

The Case for Prayer

Nov. 4, 2018

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Matthew 6:9-13

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Read through Matthew 6:9-13 as a group and meditate on God's word.

Icebreaker

Who taught you how to pray and what did they do?

Text for Discussion: Luke 18:1-8

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Jesus tells us we “ought always to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). Too often, this call to pray falls on deaf ears. In the midst of our secular culture, we've led ourselves to believe that prayer has lost its usefulness, especially when we're confronted by concrete, measurable things that need fixing. But Jesus says prayer is very practical, offering every assurance that He will listen to and answer those who persist in prayer.

Prayer is central, one of the church's core activities to bring about change in the world – spiritually, socially, even politically. It's by no means the only thing we should do as Christians, but because it's right at the hub of our faith, we won't get to those other central things unless we pray. It's that foundational.

Prayer is also radical. It's one of the few things the church does that really brings about radical change in the world. Many aspects of being a Christian address what's at the surface, but prayer gets to the root of things. It is the ultimate interference with the status quo.

Why is prayer essential to our faith?

> **Because of the nature of the battle we are in.** Our struggle here on earth and our yearning for justice is ultimately spiritual. This struggle is not against flesh and blood, nor the things that we can taste, touch, hear, smell or see. We get fixed on the things our senses have access to. But as helpful as they may be on one level, this is a spiritual war. Our Father has the vision to see what is truly at hand. Meaning that without God, we are wholly inadequate to face our foe. Therefore, we are called to put on the full armor of God to protect ourselves (Eph 6:10-18). And how do we put on this armor? Through prayer! God is our armor, and the command to pray is therefore as simple as recognizing “We need to be with God,” who is our strength, our fortress, our rock. This is God's war, but we took a side in this cosmic conflict when we accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior. There will be conflict, and it can only be fought in the power of the Holy Spirit.

> **Because the work of the church is God's work, not ours** (Matt 16:13-18). We do have work to do, but we do it with the knowledge of Whose work it really is. God is running the church. Therefore, as we live and serve within it, we must start and end by checking in with Him. And we do that through prayer.

> **Because prayer gets God's work done.** It's practical (1 Tim 2:1-5). We can do more than pray... after we pray. But we can never do more than pray until we've prayed. As Martin Luther wrote, we are too busy *not* to pray. Praying can be hard work, but it is central to our work getting done.

> **Because prayer lets God work on us.** When we stand in the presence of Jesus, we are changed (2 Cor 3:18).

Just as Moses' face was changed on Mount Sinai, we become like the One we are gazing at. Transformation takes place through such prayerful contemplation. Meaning some of the most important work we will ever do is when we are spending time with our savior Jesus. Because in those moments, we are become more like Him.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What are the benefits of persistent prayer? For Others? For ourselves? For our work? For the Kingdom? For God?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What stands out to you in the parable of the judge and the widow in Luke 18:1-8. What is Jesus' point of the parable?
 - Have you ever faced a situation where you thought about giving up praying? Explain.
 - Why do we often give up hope? How does the parable help us to stay hopeful?
 - What would we lose if God gave us what we asked for immediately and always?
- Discuss the thought that prayer is foundational, radical work and prayer gets things done that only God can do.
 - Name an area of your life that you would like to apply this to right now.
 - What keeps you from experiencing a more prayer filled life? How do you respond?
- What are the benefits of persistent prayer? For others? For ourselves? For our work? For the Kingdom? For God?
- Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4. Who should we be praying for and what is God's heart toward those we pray for?
- What is the role of prayer in spiritual warfare and why are we instructed to put on the armor of God? See Ephesians 6:10-13
- What in this passage and/or sermon encouraged you to pray more or pray differently? How do you respond?
 - What will you do to pray more or differently between now and the next time the group meets?

Prayer

Share prayer requests by praying them rather than telling them. Ask God to give you a strong prayer life. Thank Him for the privilege and responsibility of prayer. Thank Him that He included us in getting things done on earth by calling us to always pray and not lose heart.

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

The greatest power God has put into our hands for service is prayer. Prayer is harder work than doing and gets things done that only God Himself can do. Spend an extended amount of time in prayer either alone or with others this week. Reflect on the wonder, beauty and power of prayer as your faith grows through a commitment to pray. Acts 4:23 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Share with the group the outcome of this experiment and the affect it had on you.