



DEVOTIONS
FOR LENT

WOODBURY LUTHERAN CHURCH 2018



The Lenten season is that period of time between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. The 40 days of Lent remind us of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness prior to the beginning of His public ministry. (See Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.) Many who follow Jesus make use of the season of Lent as a time of reflection on their own sinfulness and brokenness bringing our need for a Savior to the front of our minds. Being confronted by the reality of our hopelessness drives us into the arms of our only hope, Jesus.

Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. He responded with what we now call the Lord's Prayer. In these words Jesus teaches us about the nature of our heavenly Father, the intimate relationship He desires to have with us, and gives us a model for how to pray.

During this Lenten season our Sunday sermon series focuses on the Lord's Prayer. As a companion to the series we've prepared this little devotional written by members of the Woodbury Lutheran staff focusing on prayer. Beginning on the first Sunday in Lent, February 18, you'll find one reading for each day of the season until Easter.

Week 1: Struggles When We Pray

Week 2: Postures When We Pray

Week 3: Places Where We Pray

Week 4: Favorite Prayers

Week 5: Listening While We Pray

Week 6: Paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer

God's blessings during this Lenten season. May the gift of prayer continue to strengthen our hearts and draw us closer to our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Week 1: Struggles When We Pray

Sunday, February 18

“How’s your prayer life?” One of my seminary classmates asked me this question one day. I got a lump in my throat. I immediately felt guilty. I’ll admit, I wanted to lie. It would be so easy to say, “Oh, it’s going fine.” But it wouldn’t be the truth. I was stuck. I didn’t know what to do. The words weren’t coming and when I wrote it in my calendar I had ignored it. I was too busy to pray. I took a deep breath and admitted it to my friend. To my surprise he didn’t judge me. “I figured,” he said. “At least God is still praying for you.” I stopped. My friend was making a reference to Romans 8:26: “The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.” God was still praying for me even though I wasn’t. My friend gave me a resource of daily prayers—if I couldn’t find the words I could borrow someone else’s words for a while. It helped me get back on track. But that conversation changed my view of prayer forever.

God does want to hear from you. He waits for you. But He also knows you and understands your struggle. Sometimes we get in ruts. We need friends, disciples, to help us get out. But we can take comfort: God is praying for us—even when we aren’t.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, thank you for seeing my weaknesses. Thank you for praying for me in ways that I can’t even express. When I struggle, remind me that you are with me. When I’m in a rut, help me see those you have placed in my life to walk with me and help me. Thank you for your love, Amen

Pastor Jon Kuehne

Monday, February 19

Why don't I see answers to my prayers? Does God hear me? Does it really matter if I pray? God is going to do what He has planned anyway, isn't He? These are questions we all may have been tempted to ask at one time or another. Certainly we have all prayed prayers that seem to have gone unanswered, and yet, we are commanded to pray. "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16-18) I would like to suggest that some of our prayers may be so general that it's hard to see if they are answered. We pray, "Bless this person or situation, be with my friend who is struggling." It is hard to see God move in answering such prayers. If we are more specific in our requests, we can see God's hand at work and give Him glory. For example, ask God to provide an opportunity to share Jesus with _____, who does not know Him, and ask for the boldness to do it! Pray for the Lord to meet a specific financial need or ask Him to provide a job. Seeing God answer such prayers builds our faith and gives us opportunity to testify to His greatness.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Luke 11:9-10 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us." 1 John 5:14

PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, you have asked us to come to you in prayer, to ask, seek and knock. Give me confidence in prayer, knowing you hear me. Father, right now I ask...
In Jesus' name. Amen*

Tuesday, February 20

I remember the feeling as if it was yesterday. I recall vividly the pit in my stomach as I thought about praying out loud with all the moms at Mother's Bible Study who prayed so eloquently for the desires of their hearts. As our meetings drew to an end and it was time to break into our small prayer groups, moms would gather for praise and confessions, thanksgiving and requests. But not me. I would actually sneak out the door. When I look back, I didn't want to pray with all these women because their prayers were so much better than mine. I didn't feel I could live up to the standard of their praying. And if I happened to stay for prayer time, I spent the entire time thinking about what I was going to say instead of listening to the words they were saying. During this time, I was worried about me – how I would sound and how others would see me. The point of prayer should never point to us. Ever. It should always point to our Heavenly Father. If you are having trouble praying with others, I suggest two things. Spend time getting to know the Father in His Word and have a conversation with Him.

As I search through scripture, I see nothing that talks about having the right words. Instead, I see that we are to be faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12), confident, knowing He is near when we call on Him (Psalm 145:18), and sure that He will listen (Jeremiah 29:12).

Jeremiah 29:12 “Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for teaching me who you are through your word. In the busyness of life, help me to seek you daily by spending time reading your word and talking with you in prayer so that I will be more comfortable sharing your love and praying with others. Amen

Wednesday, February 21

I grew up praying; we prayed a mealtimes and I prayed in church. I knew the Lord's Prayer and Luther's Morning and Evening Prayer and I'd listened to countless pastors pray. I thought I knew how to pray. But then there was that moment—that time that I was asked to pray during a religion class in college that I froze. Well let's just say I felt like my mouth froze but my brain was R-A-C-I-N-G a million miles an hour. What to say? Dear God or Heavenly Father? Ummm... What is that five finger prayer model? Can I pray for myself in class or maybe I should just be praying that my mouth starts to work! It felt like I sat there for an eternity before my professor asked if I would like him to pray and I could close another time. Yes! Please! I think my lungs unfroze at that moment as I could finally breathe. And let's just say, I wrote my prayer out so that next time I was called on I was ready.

It's hard to pray at times especially in a group situation. We don't want to sound like we don't know how and we have expectations for ourselves that we must say the "right" thing. Romans 8:26 says, "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with in ways that cannot be expressed in words." I've found that that deep breath and the thought, "Okay God, you've got this," is what now carries me through those moments of public prayer. And He does; the words that I say are not mine but His, clearly communicated in a way that perfectly shares the message He needs His people who are with me at that moment to hear.

PRAYER

Father God, you know what is on our heart and you know our prayers before we utter them. Give us the confidence to come to you in prayer, especially when we feel like the words aren't there. Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit who fills our hearts and minds with the petitions that we feel compelled to pray silently but also who guides our words when we pray with and for others.

Thursday, February 22

A text from my mom: “Today your uncle has tests at Mayo – pray for a miracle!” Yes. Definitely I will pray. I believe God can do miracles.

But the struggle comes in here...what exactly is my prayer? That there’s no disease? Well, I’m late to that party—the tests will only confirm what is or isn’t already there. Pray that the tests reveal the problem so the doctors can implement an informed plan for healing? So, pray that my uncle is actually sick? That doesn’t seem right. Then, what? Pray “God, you have this all under control, so, do your thing. Amen.” Feels a little disconnected, he is my uncle after all.

A pastor friend from way back who I admire very much would say, “Don’t just stand there, pray something!” St. Paul says it this way, “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all He has done.” (Philippians 4:6 NLT) Okay, then, pray something, pray about everything, tell God what I need. What do I need? I need God to know that I love my uncle. I need Him to know that I know that He does, too. I need Him to be with my aunt and my cousins and my mom (his sister) and give them peace and faith. I need Him to know that I know I can only see a small bit of a big picture and that He can see the whole thing. I need Him to teach me how to pray and how to trust and when to pray and when to trust.

There is freedom in approaching God in my struggles and imperfections. And, as I pray this way, about everything (including my struggles with praying) I find myself closer to Him, recognizing more easily His presence and workings, and trusting in His God-ness. And I find myself thankful.

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord God, for inviting me to come to you as your dear child and in the name of your dear Son, Jesus. Thank you for hearing even my feeble words and for answering according to your perfect will. Give me confidence in you, a confidence that draws me to you with all of my heart. Amen

Joel Symmank

Friday, February 23

“My prayers don’t work!” This fall, my daughter was experiencing an escalation in maladaptive behavior at school—in intensity and frequency. My worries were escalating as well: will she hurt herself or someone else, what will she destroy next, what kind of future is she going to have if this keeps up? I cried out “God, please help her have a good day!” But the same day, another phone call came from her teacher. I cried out again, “Why don’t you help her? God, where are you?”

God didn’t abandon me. He led me to read “Anxious for Nothing” by Max Lucado. This is a study based on Philippians chapter 4. Max Lucado unpacks Philippians 4:6 (“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all He has done.” NLT) and here, I was reminded to make my prayers SPECIFIC. In doing so, I am: 1. Acknowledging that God is sovereign (in control of every aspect of the universe) and that I can trust Him with specific details in prayer. (“God, please lead us to discover the trigger for these behaviors.”) 2. Then able to see God at work, and then thank Him for all He has done. (The excellent school staff did figure it out and positive behavior returned.) 3. Easing my burdens and worry. (Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 NLT)

We can confidently bring all our prayers before God with the knowledge that God exists; that God is in control and that God is good.

PRAYER

Dear Sovereign Lord, help me to trust you in all the details of my life and I thank you for your goodness and love. Amen

Saturday, February 24

Ever since I can remember I've prayed. My parents modeled prayer daily. We prayed at the supper table. We prayed our nightly prayers before bed. And when I was young, I'm sure there were other prayers to pass a test I didn't study for or prayers to help with a relationship that I was hoping that would come to fruition. But what do you do when you don't feel worthy of the prayers that are on your heart? What if the struggles in your life just seem too big? Or when you know that what you are bringing to God might not be a part of His plan, but it is in yours? I think sometimes we make prayer out to be more complicated than what it really is. Prayer is quiet conversations with our Father in Heaven.

Many times our guilt and sense of unworthiness drives us away from prayer when we should be doing nothing but praying and having opportunities to draw closer to Him. Prayer is our moments in time to share the desires of our heart. It is our time to tell Him that what's happening in our life isn't fair. It is our time to rest in the arms of our Father and to hear His quiet voice tell us that it will all be okay.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for teaching us to pray. Send your Holy Spirit to remind us to pray when we feel unworthy of prayer. Thank you for holding us when we are hurting. Amen

Mary Law

Week 2: Posture When We Pray

Sunday, February 25

I remember that first time I went to St. Mary's Catholic Church in my hometown. Like most of my interactions with the Catholic Church, it was in regards to a funeral. The one thing that I remember most was the nifty little contraptions underneath my cousins who were seated in front of me. At one point the priest said, "Let us pray," which I suppose was code for "flinging open the padded cushions trying to hiding beneath your neighbor's pew and kneel." In fact, it was such an effective code, that I failed to pick up on the hint and was soon among the few people who did not know that that was what we were supposed to do.

It took me years to realize that kneeling is truly a beautiful posture to assume. Kneeling before the Lord is just as much an act of humility as it is an act of submission. Socially, kneeling is one of the most vulnerable positions that I can think of assuming. Without words, it expresses the unworthiness or inability to stand before someone or something. It acknowledges power and might. It reveals our weakness.

The list of people who knelt before the Lord is extensive: Israel, Solomon, lepers, disciples, grieving fathers, and even evil demons. In fact, one day we are told every knee will bow and every tongue shall confess Jesus is Lord (Romans 14:11). I take great privilege knowing that through His Spirit, God has given me the strength and faith to be able to fall to my knees even now before that day arrives.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, because of my sin I am unable to stand before you or your great name. I am not worthy of such honor. Even as that sin has been washed away by the blood of Jesus, help me to humble myself before you; and help me fall to my knees in awe and wonder of how great you truly are. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen

Vicar Christian Jones

Monday, February 26

The world of sports has often been a platform for Christians to pray to God. It may be a simple prayer from one knee after a touchdown is scored, it might be touching your chest and pointing up after a homerun is hit. It is often seen in a post-game prayer between two teams, where players from both sides join together in praying. If a player is injured, you will see other players on the sideline praying for their injured teammate. What we see with our eyes when we witness these times of prayer are different postures people use when they pray.

Even more important than the positions we may use when we pray, whether kneeling or standing, bowing or looking up to heaven, is the posture of our hearts. In Luke 18, Jesus tells a parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector, both of whom were praying in the temple. The Pharisee was thanking God for how good He was, and that He was better than most, especially the tax collector who happened to be there praying as well. In his prayer was pride, a prayer that lacked repentance in any way. The tax collector, on the other hand, was filled with sorrow at his own sins. The best He could do was to beat his chest and ask for forgiveness.

When we reach out to the Lord in prayer, whether we are standing or sitting, kneeling or bowing down, or whatever posture we are taking, we also need to posture our hearts appropriately before God. This means approaching God with repentance and humility, leaving any pride at the door. Psalm 51:17 says “The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit; you will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.” How comforting it is to know that even in our brokenness, God hears us.

PRAYER

Father in heaven, as we come to you in our broken lives, you promise to hear us. Help us to always posture our hearts appropriately, that we might be blessed. In Jesus' name. Amen

Pastor Tim Marshall

Tuesday, February 27

We know that kids learn all kinds of things by watching adults. This includes how we pray, and the posture we take when we pray. From little on, we help them learn how to close their eyes, bow their heads, and fold their hands to pray. In Kids LINK we decided to let our 4th-5th graders choose their own posture when praying at the end of small group time and told them that they could be in any position that they felt comfortable in and were not distracted by another student.

Guess what? Most of them decided on their own, without consulting a friend that they would lay down to pray. This is a sign of utter respect. Laying prostrate in prayer is a natural position for those who are sensing the glory and majesty of God. “And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God.” Revelation 7:11b

This is a picture I will never forget. How often do kids lead us adults to a place we have forgotten? Do we still sense His majesty and glory? Are we vulnerable enough to lie down on the floor to pray to the God who created us?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me remember to reach out to you in prayer each day, and to be open to experiencing your glory in my everyday life. Amen

Wednesday, February 28

When I was a little girl I went to a church that had hard wooden pews and padded kneelers. The kneelers could be lifted up and tucked under the pew in front of you. I remember wanting to sit on the kneelers and use the pew as a table and play. That was certainly not allowed as having your back to the crucifix (or perhaps it was the altar) was frowned on. When there was prayer during Mass, we would kneel. There seemed to be a lot of prayer for what seemed to be a long time. It was an era when girls and women wore dresses to church even in the winter. The prayers were ones we memorized like the Lord's Prayer. Today my prayer usually takes place in my living room sitting on a comfy chair with my feet tucked up under me. On occasion there's a blanket, however, being too warm can lead to napping rather than prayer. I once felt bad about falling asleep during prayer until I heard someone say, "What could be sweeter than falling asleep in God's arms while you are talking to him?"

1 Thessalonians 5:10 "He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him."

PRAYER

Father, help me to be awake to your presence and goodness. Thank you for being our Shepherd. Let the posture of my soul always lean toward you. Amen

Mary Lehman

Thursday, March 1

Several years ago, I was finishing up seven weeks as a short-term missionary. I had developed good friendships with the people there and was terribly sad to leave. As we said goodbye in the driveway of our host's home, I was in tears. I didn't know if I would ever be reunited with them.

Then, the seven-year-old daughter of our trip leader said, "We don't have to be sad, we know we can see them again in heaven." Her comment seemed incredibly wise. She was trusting in God's promise and His will, while I was focused on my desires.

As I boarded the plane that day, I was reminded to pray for God's will. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus leads us to pray, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Maybe it would be God's will that we'd meet again, but maybe it wouldn't be until heaven.

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to pray "Your will be done." You have the full picture and best perspective on my situation. Help me to trust your will and leading in my life. Amen

Friday, March 2

I've dabbled with various prayer postures over the years but by and large my standard prayer position is very vanilla in nature. And while I haven't yet found a specific posture that helps focus my time with God, I have found great benefit in changing the PACE of my prayers. Not surprisingly I need to remember to slow down, and not rush through my conversations with God. One half of this process is quieting and settling my heart before I begin praying, and the other half involves slowing the actual pace of my words.

Settling my heart is sometimes as simple as pausing in silence before I pray, allowing the internal noise of my mind to resolve itself. Other times I need to be more proactive in this process by identifying specific distractions and commanding them to be still. This process keeps my mind from wandering and makes me much more receptive to hearing God.

Far too often I fly through a prayer without any awareness of the words I'm actually saying or how they apply to my life. Slowing my words to a walking pace has helped me focus on the meat of the prayer instead of just checking the prayer box. This practice has been particularly beneficial when praying familiar prayers such as the Lord's Prayer, mealtime prayers, and the nightly blessing we sing over our children. When I slow down the RPMs of these familiar words it helps me to experience their richness and importance, rather than having them slip past me without a thought.

So my recommended posture is actually more a pace of stillness and slowness. It's a tool that has helped me give my full attention to the action of prayer and I hope it can bless your time with the Lord as well. "Be still, and know that I am God!" Psalm 46:10a

PRAYER

(Pause for 10-15 seconds of silence and then pray this prayer at a walk.) Father, I rush through so much of my day, striving to move through my tasks with as little time and effort as possible. Teach me to slow down with you, setting aside my distractions, and enjoying being in your presence.

Patrick Brewer

Saturday, March 3

Being intentional with the way we physically pray is a wonderful step in preparing our hearts and minds as we approach our Heavenly Father. By no means do I aim to discredit all that has been discussed so far; but what if, for a brief second, we took a step back?

Not that this happens too frequently, but when I enter into a conversation with Krysti, I can usually distinguish that I am in the doghouse before she even says a single word – her body language says it all. Communication goes beyond just the simple words that we speak; it is something that we complete with our whole being. Wordsmithing is a wonderful gift, but few things can display joy like jumping, convey rage like slamming a fist on the table, express excitement like uncontrollable fidgetiness, or acknowledge grief like the involuntary need to physically collapse to the floor. Perhaps instead of aligning our bodies to the words we speak, we should also be mindful to align our prayers with the ways God has designed our bodies to respond to whatever stimuli we might experience.

Even in Scripture, sometimes words were not enough. Whether it was Moses throwing himself to the ground (Ex. 34:8), David dancing with all of his might (2 Sam. 6:14), Israel beating their breasts in sorrow (Is. 32:12), the Son of man pounding his thighs in anguish (Ezk. 21:12), or John's record-setting sprint to the empty tomb (John 20:4), our bodies have physiological responses to the Lord. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that The Lord could be determining our prayer postures for us through wiring our bodies to respond in such ways.

PRAYER

Father, Creator of all things, you alone knitted me together in my mother's womb. You alone have programmed the ways the body responds to your Creation. As I daily interact with the work of your hands, let my experiences shape the way I pray to and praise you. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen

Week 3: Places We Pray

Sunday, March 4

Ojibway Park, Woodbury, MN –

I have a very independent dog named Daisy. She's around seven or eight years old. I adopted her two years ago this April. I think she may have been left alone quite a bit just by her demeanor around others. Other than policing the yard for squirrels and rabbits and seeking food and treats, her favorite thing is to go for walks. She's a good walker – quick and determined to get somewhere. Not unlike myself. Ojibway is beautiful year round and provides many inspirations for praising God for His handiwork. The spider webs knitted on chain link fences and dew floating on top the green grass opens my soul to prayer. The rich colors that change with seasons, the sounds of baseballs flying off bats, voices of children while swinging and climbing slides, geese landing on ponds, owls silently appearing out of nowhere indeed declare God's presence. How can I not pray? His grace-filled nearness follows and leads us wherever we go.

Job12:7-10 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.”

PRAYER

Creator God, you are amazing. You are the designer of our very souls. Thank you for prayer, friends, and outdoor life.

Mary Lehman

Monday, March 5

I have friends who are incredible prayers. These folks have their daily activities scheduled around their prayer time. You read that right...THEY SCHEDULE THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES AROUND THEIR PRAYER TIME. This is amazing to me and it is something I look up to and respect. I am not that disciplined about my prayer time but I recognize that if I committed to a place to pray I could be. My family prays together every night before bed. We have done this for a very long time. When we started I admit it was kind of rough but as time passed, we all became more comfortable praying together and it has grown into a special time in our day. It is a time that does not get missed.

We pray together on our bed; it is a comfortable place as well as a comforting time knowing we can come together to be thankful, to ask God for protection for ourselves, for our friends and our family. We ask for healing and for understanding. We are also very thankful for the many blessings God has given us in our lives.

I also pray in my car on my way to work and on my way home. My car is a comfortable place for me when I turn off the radio and can focus. (I probably am a better driver too.) 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ."

I have absolutely no doubt that my days go smother and my life is more complete because of my prayer time. Frequent prayer is something that I have learned to do over time and from special friends here at church. A special place to pray is a great way to get started.

Romans 12:12 "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

PRAYER

Dear Lord, Thank you for hearing me and for all of the blessings that you give me. Thank you for this church and my family. I ask for your patience and ask for understanding as I come to you each day at a time and in a place that I can speak to you. Please forgive my sins and give me rest. Amen

Tuesday, March 6

When I was in my early 20s, I changed how I viewed prayer. For me, it went from hands folded, specific time during the day (usually before I went to bed) to an ongoing conversation. I would greet God like I would greet the people in my life. My prayers would usually start, “Hey God, here’s what’s going on.” From that time on, my prayers became more real for me, more personal. The times I would have (and still have) the best conversations with God are in these two locations: in my car and at the end of my dock at the family cabin in northwest Minnesota. As I’m driving in my car, I can’t do anything else. I can’t be distracted by my phone, work that needs to get done, etc. While I’m in my car, all I can think of is Psalm 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God.” When I pray in my car, it’s just me and God. He hears my praises and He hears my hurts. He hears my complaints and He hears my life. In my car, I’ve heard God’s forgiveness and I’ve experienced his reassurance.

I’ve spent significant time at our family cabin every summer since I was born. Every time I go up there, I spend at least one night lying on the end of the dock praying. I look up at the clear sky completely filled with stars, and I think of the promise God made to Abram in Genesis 15. The promise that Abram (whose name would be changed to Abraham) would have more descendants than there are stars in the sky. As I lay there and hear the waves crash up against the shore, I am in awe and at peace knowing that God is at work in my life. I love praying there because I fully experience God the Creator.

When we approach God in prayer, we can come to him however we want. God wants our real emotions. He wants our real thoughts and concerns. He wants to hear from us because He’s our eternal Father.

PRAYER

Hey God, thank you for being a God who wants to hear from me. Remind me that in every area of my life, I can come to you. You hear me and you walk with me. Help me to connect better with you through prayer and remind me that, no matter what, you are right there. I love you. Amen

Sarah Dibbern

Wednesday, March 7

If you could be a fly on the wall at our house, you might consider flying right out the door at bedtime. We are not the most organized family and at times bedtime becomes a fiasco of laying out school uniforms, having library books in bags (“Hurry up, you were supposed to be in bed 10 minutes ago!”), getting a last minute snack, remembering that there is basketball tomorrow and a uniform needs washing (“Now you are 17 minutes past your bedtime.”). Whew! And then we hope no one remembers that “one more thing” and they are in bed for the night.

We try to end our day positively but so often the crazy can overshadow my “ideal” end of the day. I’d love to end the day in prayer, in God’s word and just savoring my kids. But after their eyelids flutter closed, one of my favorite places to pray is to pray in their room for them. You see, I hope they remember the hugs and not the look I gave them that I’m doing laundry at 9:00 p.m. I want them to grow to be adults who love people, know right from wrong, make time for what is important and most importantly to always have that knowledge that they have a Father in heaven who loves them more than we ever can. I pray for their future spouse, for them to find a passion in life and be able to find a career in that field. I pray for their safety and for us having the right skills to parent them. I never imagined that watching my kids sleep—that peaceful time in their room when I just bask in the moment of the gifts that they are in our lives—would be one of my favorite prayer places, but it is. “Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from Him.”(Psalm 127:3) So maybe being a fly on the wall wouldn’t be so bad when you can see how truly blessed we are among the crazy!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you are good and gracious and have sent children into our lives to encourage and inspire us but also for us to lead and to guide. Be with us as we nurture the children in our families and also the children in our church and in our neighborhood. Give us the confidence that our influence in their lives is one that guides them and assures them of your love for them. Amen

Sara Mulso

Thursday, March 8

Have you ever tried to pray someplace where there is lots of noise going on around you? Maybe it's at an exciting sporting event or maybe it's while you are doing dinner dishes and the kids are screaming in the background. It's really hard to focus on what you want to talk to God about, and it's hard to hear His voice in return. I find myself praying when I'm driving alone without kids in the car. Or other times where I'm alone and know that I won't be interrupted by a, "Mom!" These are great opportunities for me to have quiet conversations with Him. My time with Him to confess my latest list of mistakes. My time with Him to calm the uncertainties of my heart. My time with Him to be reminded that everything happens in His time.

God knows the desires of our heart before we ask, and in everything, His will is always done. What can you do this week, to find more quiet times alone with God?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, thank you for helping find quiet times when I can pray the desires of my heart. Amen

Friday, March 9

One night during my freshman year of college I was frustrated and discouraged. I thought that a faith conversation that I had with a friend had gone totally wrong. I thought I had completely messed up our relationship. So, I went to the nearby dorm room of another friend. She brought me in and listened to what had happened, as many good friends would do. But then she did something that I'd not experienced anyone do for me before. She took her Bible off her shelf and read me Psalm 103. In that moment she prayed for me. She prayed the words of the Psalm, and in the words of her prayer, I felt God's love.

She prayed for me in the very moment I was in need, right then and there. She allowed God's word to speak to me, and through her prayer I was given peace. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

PRAYER

Lord, help me to pray for others right in their time of need. You say we can pray about everything, help me learn to come to you in the midst of any situation. Thank you for the promise of your peace.

Saturday, March 10

Where is your favorite place to pray? Where is that one place you can talk to your Heavenly Father openly and honestly? For me, it's the car. I haven't always been great at praying. Sure, we pray in church, at meals and before bed. It wasn't until I started praying in the car, that my prayers to God turned into conversations with God. By being purposeful about my conversations, it freed me from my own personal self-talk. No more whining and complaining. (Although I still ask God periodically, "Why is the person in front of me driving so slowly?") It's time for me to tell my God about my family, ask advice on raising our kids, and share my fears and joys for the day. Psalm 145:18 says, "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." (NIV) I'm not always looking for an answer when I talk to God. I just want to know that He's listening. And He promises just that. All He asks is that we come to him in truth. He wants to know what's going on with you too. Whether you are on a walk, at the kitchen sink, standing in line, or in the car. Talk to Him. He's there and can't wait to chat with you.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for our conversations. Thank you for those quiet moments when it's just us and you are giving me your undivided attention. Throughout the day, remind me to take solace in you and your promises. Amen

Week 4: Favorite Prayers

Sunday, March 11

PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, I come to you with praise and thanksgiving. I am humbled by your grace and mercy. Show me what it means to be a disciple of your son Jesus and to live that out in every area of my life, bringing glory and honor to you.
In Jesus name, I pray. Amen*

Monday, March 12

Fifteen One-Sentence Prayers From Scripture

These one-sentence prayers from scripture are powerful and to the point. Pick one that challenges you. Pray it this week, and watch the Spirit move in your life.

“Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.” 1 Samuel 3:10

“I know that you can do anything.” Job 42:2

“Every good thing I have comes from you.” Psalm 16:2

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you.” Psalm 19:14

“Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God!” Psalm 42:5

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions.”
Psalm 119:18

“Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word.” Psalm 119:37

“you made me; you created me. Now give me the sense to follow your commands.” Psalm 119:73

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” Psalm 139:23

“Even if He doesn’t...” Daniel 3:18 (Trusting when God acts differently than we want.)

“Here I am. Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

“Lord, help me!” Matthew 15:25

“I want your will to be done, not mine.” Matthew 26:39

“I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!” Mark 9:24

“Pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.” Ephesians 6:20

Tuesday, March 13

A number of years ago I ran across this prayer by St. Augustine, a fifth-century African bishop:

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And for all your love's sake. Amen.

There's something in this prayer that is deeply stirring to me. Whenever I read it, it causes a catch in my breath somewhere around the end of the first sentence.

Maybe it's the rhythm and alliteration of those first words: "wake, or watch, or weep." Or that hint of a rhyme between weep and sleep. Maybe it's in the request for such tender actions from the Savior: watch with, tend, rest, bless, soothe, pity, shield. Perhaps it's that the prayer reminds me of those I love who lie awake, who suffer, who are weary and afflicted. Yes, all of those things. But above all I think it's that in this prayer each of those in need is named as belonging to Jesus: *your* sick ones, *your* weary ones, *your* joyous ones..." There's a humble confidence here asking for love and care and mercy from a loving, caring, merciful God who calls us His own.

For centuries this prayer has been prayed by the faithful during the office of Compline, a time set aside for prayer at the end of the day. Known as "the dear office" this time of prayer is for reflection on the day that has passed and preparation for sleep. In these words, prayed near the end of Compline, we pray, "Be near, Lord Jesus. Watch over and care for all your dear children." And we rest in peace, commending all to Him, trusting in His love.

Wednesday, March 14

I Need Thee Every Hour

Hymn by Annie S. Hawks, 1872 (Public Domain)

I need thee every hour,
most gracious Lord;
no tender voice like thine
can peace afford.

Refrain:

I need thee, O I need thee,
every hour I need thee.
O bless me now, my Savior;
I come to thee.

I need thee every hour;
stay thou nearby;
temptations lose their power
when thou art nigh. [Refrain]

I need thee every hour,
in joy or pain;
come quickly and abide,
or life is vain. [Refrain]

I need thee every hour;
teach me thy will;
and thy rich promises
in me fulfill. [Refrain]

I need thee every hour,
Most Holy One;
O make me thine indeed,
thou Blessed Son! [Refrain]

Thursday, March 15

Serenity Prayer

- Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next.

Amen

Friday, March 16

Luke 5:16 (NLT) But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

Sweet Hour of Prayer - W. W. Walford (1845) Public Domain

Sweet hour of prayer!
Sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer!
Sweet hour of prayer!
The joys I feel, the bliss I share,
Of those whose anxious spirits burn
With strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place
Where God my Savior shows His face,
And gladly take my station there,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of
prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

There are so many different ways to pray. Sometimes our prayers are with the whole world as we pray during a tragedy. Sometimes they are with our fellow Christians at church or in small groups. Then there are those prayers we have with just our families. But this song speaks to the prayers we say in private. The deep longing we have to connect with our Savior one on one. Calling out to Him, seeking and waiting on Him in that “sweet hour of prayer.”

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me seek to spend time in prayer with you. Better yet, help me long to spend time in prayer. Create in me a deep desire to talk with you and share all of me as I would with a trusted friend. Leaving nothing at the table, bringing everything I am to you in prayer. Amen

Stacy Winter

Saturday, March 17

A child's bedtime prayer – Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.

I was taught this prayer as a child. I'm guessing my mom taught me while sitting on the side of my bed, or perhaps kneeling at my bed. On occasion, when the day has been hard or I'm very tired or I just want to escape the day, I pray this prayer as my evening devotion. I'm not perfect with this prayer thing, this life with God. I'm still a 'child' with frustrations, wanting to be first, wanting what everyone else has. But when I shift my focus I see that through God I am so rich, I'm amazed, and I marvel at his handiwork. I think of the beauty of the recent snowfall. I'm remembering the tiny bell shaped Lily of the Valley that spring will bring. This simple prayer moves me to submission to my Father. The prayer challenges me to trust God. The prayer shows me my future with the Lord carrying me to be with him.

Psalm 4:8 In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Week 5: Listening While We Pray

Sunday, March 18

Sometimes after a busy day and about to go to bed, I find it difficult to turn my brain off. My mind gets flooded with thoughts about the day, what I should have said, tasks I could have completed, that extra piece of pizza I shouldn't have eaten. Our world is so busy. We are bombarded with so much the very moment our feet hit the floor in the morning and it becomes increasingly difficult to hear God throughout the day. I remember a time in my life where there was so much noise and feeling like I couldn't hear God. Like I was communicating to him but I didn't take the time listen back. I often find myself in relationships doing all the talking, but never taking that time to sit and listen. Do you ever find yourself doing that? It's hard I know. As weeks went by I was challenged in a book I was reading about the very idea of taking time in silence to hear God. How scripture speaks about God's presence in silence. Being challenged, I decided to take time to open my prayers with praising God and then just sitting in silence. I've often had to do this in a room with no light as my brain tries to use anything to distract me, but while I am not consistent at this exercise, there is a peace that comes with just sitting in silence. An intimacy and joy to just be still with the God that created the universe, and created you. A God who loves you more than we could ever describe. To sit in that silence is a beautiful comfort to a chaotic world.

Can you remember a time where you remained silent and just listened to God? I am reminded of the opening of Psalm 46 verse 10, "Be still, and know that I am God." Our lives are so busy. It's easy to get lost in the chaotic mess of this world. I encourage you to take time today, and spend a few minutes in silence. To find and experience that beautiful comfort. To be still and know that He is God.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I praise and give glory to you. I am humbled by your love and come to you to find rest and comfort.... (Silence)....

Kendall Johnson

Monday, March 19

Often times Christians see prayer as a one-way conversation: our talking to God. We present Him with a list of things we want Him to do for us: “Be with this person who is sick, that person, who is having surgery, protect our loved one who is traveling,” etc. Scripture does, indeed, command us to make requests of God. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This is a wonderful promise.

However, there is another dimension to prayer which we sometimes overlook: listening to God and allowing Him to speak to us. We may find it hard to sit in silence before the Lord. We grow impatient; perhaps our minds begin to wander. In the Psalms we read, “Be still, and know that I am God,” (Ps. 46:10) and “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.” (Ps. 37:7) God wants to speak to us if we but take the time to listen. He loves us and waits for us to come to Him in prayer. He may speak to us by bringing a particular scripture to mind. He may want us to intercede for another person or situation which He lays on our heart. Or, He may want us to simply rest in His presence and experience His love and peace.

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Sam. 3:9)

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me. Thank you for wanting to meet with me in this time of prayer. I come before you now desiring to hear your voice. Help me to be still and wait before you.

Tuesday, March 20

Have you ever missed God's response to your prayers? You lifted them up, only to get silence in return? I believe God still answers our prayers even when we are met with silence. However, we may need to listen with more than just our ears. In Jeremiah 29:12-13 God says, "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (NIV) As we pray we also pray with our heart. And, as we listen for a response, God will speak to our heart. It's important to listen for God's response with more than just our ears.

Years ago, while serving a congregation in California, I received a call to a congregation nearly 1,500 miles away. My family and I were happy where we were, and we weren't looking to change congregations. So I started praying about it. God revealed His answer to me in a variety of ways, speaking to my heart and to my brain in the process, as well as letting me see with my eyes what His answer was. There had been barriers preventing me from a ministry change just six months earlier, barriers God had removed one at a time. These barriers I saw removed with my eyes. The move would allow me to be closer to home and spend more time with my extended family, especially my mother, whose health was deteriorating. This I saw with my heart. And it was a setting that enabled me to better provide for and take care of my family. This I saw with my brain.

In the end, I accepted the call to serve this new congregation, moving my family from sunny California to cold and sometimes snowy Nebraska. There were challenges with the move, with the new congregation and the new ministry. But whenever I struggled with those challenges, God continued to show me that I was where He wanted me to be, as long as I was listening with more than just my ears. As you pray, listen for God's answer to your prayers with your whole being, your ears and eyes, your heart and your brain.

PRAYER

Holy Lord God and Father, help me to be a better listener to your answers to prayer, listening with my eyes and ears, heart and mind, that I might be led by you always. In Jesus' name. Amen

Pastor Tim Marshall

Wednesday, March 21

When I'm listening in my prayer time, it is a little bit like searching for God. When I'm listening in my prayer time I often long to hear what God is saying to me. I know that God is good and He saves and He calls us and He is our Friend. However, I often fail in the listening part. Sometimes I don't have the patience. Sometimes I forget to listen. Sometimes when I'm rushed on the outside I am rushed on the inside and so are my prayers. But when I do listen and I'm still, sometimes I hear his kindness, love, and his promises for me. Listening opens my mind and my heart and my soul. Listening breathes life into mute places of my prayer.

Being still and listening is a discipline. Sitting still is pretty easy, listening is pretty hard. I continue to practice and grow in this invitation from God.

Acts 16:14 "One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."

PRAYER

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear, And what a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer. Amen

Thursday, March 22

I found this really great quote from John Barclay, a theologian, while doing a little research for this devotion. He says, “Prayer is not a way of making use of God; prayer is a way of offering ourselves to God in order that He should be able to make use of us. It may be that one of our great faults in prayer is that we talk too much and listen too little. When prayer is at its highest, we wait in silence for God’s voice to us.”

How hard it is to sit quietly for even a few minutes! Even if my cell phone is in the other room, I find that after less than a minute, I’m thinking about the errand I have to run, or the email I need to write, or the text I should send to one of my kids. Over the years, I have learned to slow down, even though I sometimes struggle! I begin again, I start over, and I focus on my prayer and take time to listen. The visual I have is that I am relaxing in the arms of God. It’s like relaxing in the arms of a parent who sometimes just has to look at you and you know that you’re loved. God is patient and longs to spend time with you.

“For He is our God. We are the people He watches over, the flock under his care. If only you would listen to his voice today.” Psalm 95:7

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, help me slow down my mind and body to be able to listen to God’s word for me. Amen

Nancy Schubbe

Friday, March 23

Do you hear God in your prayer life? Most people just aren't good at listening. They'd rather be talking. Or doing things. Or watching things. Or dreaming about things. But listening? That's a difficult thing to do. I think the same can be said of our prayers. Our prayers usually consist of us talking to God, sharing our desires, thoughts and petitions and then saying amen. But have you ever stopped to hear God when you pray? Have you ever started your prayer with listening?

Listening to hear God's voice isn't complicated. But it requires discipline to find a quiet place and to allow some time for just listening. Perhaps the hardest part is clearing your mind. With all the noise in our lives it's hard to hear Him. I want to challenge you today to make your prayer a time of listening and not just talking. Find a quiet place and begin your prayer with words of praise to God and then stop, listen, and feel His presence. Wait for Him to lead your thoughts into what you need to pray about. We know we are supposed to let God be in control of our whole life, but how many of us apply this to our prayers? Can you imagine what would happen if you let God be in control of your prayers. Asking Him to tell you who needs prayers right now, what in your life you should really be praying about, listening for Him to lead your prayers towards asking what's best for you, not just praying for what you want.

God wants to hear your petitions, struggles, and joys in your prayers. But you can't hear His leading or response to those prayers if you never stop and listen.

Verse: Psalm 37:7a (NLT) "Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act."

PRAYER

God, please help me pause... and take time to listen. Please shut out the noise in my life and help me to hear you. I want you to be Lord of my whole life, including my prayers. Amen

Saturday, March 24

There's a scene in Mark 7, at the very end of the chapter, where people bring "a deaf man with a speech impediment" to Jesus and beg Him to heal the man. Now, sometimes Jesus heals people by just saying a few words (Matthew 9) and sometimes he heals them from miles away (Luke 7). But there are fewer examples of Jesus healing by touching. Enter this guy. Jesus not only touches him but He puts his fingers in the man's ears and touches his tongue. And as He does so He says, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" Mark tells us that the man could hear perfectly and speak plainly.

I don't want to turn the very real healing Jesus gave this man into a metaphor. Jesus knew exactly what the man needed and did exactly that. But as I reflect on listening to God I can't help but see some truth and challenge in this passage. There's a connection to being able to hear well and being able to speak plainly. I think praying Jesus' words, "Ephphatha, be opened!" might just be a helpful beginning to any time of prayer. Perhaps praying that my ears would be opened to hear God's perfect words will result in my prayers being spoken more plainly, more clearly, and more in line with Him. Listening first to God takes my heart and mind off of simple, sinful me and places it on holy, perfect Him. It reminds me that He is the object of my trust and my hope and the one who will fulfill my needs in His time and according to His all-knowing wisdom.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, open my ears to hear you and only you. Then loose my tongue to pray within the perfection of your will. Increase my trust in you, dear Savior. Amen

Week 6: Paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer

Sunday, March 25

To the one who knows me, loves me, and never gives up on me. You reside on high in great might.

Help me remember that you're altogether different than me. Let my life reflect your holiness.

I long to live in the perfection that you promise. Until then, help me show heaven's perfection in the brokenness of this world.

I ask that you care for my needs and remind me to be grateful for all that you have given me. Don't let me forget the source of my blessings.

I've wronged you and don't deserve your forgiveness, but I ask for it once again, confident that you desire to rescue me. Let me experience and understand your grace in such a way that I can't help but reflect it to those who have wronged me.

Give me a heart that hates evil, runs from it, and fights against it, until the day you rescue me from it entirely.

You are the most praiseworthy, powerful, and perfect entity and yet you still call me your friend. I ask all of this in your name. Let it be so.

Monday, March 26

You, who are familiar enough to be called Father
Yet who, because of your holiness, are so unfamiliar to holy-less me,
Give me grace to call you both:
 Father.
 Holy.

Rule over all things by your mighty power,
Draw all people into your grace,
Come soon in your glory.

Provide all that we need.
Take us back, we who wander far from you.
 Change our hearts to be like yours, merciful and forgiving.
And save us when trials, temptations, and the evil one would over-
take us.

This is true:
 you alone rule all kingdoms,
 you alone have all power.
 Yes, all glory is yours!

Always. And always.

Tuesday, March 27

Hey God, I give you praise because you are God.

May your will be done in my life. And when your will is different than my plans, remind me that you've got this.

Please provide for me the things I need. Give me the words to say. Always work in and through me.

God, forgive me for the times when I have gone against you. Remind me to always greet those who have wronged me with an attitude of forgiveness.

Strengthen me so that I can say no to temptation. Continue to walk with me and guide me. Shield me from the things in my world that aren't of you.

Everything I am and everything I strive to be is because of you. Thank you for who you are. Amen

Wednesday, March 28

The Lord's Prayer is such a powerful teaching tool, so rich in meaning and an ability to shape and direct our prayers in a simple and powerful way. Here is my attempt at a paraphrase of this amazing prayer:

Dad, thank you for your ever-present love and care, never for a moment have I not known your great love for me.

Please use me by the power of the Holy Spirit to make this earth more like it was in the beginning and more like it will be when Jesus comes again.

As you have provided in the past please continue to provide for all my needs.

Give me the strength to be a powerful example of forgiveness, even as you have always shown me grace and been quick to forgive my sins.

As I go about my day show me the way around temptation and keep me safe from the evil that fills the world.

Everything about you is all-powerful, all-knowing, and incomprehensible and yet I know you, because you sent Jesus. He is never changing; the same yesterday, today and forever.

Amen

Thursday, March 29

God, you are holy, you are so powerful and big yet so close and dad-like. You choose to love us and call us children of God. You know all of the stars and galaxies and you're a part of every minute of my day.

God, your name is holy. Set apart. Unlike anything else in the universe. Your name is powerful and you chose to let us claim it as ours. Please help me to live up to the name Christ-ian. Help me keep your name holy.

God, your kingdom is where I want to be. I want to be where you are honored, obeyed, and respected. Jesus, you promise that you are coming back. I'm excited for that day, but until then, please help me to be a person who knows you are my king. I want to honor you now, obey you now, and respect your authority now.

God, your will is what matters. Not mine, not what's popular, not what's easy. Please help me to be a person who seeks your desires and plans. Help me to surrender my selfishness, my pride, my need to be in control. Help me to rest in your will like those in heaven.

Thank you for providing everything that I need and so much more. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide for others so that they may have their daily bread. Help me to remember to be grateful.

Help me to be willing to forgive. Thank you for choosing to forgive me and rescue me from my sins that keep hurting others, myself, and my relationship with you. Please help me to live as one who has been set free! Help me to offer this freedom to others as easily as you offer it to me.

You are the only one who can lead me away from danger and temptation. I am so easily drawn to things that will hurt me, others, and my relationship with you. I'm so quick to judge, to see myself as a victim of other folk's choices, to need to prove my worth, and to give

in to so many other temptations that pull me farther and farther away from what you desire for me. Please help me to surrender my desire to lead so that I can listen and follow your leading. Holy Spirit, please open my eyes to see where you're moving so I can follow.

Thank you for fighting for me. Thank you for protecting and rescuing me from the evil that surrounds me every day. Please help me to remember to put on my Spiritual armor every day. you are more than I can imagine, more loving than I deserve, and I will praise you forever.
Amen

Friday, March 30

There's a saying that some things are more caught than taught. Prayer is one of these things. Unlike algebra, history, or how to change the oil in your car, prayer can't be learned in a classroom or by watching a video on YouTube. Prayer must be experienced to be learned. In many ways it's similar to understanding love. You can read about love, watch romantic movies, and listen to love songs but you won't really understand love until you personally experience it. That's because prayer is relational, not academic. So the best way to grow our prayer life is to simply engage in it. And the beautiful part about this is that it requires no expertise or training. God doesn't command us to pray eloquently...he invites us to pray continually. He doesn't want to be wowed by us...he simply wants to hear from us.

And God wants to hear from us personally. When we look at what it means to walk as disciples of Jesus, praying in a large group is a powerful and important part. But God also wants us to take the next step of pursuing him individually. When we seek God on our own we get to experience him more intimately and his influence in our daily life is expanded. Letting God into more segments of our world, and with more consistency, is perhaps the most powerful way to grow in prayer.

So if you're wondering what the next step in your prayer life might be, it might not require a formula, schedule, or plan...it might be as simple as just praying.

PRAYER

God give me a heart to pursue conversation with you throughout my week. Let me be confident that you desire a relationship and connection with me, so that you can guide me, and bless me with your presence.

Saturday, March 31

There's a bond that happens when we pray. When we speak the words of the Lord's Prayer we don't just pray it alone. We pray it with Christians all around the world—disciples of all different nationalities and backgrounds, disciples with whom we'll share eternity with Jesus forever. We never pray alone. As a community, one church across three campuses, there's another prayer that we get to pray together over the next two years: "Jesus, unleash your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in your world. Amen."

A number of months ago we stepped into a two-year journey as a congregation known as Multiply. It's a journey with big questions: What if by God's power we could multiply what we are doing missionally as a congregation? What if by God's power we could multiply a multisite "war chest" that would allow us to be ready to plant and launch new campuses? What if by God's power we could multiply our effectiveness by cutting our debt? What if by God's power we could multiply our spiritual impact on members and guests by refreshing our current worship spaces? Those are some pretty big questions that God has led us to ask as we seek to live out the vision of Multiply Disciples :: Transform Lives as a congregation. But when we look at the stories of the earliest disciples we notice that every movement begins with prayer. Every big moment starts with disciples of Jesus on their knees.

In Acts 2 we read that Peter preaches a great sermon—over 3,000 people believe in Jesus and are baptized. But where does it all begin? With disciples of Jesus in a room, praying. They prayed for God's will, they praised God for what he was doing, and they looked to follow Jesus with their lives. Today we're invited to follow in the footsteps of those early disciples, to pray to our great and loving God. I don't know what WLC will look like in two years. I don't know what your life or my life will look like in two years. But I know a good place to start. It's right here in prayer.

PRAYER

Jesus, unleash your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in your world. Amen.

Pastor Jon Kuehne



w e e k e n d s e r m o n s e r i e s

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