are not as intimate with Him as you should be and that's what we're talking about today.

"I don't think we're going to get out of this thing. I'm going to have to go out on faith." It was the voice of Todd Beamer, the passenger who said *"Let's roll"* as he led the charge against the terrorists who had hijacked United Flight 93 on September 11th, the one, you will remember, that crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside. What gave strength to his bravery was his faith in Jesus Christ. Todd died as he lived, a faithful believer.

After passengers were herded to the back of the jet, Beamer called the GTE Customer Center in Oakbrook, Illinois. He told supervisor Lisa Jefferson about the hijacking. The passengers were planning to jump the terrorists, he said. And then he asked her to pray with him. He began to recite the Lord's Prayer, and Lisa Jefferson joined him: *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."*

As they finished, Beamer added, *"Jesus, help me."* And then, Beamer and his fellow passengers prayed a prayer that has comforted millions down through the centuries – the prayer that David wrote in a time of great anguish: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want ... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. And then the famous last words: *"Are you guys ready? Let's roll."* Ever wonder where Todd Beamer got the assurance and comfort evident in his statement or how he could have such confidence and apparent peace in God at such a time as that? No question about his intimacy with God or that his relationship with God was the most important thing in his life.

Today we continue with Week Two of our study of Dr. Larry Crabb's book, *The PAPA Prayer*, and look at the first letter of our acrostic, "**P**"—*present yourself to God*. Let's begin by looking again at the opening story of your lesson in Day One on Page 121. Follow along, or listen, as I read the story of Ed and Melanie from Dr. Crabb's book instead of the quarterly:

Ed and Melanie are friends of mine. Melanie despises Ed. She recently asked me, "How am I supposed to love him? He thinks only of himself. He'll help with the kids if I ask him a hundred times. I cut the grass and empty the trash. I can't even stand to let him kiss me anymore. I service him sexually every couple of months when I feel guilty over how long it's been, which he, of course, lets me know.

I know something's terribly wrong with my attitude. I know I'm bitter, but I don't really know what to do. Sometimes after a good sermon or a meaningful time in the Bible, I try to be nicer to him—you know, be warmer, make him a dinner I know he likes. But it never lasts. When I'm nicer, he takes me more for granted. I'm really getting depressed. Any thoughts?

*I replied, "Stop trying so hard to behave the way you think you should." "Just go ahead and tell him how I really feel? I've tried that too. It makes things worse." "Pray." "You think I haven't? Let me tell you, I've prayed. I've been on the floor in tears praying about this. I know I should pray for God to change me, not just him, and I do. **But nothing's happening!**"*

Let's stop right there. **How would you respond if this was your friend?** Open your Bible to **JOHN 15: 5-7 (NLT)** and follow along as we look at what *presenting yourself to God* has to look like:

⁵"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you remain in me and my

words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

As we learned this week in our Bible study, if you want to learn the PAPA prayer, if you want to relate to God before you ask Him for anything, start by presenting yourself to God. Let Him know exactly what's going on in YOUR life—what you're feeling right then, what thoughts are floating around in your mind. Think for a second about what's happening and tell God about it. Be real with Him. Hold nothing back. Put into words whatever you know is happening to you. Does that help with what you should tell Melanie if she was your friend? [What does it mean to bear much fruit? Is it true of you? Have you born much fruit? What would be examples of fruit you have born?](#)

As I thought about our study this week, I realized that Dr. Crabb is trying to help me “*get real*” with God. Have you ever tried to sit down and have an intimate or personal conversation with your spouse, or child, or maybe even a friend and it seems they're distracted and just not all there? How does it make you feel when you just can't seem to get through and they're just going through the motions with you? Sometimes I've presented myself to God by saying, “*You seem a million miles away from me right now. Based on what I feel right now, I can't even tell you're there.*” At other times I've said, “*I'm so confused right now. I don't have a clue how to teach this class next Sunday. I'm afraid I won't be able to move our group toward a really meaningful time with You, God.*” But, I've also said, “*I feel really good right now. Hopeful. Optimistic. Glad to be alive and serving You, Lord!*” I think that's presenting yourself to God, talking to Him without pretense, being real, telling Him whatever is going on inside you that you can identify when you pause long enough to notice what's going on.

We mentioned *The LORD'S Prayer* last week and earlier today in the story about Todd Beamer, so let's turn to the opening verses of it for a moment. Turn to **MATTHEW 6: 7-9 (NIV)** and look at what Jesus says just before He actually teaches His disciples HOW to pray—a good reminder about HOW we are to present ourselves to

God: *⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹"This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"...*

It's interesting to notice that before Jesus talks about how to pray, he talks about how NOT to pray! Verse seven says "when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." Some people think that if we repeat the same phrases strong enough, long enough, and loud enough, we can successfully manipulate God into doing what we want Him to do: "If I say ten Our Fathers and O Lords, God will be so impressed with my many words that He will have no choice but to respond to the needs in my life." Aaaang! Not!

See, Jesus is saying, "That's not the way it works! You don't have to babble on and on to get God's attention because you already have His attention! Just say what's on your heart and He'll take care of the rest." You say "Wait a minute! Does this mean that I'm sinning when I pray more than once for the same thing?" Not at all. **1 Thessalonians 5:17** says, *"Pray continually."* And last week we talked about the persistent widow in **Luke 18:1** where Jesus reminded us, *"Keep on praying and don't give up!"* There's nothing wrong with persistent prayer. The problem is when we're more interested in how religious we sound than we are with getting to the point.

That's why Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer—to teach us how to get to the point rather than belabor the point. Verse Nine says "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Right away, Jesus is exploding a myth about God. God is not an angry tyrant waiting to zap the first person who gets on His nerves. He is not a vicious God. He is our daddy! He is our Father! This is music to my ears. Because right now, I need a father figure in my life. I need God to say "Dean, I'm your daddy or papa. I'll always be here for you. I'll always love you. I'll never leave you or forsake you!"

And it's not just me. We all need a Father to guide us and watch over us and love us. Two things you need to know and remember about our Father, Papa, Abba who art in heaven. Number one: He is a caring Father. You'll never hear God say "Oh no, not YOU again! Weren't you here yesterday? Don't you know I have six billion people to take care of? Can't you get back in line and wait your turn?" You'll never hear that from God.

You can pray to Him a million times a day and He would never turn you away. "You can say, "Father, I need strength to fight this temptation AGAIN. I need help getting rid of the bitterness in my life AGAIN. I need your forgiveness for a sin I committed AGAIN." You can go to God with your problems over and over and He'll never get tired of you because He is a caring Father. Listen to these words from a former memory verse: **1 Peter 5:7** says, "*Cast ALL of your cares upon Him because He cares for you.*"

I started with a statement that depending on how you filled in your blank, you may not be as intimate with God as you should be. Turn to **MATTHEW 6:33 (NIV)** and be reminded of one thing for sure: YOU ARE AS INTIMATE WITH GOD AS YOU **CHOOSE** TO BE." Follow along as I read this memory verse that we keep coming back to about what God wants from us: ³³*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* Now what does that mean, in light of the statement that you are as intimate with God as you choose to be?

If you watch the TV show ["Two and A-Half Men"](#), you know there is a girl on that show named Rose, a neighbor, who is absolutely crazy about Charlie. She shows up at odd times, just walks right into the apartment, cooks meals for him, cleans his place, whatever. Because she is absolutely crazy about him. Charlie is as close to Rose as he chooses to be. In the show, he is not close to her... because he doesn't choose to be. But if he did choose to be closer, she would let him, because she has already chosen, already decided, she wants him. So, he is as close to her as HE chooses to be. Now, what about you?

If you want to be close to God, just choose to be, choose to let God get close to you. In my example about Rose on Three and A-Half Men, God could be like the girl on the show—not that God is a crazy girl with low self-esteem who stalks people—BUT GOD IS ABSOLUTELY CRAZY ABOUT YOU AND HE WANTS TO BE AS CLOSE TO YOU, AS INTIMATE WITH YOU AS YOU WILL LET HIM!

On Day Two of our study this week, Dr. Crabb talked about *finding our "red dot."* What does he mean by that? [WE NEED TO KNOW WHERE WE ARE] Why is it important that we find the red dot? [IN OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY, WE NEED TO KNOW WHERE WE ARE BEFORE WE TRY TO GET WHERE WE SHOULD BE] Turn to **MATTHEW 23:25-26 (NLT)** and let look at Jesus' words when He was really ticked off at the Pharisees for looking at only the outside of their lives, seeing nothing there that particularly concerned them, and them moving on with their religion: ²⁵*“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence!* ²⁶*You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.*

Jesus is basically saying, *“The inside of your life is a dirty mess. Observe that, and then you’ll realize that your religion is worthless. It has no power to change you; it only covers up what’s wrong.”* Whew! I hear Jesus telling us to take an inside look. See yourself as you really are. Don’t take a quick look and then try to change. Reflect on where you area. Talk it over with God. It’ll be uncomfortable. It won’t make you feel good, but it will make you think more about God. In doing this, you’ll really find out that you need to think about and experience your relationship with God **before** you worry about anything else, and that the relationship has some real problems. God sees everything. You can change nothing without Him. What will He do? In other words, find your *“red dot”* and talk it over with God first.

The choice is up to you. You get to choose to be honest and straightforward with God—to work toward real intimacy as you

present yourself to Him. The road to intimacy with God is not controlled by luck—but by choices. We make certain choices and they cause us to move closer to God, become more like God, receive the gifts of God and be more aware of God’s presence with us.

It is just like with your wife. Say, you come home from work early, everyone else is still not home, and you decide to start cooking dinner. While the meat is cooking you load the dishwasher and you also start a load of clothes. I know most of the men are thinking that I’m crazy, but work with me. Imagine you did do that. And before she gets home, you draw a hot tub of water and light some candles around the tub. Let me tell you something, you’ve hit a homerun in choosing that route and you have moved forward in the intimacy with the wife game. In fact, you can probably enjoy a very close intimate evening with your wife because of your excellent choice.

By the same token, say you come home, no one else is there and you go to your room, change your clothes, throw your clothes on the floor, go the kitchen, make a snack, leave the peanut butter open and the knife laying on the counter, flop on the couch and when your wife comes home you ask, “When will supper be ready?” She walks in the kitchen and sees the mess and gets mad. She goes to the bedroom and comes back with your dirty clothes in her hand and throws them at you and says, “Slob.”

As she leaves the room, you say under your breath, “You’re just lazy like your Mother.” But it was not under your breath enough. If you’ve ever played the game Chutes & Ladders, you just slid waaaaaaaaay back! You just lost so much ground you’ll have to live to be 105 to make it up. You are going to get to sleep on the couch on the other bedroom. Maybe even develop the life of a monk. And just crawling on your knees and saying, “I’m sorry” won’t do it! This is going to take JEWELRY!!!!!!

So, you see, a relation ship is a relationship, whether it is your wife or your boss or your Lord. There are things you can DO that will

build or destroy intimacy. The first step in our PAPA prayer is to get real with God and tell Him right where you are. No games!

I'm still a big fan of the TV show, Friends, and remembered an episode this week where Rachel says to Joey, "Do you think that on some deeper level. . ." Joey responds, "No, with me, there is no deeper level." [How would you relate to someone who continually felt this way, that they had no deeper level?](#)

So we've talked about finding that deeper level, finding our red dot and beginning there. What's next? On Day Five, Dr. Crabb tells us we should ENTER our Red Dot—not just describe it. Turn to **PSALM 139:1-4 (NLT)** and let's look at a few verses about God's knowledge of you: *¹O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. ²You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. ³You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. ⁴You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.*

[Is it good news or bad news that God already knows everything about you? If God knows everything about you, then why do we sometimes pretend?](#)

Notice on Day Five, Dr. Crabb explains that in order to present ourselves to God, we need to enter your red dot. [How do we enter our Red Dot?](#)[MAKE A LIFESTYLE OF REFLECTION ON YOUR RED DOT; PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR DREAMS; AND, FOLLOW THE "AFFECTIVE TRACK" IN THE PRESENCE OF A TRUSTED FRIEND] Why is it important to find a friend with whom you can be real? Look at **PROVERBS 20:5 (NLT)**, *⁵Though good advice lies deep within the heart, a person with understanding will draw it out.*

Since God has already seen you at your worst and loves you anyway, you can be free and safe to honestly present yourself to God. Just get real with your Father—PAPA—and tell Him all about whatever's happenings. Pull up a chair beside you and talk to Him often.

A man's daughter had asked the local pastor to come and pray with her father. When the pastor arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed. The pastor assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me," he said. "No, who are you?" "I'm the new pastor at your local church," the pastor replied. "When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up."

"Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?" Puzzled, the pastor shut the door. "I've never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it always went right over my head..."

I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, "Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here's what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised, "I'll be with you always." Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you're doing with me right now." "So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful, though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm."

The pastor was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, and returned to the church. Two nights later the daughter called to tell the pastor that her daddy had died that afternoon. "Did he seem to die in peace?" he asked.

"Yes, when I left the house around two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange, In fact, beyond

strange--kind of weird. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside the bed."

Stop trying to be who you think you should be and simply **present yourself to God**. He'll present Himself to you. That's the first **P** in the *PAPA* prayer.

Let's pray.

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