

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Series: Life Hacks

Message Title: Prayer

Speaker: Kevin Queen

Date: November 29/30, 2014

Icebreaker:

Share a story about something your family did to help with the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes OR share something about your Thanksgiving.

Message Overview:

The book of James addresses many different subjects, but if you put the topics together, they relate to prayer. Many people lack excitement when it comes to prayer or feel guilty for not praying enough. Some are not sure that God exists and others cannot see God for who He is because of their earthly father's behavior. With this lesson we hope to be inspired and encouraged to pray more. This is a guilt-free zone.

All through the Bible we see people praying. Jesus drew apart from his disciples to talk to the Father and the disciples eagerly asked Him to teach them about prayer. They surely heard Jesus talking intimately with the Father, praying unlike anyone else they had ever heard before. "Prayer is keeping company with God." Jesus had a need and a passion for conversation with God.

It's hard to pray if we do not understand that God is a perfect Father who is present with us and wants to spend time with us. He is all that we long for in a Dad. He is never too busy and never has mood swings. (James 1:17)

TWO THINGS TO DO:

The compelling reasons that we should pray are to: 1) "Talk with God every day because He enjoys your company." and 2) "Talk with God about everything, because He cares for you." Everything that matters to you matters to God. There is no detail that is too small. Prayer can change our perspective on our circumstances, and we look less at ourselves and more to God. Life is less like a roller coaster and more like a railroad track—good and bad things are happening in our lives at the same time. If we pray about bad things, God changes our perspective to be hopeful and as we pray about good things we become more humble. If we do not pray, bad things make us have self pity and good things make us prideful and selfish. Prayer helps us focus on God, not on the good or bad.

THREE LIFE HACKS: James 5: 13-18

Power Down to Power Up: (verse 13) It can be helpful to write out your prayers, and it is important to create a time and a place for praying. Like Kevin, start with 10 things you are thankful for. The length of the prayer is less important than the act of the praying itself. Don't forget to listen; learn to know God's voice. At night, pray with your spouse before you go to sleep. If this is a new thing, don't take shame for what you haven't done, just begin to do it.

Invite In: (verses 14, 15) If you are sick, ask for godly people to pray for you. Having them around can bring a sense of God's presence. It takes courage to ask for help.

Host the Dove: Kevin was thinking about the dove that came down to Jesus at His baptism. Why did God use a dove? Because God is present all the time, it is something like having a sweet dove sitting on our shoulder. If we acknowledged this, how would we live differently? We can learn to honor Him and know His heart more intimately as we grow closer with Him, knowing better what and how to pray. It is like learning chess—it takes time. In chess, if you lose the king, you lose the game. In a famous painting called "Checkmate," an observer saw that the king has one more move. Whatever occurrence happens in our life, The King always has one more move. There is always hope! He reveals these things to us in prayer, and He deeply enjoys our time.

Discussion:

(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion on this week's primary Message points. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased *biblical* awareness, as well as individual *self* awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and...transformation!)

- Read the teaching passage aloud—James 5: 13-18. Share a time when you prayed during a difficulty or trial. How did prayer help you feel more peaceful? How were you able to surrender the problem regardless of the outcome?
- Have you or has anyone you know ever been healed of a physical problem through prayer? What about an emotional problem? Are you able to stay focused on God if an issue does not resolve as you hoped it would through prayer? (His presence in the situation can change our perspective.)
- Has your view of God been affected by a negative image of your earthly father? What steps do you need to take to help develop your view of God as a "good, good Father?"
- What are some characteristics that most people long for in a Dad? How is God like these?
- Share with the group something that means deeply to you but never realized meant just as much to God.

- How might your daily life be different if you thought about the Dove riding on your shoulder? (Remember: He is not there to condemn you, but to love and guide you.)

Wrap-Up/Close: What can you do this week to begin making a time (if even just 5 minutes) and a place to converse with your loving Heavenly Father? Are you willing to try writing out your prayers? If you are married, will you pray with your spouse before going to sleep?

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

Memorize John 17:23 and John 15:9 and think about how God loves you as much as He loves Jesus.