

Union USG 2015

Week 4

Preliminary

Please read the book...

I will not go over it page by page, but it has good information in it. The book is good background because what I talk about will be...

Highlights at best
Something related to
or Applications of

...What is in the assigned reading

Prayer requests (other sheet)

Review from last week about Discipline

- There are three kinds; punishment, training, the will power or self control to discipline or train ourselves.
- Discipline is good
- A wise man loves discipline, while a stupid one rejects it
- God disciplines those He loves
- Pride is the opposite of discipline because it focuses on self while
- Discipline focuses on Submission
- Jesus was the ultimate expression of power and submission
- Jesus life modeled discipline
- Christian Disciplines are the duplicatable, Christ-modeled activities.
- Like the Ten Commandments, Christian Disciplines are not about lists of things to do or not to do or how many times or at what time, they represent an Attitude of Submission to God and Love to our Neighbor.

Review Homework

Share Covenant Prayers, experiences journaling...

Journaling is a letter from God to you.

Chapter 5 Prayer

We are talking about the Christian Disciplines as the duplicatable Christ-modeled activities that by constantly using, we can train ourselves in godliness and the ability to discern His will.

We add to our faith, the knowledge of what to do and to that the self control or will power to persevere in the pursuit of Christian Maturity or Godliness.

That is a *different way of thinking* because godliness, or Christian maturity is not automatic, it is a process and as an athlete trains himself physically, there is a process to train ourselves spiritually.

Again, last week we saw that God *disciplines* those He loves and a fool rejects his discipline.

This week we will discuss perhaps the most important of all Disciplines, Prayer. Prayer is so important because it is involved or incorporated into many of the other disciplines, i fact you can not do some without prayer.

Also, I'll point out again that the disciplines, or even a godly, abundant, victorious life is not about lists as much as it is about an Attitude of Submission to God and Love to our Neighbor. It is the attitude we are trying to get to, and the disciplines are the exercises on our workout program or what has been called the Disciplined Training Approach.

That said, lets talk about PRAYER.

25 years ago John Bauer was a member here, he has since died. I remember one Wednesday Night Bible Study in the Parlor... Leonard was teaching about prayer and John Bauer had what I thought was a flawed idea.

If we were to compare John to someone here it would be Earl Franklin, except Earl is a much better driver than John. Bless his heart, every fender on John's old car was beat up, but he loved God and loved being at church. He was at church so much that some people thought his old car was Leonard's to the point someone actually bought Leonard a new car.

The point is John thought it was a sin to not pray every day, I didn't understand what I do now and he may have been on to something. While not a requirement to not sin, prayer is a requirement to a richer relationship with God. You can not argue that.

There is a lot we could say about prayer...

1. What it is and is not.
2. The Purpose of Prayer
3. Different Feelings and Viewpoints, Attitudes about Prayer
4. Prayers that work and do not work
5. Jesus' example of prayer
6. Jesus' model prayer
7. God's Word about prayer

Do you think we can cover that in the next 30 minutes?

Let's begin with ***Different feelings or views about prayer.***

Tell me one word that describes prayer, your prayer life or what comes to mind when you pray. One Word.

Share Comfort, hope, peace, connection, calm, etc.
 Why? Because God has answered your prayers before.
 Or... fear, anxiety, dread
 Why? Because we may be afraid to pray in public
 we may not know how to pray
 we may not have the faith to pray, i.e.
 what if we pray and God doesn't answer it,
 then our faith is of no effect

The point is we have many attitudes about prayer and there are different types of prayer aren't there?

- Heart-breaking pleas for healing or lost loved ones
- Joyful, almost whimsical thanks and praise, or earnest thanks giving
- For help, guidance, direction, or just asking God to go before us ordering our lives, prayers for safety, etc.
- Prayers of Invocation, Dedication or Benediction.

Some people think of prayer in automotive terms:

Like a steering wheel, they use it every foot of the trip, or...
 Like a spare tire, for use Only in Case of an Emergency.

Why is that? What has your experience been?

I think in this room we can agree which is the more correct approach.

Q./ Why would some people think prayer is of use only in case of emergency?

A./ Lack of training, understanding, experience, or because of pride.

Q./ How could each of those be true?

- Lack of training
- Lack of understanding
- Lack if experience
- Pride

I'd like to tell you, that as a Session we have always used prayer as our Steering Wheel or Rudder, instead of In Case of an Emergency, but that would not be entirely true. (Nor is it true in your personal lives either)

I'd like to tell you that our Christian Ed Department under the Spiritual Leadership of the Session has for years had a purposeful documented, multi-pronged approach to teaching the congregation about using prayer daily as a steering wheel, but we haven't been that smart either.

What I will tell you is that for several years the Session has purposefully, sought the leading of the Holy Spirit in how best to lead and teach this congregation and without our knowing, He has led us to know, use and understand prayer better. Without our planning, the Holy Spirit has lead different classes, different teachers to teach the same thing. **Praise God!**

That same thing is... Pray then Trust and Obey

It certainly wasn't that we didn't pray, but perhaps we didn't trust when we did pray, or weren't obedient until we didn't need faith to see the logical conclusion something. (Again, we all are guilty of that.)

What prayer is and is not.

Lets begin with what it is not.

Not a list of things we want, not our eBay Wish List and that is all I'll say about that. Counterfeit experts concentrate on what is right not what is not.

See p. 53 for a definition of ***What prayer is.*** This is my definition, yours may be better, but for now we will use mine.

Prayer is an avenue or vehicle God designed for us to be in constant communication with Him.

I like to break scripture down word by word, so lets break this definition down word by word.

Avenue Thorough fare, two way street, not a cross street or alley
It goes from one place to another.

Vehicle A way to transport something back and forth

God designed A perfect, benevolent Creator, the best plan and planner
the Author and Finisher of our Faith.
for us We are His beloved, his children, created in His image
and likeness.

for Constant Constant, God was constant before the beginning,
He was 24/7 before we ever thought of 24/7.

Communication Again, a two way street, communication doesn't take
place unless there is an exchange of information.

With Him This two way communications not with the Angel in
Charge of Jobs or the Department Head of Healings or
the Supervisor of Praise, No, our Communication is with
God the Father through Jesus the Son by the power and
leading of the Holy Spirit. We communicate with God
Himself, by his own choosing and design.

I want to delve into the Communication part of the definition.
Communication is an exchange of information.

Like speaking to a fence post. You can plead your case all day with a fence post, but it will do no good. Why? It can't hear you, nor does it care what you think, but that can not be said of God.

The problem is ... even if God does hear and He does care and He does answer, don't you think we need to ...

- A. be listening
- B. be obedient to what He said.

Our first challenge is in knowing how to listen. Entire books have been written on this subject alone... How to Hear or Hear From God.

The simple answers range from interest, attitude and time before we get to forgiveness, bitterness, deliberate sin in our lives, denial of God's interest, power and control in our lives, all of which will keep us from hearing God's answer to our prayer.

To make it simple, lets begin with the easiest, time. We need to allow time for God's answer to penetrate our thick skull. We need to rid ourselves from the distractions around us so that we can hear.

Some answers are immediate and obvious, like a new job, a safe trip, but others may take more deliberate concentration to discern God's Answer.

So lets talk about time. I am not taking away the validity of praying whenever you want to or God's ability to answer in any way He wants to but I do want to emphasize the importance of our sacrifice of time in seeking God.

Simply, God appreciates time dedicated to Him beyond that He appreciates prayers prayed in faith. The first step to God answering is our Faithful Prayer.

When we pray we are giving Him our only un-replenish-able resource. When we set aside time to pray we are giving Him a sacrifice of our time. **Hearing from God...** I've said this a hundred times, we need to spend as much time in quiet reflection after a prayer as we spent praying. The disciplines of Meditation and Solitude are a different matter and we will get to them in couple weeks.

As you pray and after you pray God will put an idea into your head, for that matter the devil will too, so we need to be careful. Doesn't it make sense to be listening, if we are asking for an answer?

Try not listening to your spouse and see how that goes. We need to purposefully listen for God. He is not being evasive, we just need to listen.

Trust and Obey ... If we listen and after we've heard, there is only one thing to do; trust and go ahead and obey. Not leaning on our own understanding, not relying on the way which seems right to man, but leads to death.

Here is a new thought for you... *Prayer takes on a new dimension when we listen. Said another way, when we open the lines of communication with God, not only are we asking something of God, He maybe asking something us also and leads to more Trusting and Obeying... or not.*

This is the meat; it is a Different way of Thinking.

Purpose of Prayer ... The very immature or elementary thinking says the purpose of prayer is to get what we want. Remember the "Worldly Trinity," Me, Myself and What I Want?

That was characterized by Pride which is the opposite of Submission.

When Jesus sought God in the quiet of the morning it was not to get what He wanted, it was to spend time together so that He would be "heart-linked" with his Father.

Think about some of his prayers,

Thy kingdom come, in earth or in us as in Heaven...

Not my will but thy will be done...

His prayers modeled acceptance and submission and resulted in power and peace which is where we began.

Q./ Have you heard it said that prayer usually changes us more than our situation or circumstances? What does that mean?

God'd Word on Prayer

Jeremiah 33:3
 Psalm 37:4
 Psalm 145:18-19
 Proverbs 15:29
 Matthew 7:7-8
 Mark 11:24
 John 14:13, 15:7
 Hebrews 4:16
 1 John 3:21-22

Jesus Model Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Q./ Is this prayer a tutorial on how to pray to the Lord, God Almighty?
 or... it it the Prayer of our Lord Jesus... to his Father?

Whatever it is, we see 5 elements that need to be present in most prayers.

They are in your book on page 60-61 (Turn to Book)

Worship
 Submission
 Focus on God, even Thanksgiving
 Forgiveness
 Protection

These are not just good words or theology of Jesus they are attitudes also expressed in the Old Testament. (See Page 60)

Finally, I'd point out that journaling should be part of your purposeful prayer time. If you are sitting there, praying and then listening, pencil in hand, God will reveal or remind you of something you need to know or do.

It may be confirmation of a previously answered prayer, or future direction or a reminder of someone who may just need a call of encouragement. You may even be aware of these thoughts, but if you write them down you are more likely to remember them.

This is like a email or letter from God to you... not me or a Pastor, as a prophet hearing form God for the people, but from God to you, individually.

There is much in the book I have not covered and is worth your reading, so please do that.

My last word on prayer is "*practice makes perfect.*" Don't be afraid to pray, don't feel intimidated because someone else seems to do it better. Your prayers are between you and your creator, He already knows your heart, He just desires your sacrifice of time in your prayers.

Next week Chapter 6-7, Study, Learning, Journaling and Meditation

I would like more of you to read your Covenant Prayers to the class. If you have done it yet, those who have would tell you it is a good exercise.