

Devotions for the Week of January 27, 2019

LARGE-PRINT

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

2019 Theme: PRAYER

2019 Key Scripture: “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.” - I Chronicles 16:11

Sunday, January 27, 2019

Read Matthew 6: 5-6.

Dunnam writes, *“It is clear from this word of Jesus that prayer is a personal matter. It is the communication that goes on between God and me. The emphasis here is upon solitude. Now there is a difference between being alone and being alone with God. Even in the hectic, crowded conditions in which many of us live, most of us are often alone. Jesus is urging us to choose aloneness, to find solitude for a purpose: to be alone with God. If we are going to have a life of prayer, Jesus is insistent that we must go into our room, shut the door, and be alone with God...This doesn’t mean that we have to be behind a physical door to meet this condition. The emphasis is upon privacy and the deliberate effort on our part to be with the Father “who is there in the secret place.””*

Read those words again...*“The emphasis is upon privacy and the deliberate effort on our part to be with the Father.”*
“Deliberate effort.” In other words, *“Intentional.”* We must be intentional in taking time with God. We must enter the secret place in private within our spirits, within ourselves, and, as Dunnam writes, *“dare to level with God.”* He continues, *“When*

someone will not allow you beyond the very superficial levels of his or her life, there is little or nothing you can say. You only make “small talk.” Likewise, when we present only a fictitious personality to God, when we pretend something we aren’t, there is no real presence with which God can be truly present.”

Are you taking time to shut the door, to enter into private conversation with God? Are you making a “*deliberate effort*,” and intentional effort to daily take time for prayer? When you pray, are you going into that secret place, and baring your soul, sharing everything, being honest with God about your sin, your fears, your faults, your hang-ups? Close your prayer closet door tonight and allow God to be present with the real you, warts and all. Talk to Him.

Monday, January 28, 2019

Read Luke 18: 10-14.

Eminent theologian John Cobb confessed the following: “*When I engage in self-examination in the presence of other persons, I cannot free myself from concern as to what they think of me or of what the consequences of my confession may be. In church when I join with others in confessing my sins, those sins are too generally stated to force me to more careful self-awareness. It is when I am alone what I can bring all these things together and go beyond them....It is only when I think of myself as being alone before God that traditional Christian self-examination, confession, and repentance make sense to me.*”

Prayer is about recognizing our sin, our lives, before God. It is standing before the throne of God, the Creator of the Universe and Jesus Christ, His Son, as imperfect as we are. It is a time when the light of Christ shines into the dark areas of our

lives that we would rather ignore or not deal with. It is a time when we see our dirtiness and God's glory, we recognize His grace and love for us regardless, and we are overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness.

Spend time with God in self-examination. Ask God to help you become aware of actions or attitudes, hurtful relationships, estrangements you need to confess. Maxie Dunnam writes, *“Confession is the way we clarify the vision of who we are before God by acknowledging our destructive habits and seeking the realignment of our energies in more constructive directions.”* We openly share our shortcomings with God and allow Him to show us our sin. We then turn away from that sin by repenting, being genuinely sorry for what we have done. We ask God to not only forgive us but give us direction for changing our behavior and becoming more like Jesus.

Go beneath the surface tonight and open yourself up to God. After putting everything on the table before God and asking Him to help you, read I John 1:9. Give Him thanks.

Tuesday, January 29, 2019

Read Matthew 6: 5-8.

Dunnam writes, *“In our aloneness with God, Jesus says, “Don't rattle off long prayers like the pagans...”* In the world that Jesus knew, the gods of the people were remote, unpredictable, far removed from the affairs of the earth. Prayer for the most part, in much of the religious practice of that day, was the effort on the part of an individual to win attention. So one made a lot of noise, rattled on and on. Such is not necessary; in fact, Jesus said it's repulsive to God. God is near – as near as breathing. God hears our longings even before we put

them into words. God “*knows your needs before you ask.*” So we come to God regularly, not to “*rattle off long prayers*” but to spend time in reflection, simply to be alone with God and to gain perspectives for living.

Use the time in spend in prayer with God tonight to be not only time you speak to Him, but time you reflect on what God wants for your life, you reflect on where you are letting God down, you reflect on what it means to put God first in your family, your workplace, your daily time. Use your prayer time not only to talk to God but to listen and to be challenged by God’s word and purpose for your life.

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

Read Matthew 7: 7-11.

Dunnam writes, “*Here’s what the gospel challenges us to recognize: Don’t underestimate the power of God that comes to us through prayer...The big meaning here is that too often we add more limits to prayer than God does. God’s answers to prayer are always better than our asking, and God is always more ready to hear than we are to pray.*”

What are the three boldest requests you ever made to God? Were these requests consistent with what you believe God would want for you? Go to God in prayer this day boldly. Approach the throne of grace believe God will answer and wants to answer your prayers. Ask Him what is truly on your heart that you know He would want for your life. Don’t be afraid to seek God’s blessings.

Thursday, January 31, 2019

Read Matthew 18: 19-20.

Dunnam writes, *“Many times when we pray alone, it is difficult to sift our selfish desires from our real needs, difficult to keep clear our seeking the will of God rather than our own wills...Our desires are not always pure, certainly not always good for us. So we test them with others we trust.”* He goes on to say, *“Jesus was insistent that we find solitude and be alone with God, [but Jesus also was insistent] that the mind and will of God come to us when we pray with others.”*

Who are you praying with? A spouse? A friend by telephone? A neighbor? A small group? Pray that God will give you guidance in selecting a person you can trust, be open with, and spend time before God with together. Call and ask them if they would like to be prayer partners, getting together at least once a week simply to pray.

Friday, February 1, 2019

Read Matthew 17: 20, James 5:16.

Prayer unleashes God’s power and draws us closer to our Creator. Below is a formula to help you begin to take time with God each day, to help you share with God your praise, your mistakes, your thanks, and your needs. Work with this acronym for awhile and it will become very natural.

A: Adoration

Read Psalm 145

Adoration is praising God for who He is and what He has done. It is giving God the credit and praise He deserves.

C: Confession**Read Psalm 66:18 & Psalm 139: 23-24**

Confession is admitting our sins, our mistakes, our faults to God as soon as we are aware of them. Asking God to search our hearts and point our sins that we have overlooked in the busyness of life.

T: Thanksgiving**Read I Thessalonians 5:18 & Psalm 92:1**

Thanksgiving is thanking God for blessings in your life... things God has done for you and others.

S: Supplication**Read Matthew 6:11; Matthew 6:13; Colossians 4:3**

Supplication means making requests. We can pray for our own needs or the needs of others. We can pray for pre-Christians to begin a relationship with God. We can pray for pastors, for leaders in the church. We can pray for our relationships and concerns. We can pray in joy and in sorrow. Nothing is off limits.

Saturday, February 2, 2019**Read Psalm 63: 1-8.**

Listen to the psalmist's hunger for God in this prayer. *“O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirst for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”*

Maxie Dunham writes, *“Many of us see prayer...as a duty, something we must do. We’ve been taught that we ought to pray, and when we don’t , we feel guilty. We will take a giant step*

*forward in our adventure when we cease seeing prayer as a duty and begin to look upon it as a privilege...Like love and friendship, music, books, art, laughter, and play, prayer is a privilege, a great opportunity to be sought. **Not to pray is an act of self-robbery.** We are free to pray. The privilege is open to all of us. The privilege is communion with God, feeling God's presence, being aware of God's guidance...**Prayer is a privilege, not a duty.**"*

We give gifts to our families, our children, out of love for them and it is a great joy to see their faces as they open those gifts. It is a great joy to shop for just the right present. We receive blessings from giving to those we love. We don't give out of duty...we give because these are the people that are very special in our lives.

Prayer is like that...we give because we love God...and we want to continue in that relationship. It is a special relationship and one we treasure. And in giving we receive many blessings. It is not our duty that calls us to pray...it is the relationship, the love, that draws us to God...and we are filled every time we kneel...

"Not to pray is an act of self-robbery." How many blessings are you missing because you are not taking time to pray, to kneel before God, to talk with Him? Do you pray out of a sense of duty or out of a sense of awe, gratitude, love? Take time tonight to give to your relationship with God...take time tonight to pray.

**AND DON'T FORGET TO
INVITE SOMEONE TO CHURCH
TOMORROW!!!**