

SERIES: Why do we do the things that we do when we gather together as the Church? We want to follow what the early Church modeled.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

RECAP:

- Preaching: We gather together to be washed in the Word of God.
- Communion: We celebrate and remember what Christ accomplished for us through His death, burial, and resurrection.

THIS WEEK, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT *PRAYER*.

- Have you ever noticed how many times throughout a service we pray together as a church?
 - o Between 5-7 times each service!
- **Define Prayer:** In its simplest form, prayer is **communicating** with God. The question is "Why do we spend so much time devoted to prayer each weekend?" Along with each of the reasons below, there is a "ditch" that we can easily fall into if we are not careful.

WE PRAY BECAUSE WE ARE IN _____ WITH GOD.

- **Communication is KEY to any healthy relationship!** God is a God of relationship. He desires to spend time with His people. There is a reason that the Bible says that God is our "FATHER."

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Luke 11:1-2 ¹Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ²And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name.'"

- o Jesus says that we should call God "Father." This communicates relationship. When we pray, we are living out part of what it looks like to be in relationship with our Heavenly Father.

THE DITCH: *When we talk to God as if he is just our Friend and not our Father.*

Luke 11:2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, **hallowed** be your name. '"

- o "Hallowed" means Holy and represents reverence.

Exodus 3:5 Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

WE PRAY BECAUSE WE ARE _____ ON GOD.

- Many of us struggle with the idea of being "dependent" on anyone or anything. We take pride in our independence. We don't want God to be a "crutch" in our lives.

WE WERE CREATED TO BE DEPENDENT ON GOD!

Isaiah 41:13 (NIV) For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

Psalms 34:4-6 ⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. ⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

- Not only are we dependent on God but also God actually wants to hear from us, His children. Part of prayer is confessing to God that we are in desperate need of Him.

CONFESSION OF DEPENDENCE

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

THE DITCH: *We only pray when we need something or want something.*

WE PRAY BECAUSE THERE IS _____ IN PRAYER.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness

1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

- God answers our prayers! When they line up with His will...

THE DITCH: *When God doesn't answer our prayers, we lose faith.*

LIES WE BELIEVE ABOUT PRAYER:

1. **"God doesn't answer my prayers."** He does! It just might not be the answer you were hoping for. Will you trust Him?
2. **"God isn't listening."** He is! Will you have faith that He hears you and cares for you?
3. **"I can't pray because I'm not good enough."** It's true—you're not good enough! That is the amazing thing about our God. He loves us and listens to us anyway.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Luke 11:1-13, 18:1-8; Acts 4:23-31; Hebrews 4:14-16

1. How did the sermon challenge and encourage you about prayer?
2. Read Luke 18:1-8 and Acts 4:23-31. What are several things Jesus taught His followers about prayer?
 - A) What do you see about how Jesus' disciples practiced prayer?
3. How would you explain prayer to someone not familiar with the idea of prayer?
 - A) What would you want them to understand about prayer?
4. What has been your experience of praying together with others?
 - A) How has it been different than praying alone? B) Share what has been beneficial (and any challenges).
5. When do you engage in prayer? When do you engage in prayer with others?
 - A) What would help you grow in your personal prayer life and *praying with others*?
6. What is God showing you about being devoted together?
 - A) How is this series impacting how you engage at services or answering questions you have wondered?

Next Week: Worship

Passages to prepare: Acts 2:42-47; Hebrew 10:19-25