

Draw Near 2

Prayer, March 10

1. Review Devotionals: Has everyone completed all four devotionals from this past week? There is no penalty for not completing them. They are there to help you and guide you. Let's share for a minute what we have learned.
2. Introduction: Today we will begin looking at the 12 different practices we will be using to allow the Holy Spirit to move within our lives to help us better live out the Sermon on the Mount.
 1. Our focus throughout these two months is the Sermon on the Mount and the beautiful life Jesus speaks of there.
 2. For these first four weeks, we will talk of piety, focused on God. Then we will have four weeks focused on people, then the final four weeks will be focused on possessions.
 3. Always remember, as I talk about these different practices, that they are just like church attendance, just like daily Bible reading, daily prayer that we have always talked of. Those things we do to bring God more into our lives. I want to introduce you to things you may not have thought of doing before that will help you get closer to God. But these are not things to get God's approval - you already have that. God loves you deeply. These practices are for your benefit.
 4. Also remember a wonderful line written by Richard Foster in his book, "Celebration of Discipline" back in the 70s, "Superficiality is the curse of our age...The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people." This is our goal.
3. Prayer First
 1. Read Matthew 6:1-18
 2. When you stop to think about it, how much of this section is focused on prayer? How many verses are focused on prayer? And remember, when you are talking about fasting, what often is happening when you fast? - Prayer!
 3. Jesus makes sure that not only the Jews know what their leaders are doing wrong, but also the Gentiles who hear Him. He is so concerned about "right" prayer, he is hitting both Jews and Gentiles.
 4. Last, notice that it is only in prayer that He provides a formula. This is powerful and has been extremely powerful in people's lives since that day.

4. Ready Made Prayers

1. In a pre-literate society, a "ready made prayer" was invaluable. It could be used to teach truth, to help memorize scripture, and to encourage the faith. So it was used in a vital way.
2. It is still helpful. The same way a familiar song brings to mind emotions and memories, so a familiar memorized prayer can do the same thing. Though we should not exclusively use "ready made prayers", they can be very helpful in our connection to God.

5. Praying the Psalms

1. The Psalms are the original pre-owned prayers. They have been prayed by Jews and Christians for centuries. They are requests and demands and laments to God where we are given words we sometimes need to express what we cannot put into words.
2. The Psalms fall into 3 broad categories that Chris Altrock, following Walter Brueggemann and others, calls Prayers from the Plain, Prayers from the Pit, and Prayers from the Peak.
3. Prayers from the Plain are those in which God is viewed as trustworthy and reliable, life is happy, everything is good. Examples: Psalm 19, 104, 119
4. Prayers from the Peak are those where things are great, it is like the psalmist is shouting from the rooftops! Examples: Psalm 16, 23, 100, 150
5. Prayers from the Pit, of which there are many, are a stark contrast to the other two. These prayers groan, gasp, and hurt. God does not always seem reliable in these prayers. They are some of the most disturbing parts of the Bible. Examples: Psalm 13, 51, 69

6. Praying the Prayers of Jesus

1. When I talk about prayers of Jesus you automatically think of the Lord's prayer - and that is obvious. But we have several prayers of Jesus in the four Gospels. Let's look at three:
2. Prayers of Complaint - these were inward. He teaches us how to complain in our pain. Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 15:33-37; John 19:28-30.
3. Prayers of Confidence - These were upward - focused on God. Jesus shows how to trust God even in darkness. Luke 10:21; John 11:41-43; John 12:23-29; Luke 23:44-46
4. Prayers of Compassion - These are outward to people and for people. John 17:1-26; Luke 23:32-34.

7. Praying the Prayers of Paul

1. When we come to Paul and all the different passages of Scripture there are several options for prayer that we can explore. I will share two with you today.

2. Pray Paul's prayers. Paul has some wonderful prayers, or he alludes to praying in wonderful ways that we can then pick up some of his language and use. Look at Philippians 1:9-11 or Ephesians 1:16-21 or Colossians 1:9-12 as examples. These can help your faith and ground you in Jesus.
3. Pray Paul's lists. Paul gives us several lists in his letters. And sometimes it is wonderful to just pray through those lists, asking to not have some of them, or asking to have some of them. As an example look at Romans 12:9-21, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, or Galatians 5:16-23. These can be quite helpful in bringing either sins to mind that we need to pay attention to, or good things we need to emulate.
8. Conclusion: When we are dry spiritually, praying through psalms or prayers of scripture can help us in several specific ways.
 1. It can remind us that we are a part of a much larger community. We pray this as a part of a Bible that has been around for over 2000 years.
 2. This practice keeps us from giving in to the temptation to be spectacular and entertaining in our prayers. It keeps our language grounded.
 3. It can also stretch us with new words, phrases, and concepts we may not have thought of and help us.
 4. This week you will have four devotionals you can utilize. Be sure to work through them and we will discuss them next Sunday.