



Prayer

Session 4 – 21st January 2018

Bible Readings

1 Kings 3: 1-15, Colossians 4: 2-6, Luke 11:1-4, Romans 8:34, Revelation 8: 1-5, Luke 9:29-36, Genesis 18:16-33

Sermon Notes

It's OK to pray when we are desperate, instinctively. That might even spark a more constructive spiritual life. But if we only pray when all other options are exhausted we miss out!

Revelation describes the prayers of all people bringing heaven to a standstill. Our prayers are heard. They matter.

And St Paul reminds us that Jesus is our partner in prayer. "It is Christ Jesus, who indeed intercedes for us."

Reflecting on the story of Abraham - Walter Wink says, "Biblical prayer is impertinent, persistent, shameless, indecorous. It is more like haggling in an oriental bazaar than the polite monologues of the churches."

But, prayer does not happen automatically; even for Jesus' first followers who had a front row seat to watch the master of prayer, seeing his face "changed, and his clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning." Prayer is learnt behaviour. Nobody is born an expert. So here are some suggestions.

Start with a few minutes every day, sustainably. Try to make it the same time each day, at the time of day when you are at your best!

Select somewhere to pray - indoors or outdoors. Jesus went off to a solitary place. Ely is full of opportunities.

Take your Bible, maybe light a candle – you are in the presence of the Light of the World. Some ‘props’ might help – a cross, a notebook and pen, a kneeler, (we have some spare ones in church!).

As you start, take a few moments to breathe. If you can – give thanks to God, hallow His name.

I recommend the “Pray As You Go” app, which leads us into worship, scripture and prayer for 12 minutes. You can leave it at that but I find it encourages me to stay in place and carry on.

Dallas Willard suggests that we “start by praying for what we are truly interested in. The circles of our interests will inevitably grow in the largeness of God’s love”.

C. S. Lewis encourages us to “lay before God what is in us, not what ought to be in us.”

Finally let’s remind ourselves that prayer is a relationship. With simplicity of heart, we allow ourselves to be gathered up into the arms of the Father and let him sing his love song over us.

Key Quotes

“Prayer unites the soul to God.” JULIAN OF NORWICH

“History belongs to the intercessors, those who believe and pray the future into being.” WALTER WINK

Discussion Questions

If we turn to prayer as a final desperate measure, only after all our own efforts have been exhausted, what does this reveal about our view of Prayer, of ourselves, of God?

Walter Wink writes, "History belongs to the intercessors...those who believe and pray the future into being." If Wink is right, what implications would this have on:

- Your personal commitment to pray?
- The power of a praying church?
- What you teach your children about prayer, if you are a parent?

Describe a time you prayed and saw clear and definite results. How did this answered prayer spur you on to pray more passionately?

Read: Luke 11:1–4

What core issues does Jesus address as he teaches his followers to pray? *Which of these areas do you tend to focus on the most when you pray? Which do you need to focus on more?*

What situations and life-experiences most naturally move you to pray? How can you use these God-given moments to propel you into more frequent and passionate prayer?

What situations and life-experiences tend to keep you from praying? What can you do to make these moments an opportunity to seek God in prayer?

What are some of the values of setting a specific time and place for prayer? *If you have a time and place you have set aside for prayer, tell your group members how this has helped you in your prayer life.*

Prayer

Take time to thank God for inviting you into relationship with him. Sometimes we forget what an amazing honor and privilege it is to talk to God in prayer. Thank Jesus for making a way for us to speak with the Father in prayer.

Living the Life

Sit down for 20 minutes. Identify one area of life that you have been praying about consistently. Write two prayers. First, a safe, polite, cautious prayer. Don't be too expectant and don't expect God to be very responsive or extravagant. Second, write a prayer that reflects the attitude Walter Wink suggests "Be bold, be fearless, be expectant." Ask in a way that takes you beyond your own comfort zone and ask in anticipation. Then read each one out loud and ask yourself which of these prayers most reflects what God wants to hear from his children.

Personal Reflection

The first disciples were face-to-face with Jesus, the master prayer. Reflect on the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, identify what you can learn about prayer and how that might impact your prayers.

Blog, Vlog and Social Media



<https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/>

Please visit the Holy Habits pages on the St Mary's website.

www.stmarysely.org hear Lisa's Testimony and join the conversation on our **Facebook Group "Ely Team Holy Habits"**
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