**“One-Off Message” – Prayer**

**March 23-24, 2019**

Good morning everyone! Today, we will be doing a one-week message on prayer. This is a topic that applies to most if not all of us in the room because at one time or another, you have probably prayed. In fact, each week we spend time in prayer: together as one large group and at the end of our group discussions. Prayer is obviously important!

**(Leaders Note: Share a personal story from your prayer life. Talk about some things you regularly pray for and others that you should start praying about. This can be serious or humorous.)**

In the New Testament, Jesus gives us some thoughts on prayer. Check them out in Matthew 6:6-8: *“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then, your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*

When I read this, I’m reminded of what a noisy, busy world we live in. Sometimes, it can be hard to find some peace and quiet! However, when we pray, we need to push out the distractions in our life, whether around us or in our head, and focus on spending time talking with God. I also read in this verse that my Father (God) knows what I need even before I ask and that He sees what is done in secret. We also don’t need to pray using fancy, churchy words. We simply just need to find time to regularly pray. Here’s where our THP comes into play…

**THP: God honors the time that we spend in prayer.**

I believe this THP whole-heartedly because God is saying that our prayers are important to Him. We can have a personal connection with Him, and He knows, hears, and cares about our prayers. In verses 6-8, Jesus said that we should go into our room and pray to our Father. And he said that our Father knows what we need before we even ask him…

**Prayer is personal…** Jesus says to go and do this in private. Now, that doesn’t exclude you from praying out loud in front of people because there is definitely a time and a place for that, but for now we are talking about prayer just between you and God. He says that you don’t have to have eloquent words, or some super graceful prayer. It’s not some kind of show, and prayer is never to impress someone. Rather, it is a time for us to go and have a conversation with our Father who loves us, and wants to have a conversation with us.

**God Hears, Knows, and Responds to all of our prayers…** Jesus says that God sees what we do in secret and rewards us for it. He also says that God knows our needs and requests even before we ask. When we go to that quiet place and we focus our hearts on God, we are just tuning out the distractions and all of our concentration is on Him. God is constantly sitting right there ready to have a conversation! God is expecting us to come to Him. I think that Jesus is even saying that it is joyful to God to hear our requests. He is prepared and waiting to respond to us.

Jesus wanted us to understand this so much that he even took the time to teach us how to pray. If we keep reading in Matthew 6, in verses 9-13, Jesus gives us kind of a road map on how to approach prayer in Matthew 6:9-13: *“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.”*

So, let’s simplify that just a little… Jesus says, “This is how we should approach God. Start with this. ‘God, You are holy, and I pray for Your will to be done in my life, and on the earth.” And then Jesus says “Give us today our daily bread.” He is telling us to pray for God’s provision in our lives; our daily basic needs like food, water, or shelter, but he also means our spiritual needs (what we need as people). He goes on by telling us to ask God to forgive us of all of the sin in our lives. He takes it a step further and even asks God to help us forgive other people for whatever they might have done to us. Finally, he says that we should ask God to protect us from the devil and the temptations that he puts in front of us.

I believe that God honors the time we spend in prayer. It is a very personal time to spend with Him. It is like the time spent between a parent and their child. He knows your requests, and He is waiting for you to have a conversation with Him. We must commit ourselves to prayer. If not, we are detaching ourselves from the Father. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray continually”. That means that we should pray without ever stopping and be in constant conversation with God. That may seem difficult to do, but we must realize that we desperately need God just to get through one day!

**(Leaders Note: Briefly mention an example from your or someone else’s life where it seemed as if God didn’t answer their prayer. Explain how difficult/hurtful/sad that can be. Even though it’s hard to understand, we should still trust God.)**

God will either give you what you ask for or pray for…OR…He will give you what you WOULD have asked for if you knew what He knew. That can be challenging to understand.

We are going to close this message a little differently today. I would like us to read this passage, Matthew 6:9-13, together one last time…except this time I want us to read it out loud together. After we do that, I want us all to take 30-45 seconds of silence and pray. You can thank God for what He is doing in your life and all the things He has provided for you. Then, I want you to pray for something that’s on your heart right now. It can be something about you, a family member, or a friend. Whatever it is, tell God what’s going on and then ask Him to help you. Prayer is just a conversation with God so don’t be afraid to tell Him exactly how you feel. Let’s read this verse out loud together.

**(Leaders Note: Read Matthew 6:9-13 together off of the message slides. After you’re finished, say, “Now, let’s take a minute of silence to pray individually.” After that time**

**has passed, close the group in prayer.)**