

Thirty-Five – Week 4

Prayer – Jim Burgen

September 26, 2021

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation--encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Bible References

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4, 9 John 3:16; John 17:20-23

// Message Summary

We're talking this week about prayer and continuing our [35 Day Challenge](#) series. Jim looks at our common ideas and reactions to prayer, and explains how these have become complicated and religious in nature; frustrating our attempts to cultivate a relationship with the Father. Much like the other spiritual disciplines we have been studying; prayer is something that can be learned. And prayer is best learned by following Jesus example. Jesus was undoubtedly advantaged by His supernatural ability to pray, knowing the heart of the Father; but we are not without resources that will help us learn to pray. As we return to the gospel, our approach to prayer is simplified and the outcome is meaningful alignment of our hearts with the will of God.

// Biblical & Historical Context

Many hundreds of books have been written on the subject of prayer, as a central theme of religion and spirituality. Recently prayer has been studied in a variety of more rigorous and systematic ways. A 2003 conference of more than a dozen scholars of classical literature, history, ministry, philosophy, religious studies, and theology convened and later went on to compile *A History of Prayer*¹ across the various Christian traditions from the first century through the middle ages. Many of the prayers included in this book were penned by those who prayed them, some were spoken or recited orally over many years before being recorded; still others became poetry or were sung as songs of the liturgy used in worship and gatherings of believers. These were then studied in their context to learn about the various forms and practice of prayer over time, in an attempt to explore the meaning of prayer which, by it's very nature tends to elude a strict definition.

In studying what the Bible has to say about prayer, the first mention is found in Genesis 4:26 with the sentence: At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD. Throughout the narrative of the Old Testament, prayer is described as dialogue with God. We're drawn to the description of prayer in Exodus 33:11; The LORD would speak with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend. We know that David had an extraordinary relationship with God, largely because of his recorded prayers that make up the majority of the book of Psalms; and

¹ Hammerling, Roy (ed). (2008). *A History of Prayer : the first to the fifteenth century*. Leiden : Biggleswade : Brill ; Extenza Turpin [distributor]

not including the book of Psalms, there are more than six hundred other prayers recorded in the bible offered by kings and queens, priests and prophets, and more than a few ordinary people. While some prayers of the Bible are only for the unique time and place of specific individuals; others can be more broadly applied to circumstances we may face today. The Bible is the word of God, and probably the most common and accessible way God speaks to people today. When we pray, it is there we find His reply.

// Community Questions

1. How's it going with the 35 Day Challenge? Has it been easy to remember to pray daily?
2. What is the greatest benefit you have noticed from regular completion of one or more of the daily activities?

// Discussion Questions

1. As a child, did you grow up with prayer habits at mealtime or bed time? Have you continued these or adopted other/additional prayer habits?
2. How is the practice of prayer central to the 35 Day Challenge, or any effort to experience spiritual connection or growth? Have you noticed anything about your praying recently?
3. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) is among the most quoted prayers of the bible. Have someone in the group read it from a different translation (such as MSG or NLT). What stands out, or what do you notice?
 - a. What truths does this passage express about God?
 - b. What does this passage have to say about the needs of people generally?
 - c. What does the passage have to say about your needs specifically?
 - d. If you were to use this passage as an outline to guide your prayer time, list the contents or categories of things you would talk with God about.
4. Another prayer of Jesus is recorded just before He is betrayed, arrested, and crucified. What kind of sentiment does Jesus express in the words of John 17:20-23?
5. In earlier writings, some authors mention devotion to, or adoration of God? How might you incorporate this idea into the words of your prayer?

// Challenge

During your prayer time this week, meditate on John 3:16. Spend at least some of your prayer praising God for who He is and this demonstration of His love for you; confessing any source of pride or sin you become aware of in your life; thanking Jesus for His work of salvation in the gift of His life, death, and resurrection. .