

Growth Pt 1 Prayer

- I. Tonight we're starting off our series of Growth Classes.
- A. These classes are going to equip you to grow and mature in your walk with Jesus.
 - B. Just like any other area in your life, it takes discipline to grow.
 - C. I found Jesus on June 8th, 1982.
 - a) During that time, I've seen a LOT of people come into the faith, and unfortunately I've seen a lot of people walk away.
 - (1) The ONE difference in the two is _____.
 - (2) Those who took the time to pray, read scripture, worship, and serve are the ones who lasted.
 - (a) "He who prays, stays and he who fasts, lasts."
 - D. Why are spiritual disciplines so special?
 - 1. The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can _____.
 - a) Galatians 6:8 says, "**Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.**"
 - b) The disciplines is one way we invest in (or sow to) our Spirit.
 - (1) Just like a farmer creates the right conditions for grain to grow, the disciplines create the right conditions for God to work in us and transform us.
 - E. Our community doesn't need more intelligent, talented, or gifted people, but deep people.
 - 1. You can't give away what you don't have.
 - 2. The disciplines help you to be a well for others to draw from.
 - F. Discipline brings _____
 - 1. This holds true for just about any discipline
 - 2. King David was a disciplined in his study of God's word and here's what he had to say about it, "**I have rejoiced in your laws as much as in riches. I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways. I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word.**" (Psalm 119:14-16)
 - G. The discipline we're going to focus on tonight is **prayer**.

II. So why do we need to pray?

- A. Let's look at Luke 11:5-10, "**Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: 'Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' But I tell you this — though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.'**"
- 1. God never intended for prayer to be an occasional ritual, or something we just do before meals or at church.
 - 2. It's our " _____ " in **prayer that moves the hand of God**.

- a) God honors our our persistence, our tenacity, and our refusal to give up and just keep praying.
- 3. Jesus said to keep asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.
 - a) I don't know why chooses to move this way, but something tells me our relationship with Him would diminish if we just got what we asked for right away.
 - (1) God would just become a cosmic sugar daddy to us and **we'd never really get to know Him without continued prayer.**
 - b) Luke 5:16 tells us that Jesus got alone to _____. If Jesus felt the need to, how much more should we.
- 4. Verse 10 says that **everyone** who asks, receives. **Everyone** who seeks, finds. And to **everyone** who knocks, the door will be opened.
 - a) It's not exclusive.
 - (1) It's not just for the young and hip or wealthy people. It's not just the perfect and the do-gooders.
 - (2) **He makes himself available to all who pray** and pray often.
- B. Prayer matters to _____.
 - 1. Jesus called his temple a "house of prayer" in Mark 11:17
 - 2. Proverbs 15:8 tells us that God delights in our prayers.
 - 3. Our prayers are received by God as an offering. Acts 10:4
 - 4. Our prayers are like incense to God and He saves them (in gold bowls). Revelation 5:8.
 - 5. Each prayer we pray makes a difference.
- C. "My prayers draw me close to God and advance the Kingdom of God. It is my conviction that God wants His sons and daughters to always pray and not give up."

III. So what is prayer?

- A. Prayer is "_____".
 - 1. You've probably all heard that prayer is talking to God.
 - a) It's "communicating with The Almighty"
 - b) It's bringing your requests and petitions to Him.
 - 2. You might have even heard someone say before, "just talk to God" when they were encouraging you to pray.
 - 3. If we just limit our definition of prayer to this, then we miss out on so much of what God intended prayer to be.
- B. To pray is to _____.
 - 1. Change happens as we get to know God.
 - 2. Prayer is the main tool that God uses to transform us.
 - 3. The closer we get to the Heart of God, the more we realize we are different from Christ.
 - 4. In real prayer, we begin to desire what God desires, love what God loves, and think like God thinks.
 - a) That's what James 4 is talking about when it says that our prayers go unanswered because we ask wrongly.
 - b) We're praying for what **we** want instead of what **God** wants.
- C. Prayer is **the main business of the lives of those who walk with Him.**
 - 1. Oswald Chambers once said, "It is impossible to conduct your life as a disciple without definite times of secret prayer"
 - 2. Mark 1:35 tells us how Jesus rose, long before the sun even came up, to pray.
 - a) If Jesus needed to pray that much, imagine how we should really be praying.

3. David declared in Psalm 63:1 that he would rise early to seek God.
 - a) Are you getting the impression that prayer should be valued more than sleep?
4. Acts Chapter 6 talks about how the apostles found other people to do important tasks so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.
5. Martin Luther spent three hours a day in prayer.
6. John Wesley said, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."
7. *Don't be discouraged by these examples. God always meets us where we're at and slowly walks with us into deeper things.*

D. Prayer is _____.

1. It has nothing to do with how you feel.
 2. Just like a job.
 - a) Sometimes we love our job and sometimes it seems tedious and boring.
 3. The difference is that this work moves the hand of God, gives us access to the heart of The Father, and shapes the history of our world (*whew!*)
 - a) That sounds like a pretty cool job description!
 4. God is our **partner in the work** of prayer.
 - a) We are **working with God** to _____.
 (1) 1st Corinthians 3:9 says, "**For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.**"
 (2) That's why we pray for our city, our schools, the election, etc.
 b) Moses prayed bravely to change God's mind in Exodus 32.
 c) We are working with God to determine the future.
 (1) We are writing history with our prayers.
- 5. It's the best kind of work there is!**

IV. **How** should we pray?

A. Pray _____.

1. 1st Thessalonians 5:17 says to never stop praying.
 - a) Always have an attitude of prayer.
 - b) Pray in the car, in the shower, at work, and whenever you can.
 - c) Whisper prayers and talk to God in your head.

B. Get alone with God.

1. Being alone with someone is relationship 101.
 - a) I've been married for 18 years and I know that my wife wouldn't appreciate it if I didn't give her my full attention once in a while.

C. Quiet yourself.

1. Turn off your phone.
2. It's OK to turn off the computer or go somewhere that you won't be interrupted.

D. Praise God.

1. Take a minute to express your gratitude for all He's done.
2. Just tell Him how awesome He is.

E. _____ to Him.

1. Like David did in Psalm 51:12 "Make me willing to obey you."

F. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you up.

1. The Holy Spirit inspires us (Mark 12:36)
2. Gives us joy (Luke 10:21)
3. Teaches us (Luke 12:12)
4. And fills us with power (Luke 24:49)

G. Ask questions.

1. "What would make you happy today, God?"
2. "What does all this mean?"
3. "Could you help me with my finances?"

H. Pray for _____.

I. If you're not sure what to pray, then pray the Psalms.

V. Just do it.

A. The best way to get better at praying is by _____.

B. You don't have to spend three hours a day in prayer like Martin Luther.

C. Prayer is a learning process.

1. God understands if it seems strange to you at first.
2. Author and pastor Timothy Jones once wrote, "God does not stand afar off as I struggle to speak. He cares enough to listen with more than casual attention. He translates my scrubby words and hears what is truly inside. He hears my sighs and uncertain gropings as fine prose."
3. William Cowper, a 17th century poet who suffered from extreme manic depression once wrote, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees."

D. Just take 5 minutes every day this week to be alone with God.

E. Consider writing a letter to God every morning.

1. A year from now, you can look back at your prayer journal and see how you've changed.

F. You'll notice some really cool things start to happen.

1. You develop a hunger (addiction) for God's presence.
2. A.W. Tozer once wrote, "I want the presence of God Himself, or I don't want anything at all to do with religion."

G. Inevitably, we become like the people we hang around with. (Jesus)

H. We start to want the things God wants and we stop wanting the old things that hold us back.

I. Life starts to take on a different hue (Be Thou My Vision). It feels more "abundant".

J. You'll find that the friendship you develop with Jesus, through prayer, will become your "nothing is as wonderful".

K. **Prayer is _____!**