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“What is Prayer?”

Review:

- Last week – Larry Osborn – *Thriving in Babylon – the life of Daniel*.
- How do we thrive, as believers, amidst so much godlessness? (like Daniel did)

Preview: Why this series?

- Coming election year – politically crazy – how do we NOT get caught up in it all?
- How do we remember who our King is and live for His Kingdom and have Kingdom impact?
- Our abiding relationship with God is essential – our ability to be connected to Him and His ways.

Prayer:

Luke 11:1 (NLT) “Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

What is prayer?

Psalms 62:8 (NLT) “O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.”

- Prayer is simply talking to God (alone, others, silently, loudly, inside, outside, etc)
- Prayer is a natural human experience but we often pray “our way” and it doesn’t work so well
- We need to learn to pray “His Way” and we’ll find His results are far better

Why pray?

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

- Jesus prayed! (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12; etc)
- Prayer is about connection – relationship – knowing and being known (John 17:3)
- Prayer helps us see God’s activity in our lives (John 11:42; Nehemiah 2:4)

How to pray?

1. Pray without hypocrisy.

- Let’s look at Matthew 6:5 (NLT) “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.”
- Prayer is not about impressing others. It’s about pressing into God.
- Even if we’re uncomfortable, prayer is to be genuine so we don’t miss the point of prayer: God!

2. Pray in private – to your Father!

- Matthew 6:6 (NLT) “But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”
- Prayer is relational (Romans 8:26-27)
- Pray consistently (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

3. Prayer isn't a formula or enchantment.

- Matthew 6:7-8 (NLT) "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!"
- It's not about repeating the "right words" or saying them a certain number of times. It's not magical, it's relational!
- He knows what we need but still wants to hear from us. (James 1:16-17; 5:14-15)

4. The Lord's Model Prayer.

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV) "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

- Jesus models the heart of God in this prayer and how we're to relate to Him: it's about loving God and loving others. (10 Commandments/Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:37-30)
- God is wanting to change (Matthew 4:19) how we relate to Him and others – and pray that way!
 - "9 Our Father who art in heaven" Personal, relational. Connected. "Hallowed be Your name (KJV)/ May Your name be kept holy (NLT)" Balances out HOW we relate to Him – personal and intimate, yet He is God – holy, righteous.
 - "10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." As we see Him for who He is, it changes what we want – no longer what I want...Your will be done!
 - "11 Give us this day our daily bread," Life isn't about what I want – and stuff and materialism and consumerism. It's about needs and His provision – not wants and my solutions.
 - "12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Life isn't about stuff – it's about what matters to God...People... and how I relate to them.
 - "13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" We have a spiritual enemy – we need help in our fight against him.

What about unanswered prayer?

- When God doesn't answer how we like, it doesn't mean He is not listening and that He doesn't care. His answers are: yes, no or wait/not yet – but we can have hope (Romans 15:13)

Practical Next Steps:

- Accept Christ
- Examine your own prayer life with God to see if it matches His definition of prayer.

Start praying. Keep praying. Pray alone and with others. Change it up. Connect!

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