

FANNING THE FLAME OF PRAYER: REKINDLING OUR PASSION FOR PRAYER" **Prayer Workshop for Presbytery – March 6, 2021**

INTRODUCTION

Greeting and Prayer

Tell us about the loves of your life – Passions

***Would any of you answered in your truest self, "I just love to pray" "prayer is my passion and the love and joy of my life?"

General Observations and quotes on Prayer

For many of us, we know that prayer is a great thing and we really lock into it when we are in a crisis.

While we are all hard wired for prayer and pray instinctively in times of desperation, and while prayer is simple and basic enough **that even a small child learning their very first words can be taught to pray, prayer is not easy.**

"As human beings we breathe, eat, drink, sleep, and pray. It is part of our nature as human beings to pray. This is one of the ways we express our natural hungering for God. Natural it is; easy it isn't. There is a difference between the tendency to pray – automatic reflexive response to pain, trouble, joy, fulfillment and living a life of prayer. To pray consistently is not easy. It requires commitment and discipline." Maxie Dunham - Living Prayer quote

"All who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives." Foster

"I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." Martin Luther'

"God does nothing except in answer to believing prayer." Wesley who spent two hours daily to the sacred exercise.

"I love to be alone in my cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer." "I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer to God." David Brainerd

"For those explorers in the frontiers of faith, prayer was no little habit tacked onto the periphery of their lives; it was their lives. It was the most serious work of their most productive years." Foster

Responses to these quotes -How do we get there? How do we become community of individuals who Love to prayer?

During Lent we focus on spiritual disciplines more intentionally and prayer is at the core of those disciplines. Our goal is not just that we add prayer as one more thing to do on the long list of activities in our busy lives but that prayer become our passion – our love, our joy our delight, that prayer become the energy and means by which we live our lives individually and corporately to God's glory. **Not because the discipline of prayer is anything in and of itself but because it is a vital tool for the cultivation of our most important love relationship – a relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Our love or passion for prayer will be kindled or rekindled when we discover that...

I. PRAYER IS INITIATED BY GOD – GOD'S GRACIOUS INVITATION TO RELATIONSHIP

GOD is inviting – initiating the conversation.

Jesus initiates the journey and it is Jesus who is inviting us to a retreat with him.

Jesus takes 3 disciples with him up the mount of transfiguration.

"Come away with me to a lonely place and get some rest"

"Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest".

Prayer is a response to an invitation not a command or duty. It is an invitation to relationship. Richard Foster states, "Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the spiritual disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father."

PRAYER IS THE MEANS TO A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

***How does framing prayer as relationship rather than duty or discipline fame the flame for you?**

Our passion for prayer is kindled or rekindled when we realize that ...

II. GOD DESIRES THAT WE ASK - WE ARE DESIGNED TO BE NEEDY AND ASKING IS AN ACT OF HUMILITY

Jesus urges his disciples to ask, seek and knock for help in the quest for the kingdom of God. It is instructive to consider just how prevalent the instruction to ask, seek, and knock is throughout scripture.

In Genesis we see Abraham asking – pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 18:16-33

"**Ask** me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." Psalm 2:8

"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you declares the Lord." Jeremiah 29:11-13

"One thing I **ask** from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple." Psalm 27:4

"**Ask** the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matthew 9: 38
21 Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. 22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matthew 21: 21-22

"And I will do whatever you **ask** in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 14: 13

You may **ask** me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:14

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever [John 14:16](#)

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, **ask** whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

[John 15:7](#)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you **ask** in my name the Father will give you. [John 15:16](#)

Until now you have not **asked** for anything in my name. **Ask** and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. [John 16:24](#)

In that day you will **ask** in my name. I am not saying that I will **ask** the Father on your behalf. [John 16:26](#)

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should **ask** God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. [James 1:5](#)

But when you **ask**, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. James 1:6

You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not **ask** God. [James 4:2](#)

INESCAPABLE REALITY THAT GOD'S GIFTS AND PURPOSES FOR US ARE APPROPRIATED THROUGH ASKING - God wants us to ask

Spurgeon "Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom."

- How do you respond to the concept that asking prayer is a normative standard in Scripture?

A. AFFIRMS GOD'S CHARACTER, SUFFICIENCY AND GOODNESS – Act of faith

God delights to give good gifts to his children.

Asking affirms capability to answer my need. It is a compliment to be ask

B. ACKNOWLEDGES OUR NEED /DEPENDANCE -Expresses our humility

The act of asking is an admission that we are not self- sufficient - that we can't make it on our own that we need God desperately.

Look at 1 Chronicles 4: 9-10

It is difficult for God to give us anything until we come to understand and admit our need -

Trigger for most of us is desperation - praying is the ultimate expression of our utter helplessness and dependence upon God

Richard Foster says, "Some has said that while the less discerning will continue to appeal to God for aid, the real masters of the spiritual life go beyond petition to adoring God's essence with no needs or requests whatever. In this view our asking represents a more crude and naive form of prayer, while adoration and contemplation are a more enlightened and high-minded approach since they are free from any egocentric demands... this I submit to you is a false spirituality. Petitionary prayer remains primary through out our lives because we are forever dependent upon God - not something to get beyond

Our passion for prayer is rekindled as we discover that..

III. PRAYER IS AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S AGENDA

"God instituted prayer in order to lend to his creatures the dignity of causality" Pascal

It is a mind boggling wonder to consider how the sovereignty of God interfaces with the prayers of humanity. How somehow in the mystery of God's sovereign design God has willed that God's kingdom come and God's will be done in response to believing prayers.

God has given to us dominion over the earth - Genesis 1, Psalm 8

"The highest heavens belong to the LORD,^(R) but the earth God has given^(S) to Humankind." Psalm 115: 16

I believe Prayer is the primary means God has entrusted to us whereby we are enabled to exercise our God given dominion over the earth. God has given the authority for what happens on earth to us. Wow!!!!

Daniel – 9 – Daniel is praying into reality the prophecy that God has already given.

God desires to fulfil it but God is somehow going to interface with Daniel's prayers to bring it about.

Joel 2 - call an assembly, sound the trumpet – perhaps God will relent

Elijah in James 5: 13-18

Asking makes us active participants in the process of securing - laying hold of all that God has for us.

Our passion for prayer is rekindled when

IV. We share and hear stories of God's answer to prayers

Sharing of some stories as time allows

George Mueller

Mark Batterson

Your stories ...

RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Just a few that have fired my passion for Prayer

A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World
by Paul E. Miller, David Powlison (Foreword by) – Barnes and Noble

The Circle Maker and Draw the Circle by Mark Batterson - see below – also small group curriculum

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, Richard J. Foster
Harper San Francisco, 1992

Getting to Know God: How to Have Minute-to-Minute Conversations With God,
Rev. Edward Santana-Grace, Ph.D.
Mountain Top Publisher, Free downloads at www.restwithmfest.com

Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God, Dallas Willard
Intervarsity Press, 1999

With Christ in the School of Prayer, Andrew Murray
Barbour and Company, Inc. P.O. Box 719, Uhrichsville, OH 44683

The Necessity Of Prayer, E.M. Bounds
Whitaker House, 1984

The Power of Prayer in a Believer's Life, Charles Spurgeon
Emerald Books, 1993

Reformed Spirituality, Howard L. Rice
Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991

PRAYER CURRICULUMS AND CHURCH RESOURCES

The Circle Maker, Mark Batterson (Group 40 day course – Church wide campaign
Reading book and Devotional entitle Draw the Circle and student book and video)
Zondervan.com

40 Days of Prayer, Rick Warren (Group course with journal and videos)

Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God, Henry T. Blackaby & Claude King
Lifeway Press, 1990 - 1-800-458-2772
(Text and a 13 session workbook with daily assignments of 30 minutes or so per day)

Passion & Power in Prayer, Alvin Vander Griend
CRC Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 49560, 1991 1-800-333-8300
(7 session video course with student guide and Leader's guide)

Space for God, Donald Postema
CRC Publications, 1983, 1997

The Praying Church Sourcebook, Alvin J. Vander Griend
CRC Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 49560, 1997 1-800-333-8300

The Praying Church Idea Book, Douglas A. Kamstra
CRC Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 49560, 1997 1-800-333-8300