

LESSON 2 IT'S TIME ...To Pray

LESSON AIM: To give suggestions to improve the prayer life of our pupils so that they have personal interaction God as a basis for their spiritual formation.

SCRIPTURE RESOURCE: John 17:11-21, Matt 6:9-13

CREATING LEARNING READINESS: Instead of an off hand or perfunctory prayer time to begin the class, plan the prayers ahead of time. Enlist two or three folks ahead of time to pray short prayers and ask them to begin their prayers by saying "Amen. In Jesus' name. Dear God....." and then pray specifically for whatever they feel inclined to pray for. If you don't have folks who will pray aloud comfortably, do it yourself beginning the prayer as described above.

After the prayer. Ask if folks noticed anything different about the prayer. Say that Bryan Chappell in his book *Praying Backwards* suggests that if we begin with what we normally end and understand what it means, it will help us approach God in the right frame of mind.

EXPLAIN the meanings of the terms.

AMEN means "It is true." In saying this at the beginning we put our minds into a mode that says "This is what I really feel. I do this with sincerity."

IN JESUS NAME. We are unworthy to be in the presence of God. By our very nature as unrighteous sinners we cannot be in God's righteous presence to praise or petition. The only way we get there is because Jesus has made us righteous. In essence we are saying "Lord, there is not enough goodness in my best works to warrant your listening to me or answering my prayers but, Lord I am not appealing to you on the basis of my merit. I ask you to listen to me as one who trusts in the blood of Jesus to wash away my sin. By the work of your Holy Spirit, I am united to Jesus, and it is only on the basis of his righteousness that I feel I can approach your throne." (quote from Bryan Chapel.)

Jesus is very frank about this. In John 16:23-24 he says, "At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. The truth is, you can go directly to the Father and ask him, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy."

SAY: Last week we talked about Spiritual Formations. After we become Christians we need to grow as a Christian. The basis for this formation is a growing relationship with God.

ASK: 1. What are the biggest problems people have in developing relationships? Husband wife? Parent child? Boss employee?

In the end practically all problems boil down to communication

COMMENT: No difference with our relationship with God. Lack of communication keeps us from being drawn into his presence. A part of our spiritual formation is developing a good prayer life and including a time of meditation so God can speak to us. Let's talk about how we go about doing that.

ASK 2: Why is the manner in which we approach communicating with people important to the success of our communication?

Having an “attitude” or an entitlement approach raises barriers. A humbleness of spirit and attitude immediately defuses the situation and opens the doors. Approaching prayer with the “In Jesus’ name” approach puts us in the right frame of mind to communicate with God and makes us acceptable in his sight.

ASK: 3. A Chinese proverb says, “The one who loves much prays much, and the one who prays much loves much.” Why is that true? How does love open up your prayer life? How does praying cause you to love more?

John says God is love and since God has loved us, we ought to love one another. Praying for someone is an act of love. In the act of prayer we are closer to God and if God is love, and we are closer to him the more likely we are to show love.

COMMENT: Jesus had an active prayer life. Listen to some passages where he prays or speaks on prayer. As you listen note elements of the prayers that we can use for examples:

John 17:11 Now I am departing the world; I am leaving them behind and coming to you. Holy Father, keep them and care for them—all those you have given me—so that they will be untied just as we are.

John 17:20-21 I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony. My prayer for all of them is that will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world believe you sent me.

Matthew 6:9-13 Pray then like this:

Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,; And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 26:42 Again for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, they will be done.”

Jesus uses the familial term Father and speaks directly to God...and tells disciples to do likewise.

He prays for those he loves and is concerned about

He prays for those who do not know him

He submits to God’s will

He says ask for forgiveness and to forgive

He says pray for strength to withstand temptation

He says pray for sustenance

SAY: In our prayer life most of us do all the talking. Communication is a two way street. Dr. Vestal in the pupil’s book suggest forms of meditation as ways for us to allow God to speak to us. Discuss the three suggestions and talk about how they allow God to communicate with us?

Solitude- Most of us are so busy God would have to make an appointment with us for next week to find time to communicate with us. Time alone, walks by ourselves, a devotional time of our own.

Divine Reading – Much of the time we read the Bible for information. Try reading it for formation...letting it speak to us with an idea, a challenge, a different approach.

Abandonment- Turning loose of something. An emotion like anger or resentment can stand in the way of communicating with God. It’s hard to communicate with someone if you are nurturing what you feel is injustice. It’s hard to compartmentalize that feeling of resentment or injustice or hurt to just that one person. It carries over into other relationships including our relationship with God.

COMMENT We’re big talkers in our church about Operation Inasmuch. We’re instructed to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in jail. We’re to show the love of God. What better way to show love than to pray for people? We talked last week about a part of our spiritual formation was bringing reconciliation to the world...being an

Ambassador for Christ. How I do that is my missional purpose. **Intercessory praying for people may be your missional purpose or at least one of them.** Maybe its everyone missional purpose.

The pupil's book list **seven** practical suggestions on learning how to make intercessory prayer an act of love and a way of life. Ask pupils to open their books to page 14-15 and look at these. If they do not have their books, you may need to list them on the board. Briefly comment on each one.

CONCLUSION: Ask each person in the class to choose in his mind someone who needs prayer. Then ask them to choose the approach described in 4, 5, or 6 and pray in that fashion. Also ask them to begin their prayer by saying "Amen. In Jesus Name." Ask them to pray that way during the silent prayer time which will close the class.