

WHAT'S GOING ON? (weekly announcements)

EASTER

With the Easter season upon us, we're going to be holding 3 services: 7am, 9am, 10:45am. We'd love for as many of you as possible to join us for our 7am service. We'll be serving pancakes from 6:15-6:45 to entice you! We know that for many people, Easter is the one time they will go to church and we want as many seats available for them at our 9am & 10:45 service. Thank you for your flexibility as we look to be welcoming to our Easter first timers!

GOOD FRIDAY

In order to experience the fullness of all that God accomplished on Easter Sunday we must sit in the heartache and desolation of the cross. Join us on Friday, April 19 at 7:00pm as we encounter once again the pain and suffering of our beautiful Savior and the passion that drove him give his life for us.

PRAYER

ICE BREAKER

Question: What famous person would you be star struck by? If you met them on the street would you feel comfortable talking to them or would you be too nervous?

CENTERING FOCUS

Take five minutes and practice the discipline of silence together. Begin by having everyone close their eyes and breathe deeply. Quiet your mind. Allow the worries, concerns, and distractions to dissipate from your mind.

Leader...

*Set a timer on your phone so that you're not focused on the time. Remind everyone that movement will happen. Sounds will occur. Distractions will take place. It's ok. If your mind is bombarded with tasks, concerns, squirrel... that's fine. Just allow the thoughts to happen and pass through. Use Jesus' name as your anchor. Anytime your mind begins to wander simply speak Jesus' name silently to yourself and refocus your attention on him.

Begin by praying something like this with the group. Start the timer.

"Father, please quiet our minds and still our hearts. Protect us from the distractions that plague our thoughts stirring anxiety within our hearts. Please, fix our eyes on Jesus as we silently come before you to listen. Draw near to us. Allow us to feel your divine presence in our midst. May we be attentive to the still, small, quiet voice of your Spirit."

LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Question: What was it like to practice the "Be Still" prayer this week?

THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTION

Question: If you were at LifePoint on a Sunday morning and Brady said he was going to randomly call on someone to pray, would you slide down in your chair to hide? Why? What about public prayer makes us nervous or afraid?

ENGAGING WITH SCRIPTURE

Luke 11:1 (ESV): *[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."*

Question: Have you ever heard someone praying and thought to yourself, "Wow, that person is really good at praying."? What did they do or say that was so impressive?

Question: Do you find it comforting that the disciples, some of whom went on to write books of the Bible, felt insecure about their prayers?

Question: Does anyone here ever feel frustrated or confused by prayer? Can anyone put into words why?

*In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches his disciples to pray in this way...

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV): *This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today 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 the evil one."*

Question: Is Jesus' prayer long or short? Would you characterize it as simple or complex? Is it theoretical or practical?

Question: How does Jesus instruct his disciples to address God?

*The word Jesus uses is the Aramaic word "Abba." This is a term of endearment that a child would use when calling out to his or her dad. We might use "daddy" or "papa".

Question: When you think about addressing God in this way as Father what emotions does that evoke?

Question: Is it difficult to think about God in such a close, intimate way? Why do you think that is?

*Throughout the Bible prayer is defined simply as taking time to intentionally be with God. It's fixing the eyes of your heart on or orienting yourself toward him. Prayer is engaging with God in relationship.

Question: What does it look like when you spend time with another person intentionally engaging in relationship with them? What do you do? What don't you do?

Question: How does that effect the way you view prayer?

In the book of Psalms we see David crying out to God in passionate, vulnerable ways. He is full of raw emotion. Pastor and author Mike Erre said, "Prayer is not the place to be good. It's the place to be honest."

Question: What do you think that means?

Question: Although David respects God he doesn't hold back or measure his emotions. He isn't formal or polite. Does that make you nervous to be completely open and honest, raw and vulnerable with God?

NEW CHALLENGE

Take the first few minutes of each day right when you roll out of bed to intentionally be with God in prayer. Using what we've learned about prayer as a template...

- Begin by addressing God intimately as your Father.
- Then praise God for who he is. Think about characteristics or attributes about God that you admire and tell him about it.
- Then think about some things that you're grateful to God for and thank him.
- Then tell God where you're at emotionally. Tell him what you're feeling. Be open and honest. Don't hold back.
- Then turn to God as your provider and ask him to take care of your needs. Share with him what you want, the desires of your heart. Ask him for those things.
- Then take time to confess your sins, your shortcomings and failures to God. Ask him for forgiveness knowing according to 1 John 1:9 that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
- Finally ask God for protection from the enemy.