Series: Vision

January 14, 2018

Message Two:

**Two-Way Prayer**

Luke 8:5-15

Growth Track Step 2

Generosity

Prayer

**Intro:** Purpose of January 21 days of prayer -

* Reset
* New Start
* Getting God’s plan for the year …
* New Year’s Resolutions - what does God want me to do?

What does God want for my life this coming year?

* My family -
* My church -

In order for me to find this out, we’ve got to do some listening -

We know that prayer is talking to God - but that is only part of prayer -

We teach about the Lord’s Prayer **(handouts in Info Center)**

* Hallowed Be Thy Name

 Names of God …

 - Righteousness

 - Sanctifier

 - Presence

 - Peace

 - Healer

 - Provider

 - Banner

 - Shepherd

* Thy Kingdom Come …
* Give us this day …
* Forgive us …
* Lead us not into temptation …
* Return to praise …

There are other prayer models as well **(handouts in Info Center)**

But prayer is not just talking - prayer is two-way - it is also listening!

Last week we talked about fasting - fasting denies our natural desires, turns off those natural desires - causes the voices of this world to fade out so that we can hear the inner voice of the Holy Spirit very clearly …

Different ways to fast …

* Fasting is a personal discipline
* Fasting leads to hearing from God
* Fasting reveals God’s direction
* Fasting brings power

We are also believing God for more people to come to Know God. This is a great time to invite people to church -

* not camping
* Lake houses are closed
* As long as the weather doesn’t destroy us we can get into a HABIT of faithfulness.

We need to have habits of faithfulness.

* Everyone has gifts - using your gifts should be a high priority!
* This is a great place to use your gifts!

Beauty and the Beast song: “Be Our Guest” -

**“Life is so unnerving for a servant who is not serving.”**

That should be true for all of us because we have all been given gifts to serve.

Truth: We have a great number of ministers here - way more than the average - a fantastic commitment of people serving in a great variety of ministry.

Also Truth: We have a great deal of inconsistency -

* “I’ll come when I can - when nothing else is really going on.”

A lot of times we will miss church for family events - those are important - but I remember times when I was growing up - family would come over on Sunday - we would still get ready and go to church. They could come with us if they wanted to.

I was not raised in a Pastor’s home - I was involved in 3 sports … band … choir … but being in the children’s and youth ministries here took priority.

We worked it out - we did the same with our kids! It’s amazing how open they were.

When I got a job - schedule … they forgot - I reminded - no problem!

Those decisions gave me a closeness to Christ that I needed during those years!

I appeal to you - don’t make connection to the church family a lesser priority - it will change your life! It will change the lives of your kids and family!

Where is connection to the church family in your priority? Can everything else get in the way? Are you inconsistent? Think about it - you might not even realize you are-

MyNewLife - you can see what your attendance has been - for some, your inconsistency may surprise you! Let’s make a fresh commitment! This is a great season to develop this HABIT! Don’t let anything get in the way of drawing closer to God -

- This involves personal prayer life - but it also involves being here - and knowing what your gifts are and using those gifts to serve and make a difference in other people’s lives both here and in our community.

It’s hard to invite others to come to church with you on a consistent basis if you are not here on a consistent basis - and this is a great season in the year to be inviting family and friends to come with you. When they come, they are going to have the opportunity to accept Jesus’ forgiveness in their lives!

No greater opportunity than that!

I also believe that when we are consistent in our worship with one another - and consistent in our hearing the teaching of the Bible - and consistent in serving others - our ears are going to be more sensitive to hearing the voice of God - this is the second aspect of prayer - it’s two-way!

God does speak to us! God has not stopped speaking to His people!

From beginning to end of the Bible - God is speaking to His people -

Gen. 1:3 - … and God said …

Revelation - Let him who has ears to hear …

John 10:3-5 - The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.

Before we do anything else in a day, we need to hear the voice of God.

“Nothing digital until I pray.”

Another thing here is that they won’t follow a stranger. We won’t be misled by other voices.

Proverbs 3:6 MSG - Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.

Luke 8:8 - …Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.

**God doesn’t have a speaking problem - we have a hearing problem.**

We need to learn to tune in to the voice of God. He is speaking to us more than we realize. He doesn’t have a speaking problem - we have a hearing problem!

Luke 8:5-8 - “A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!” When he had said this, he called out, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

If the soil is right, the seed is received better. Throw seed on the ground in here, nothing will happen.

Luke 8:11 - This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God’s word.

The problem is not that there isn't a speaking God - the problem is on the hearing end.

Luke 8 - 4 scenarios -

**> A polluted heart.**

Luke 8:12 - The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved.

God is trying to speak, but we have junk in our hearts. The enemy tries non-stop to put things in our hearts that would pollute our hearts. It doesn’t matter what God is saying, the pollution is taking over.

The pollution is caused by:

* The choices we make - sometimes unrepented sin -
* Stuff other people have done to us -

Anytime we try to get close to God, the devil will try to stir up any relationship he can - cause problems in our relationships. When you have a problem with people - you don’t have a problem with that person - the devil is trying to get in between you and God.

Remember what Jesus said after the Lord’s Prayer … if you don’t forgive …

When you get disagreements worked out with other people - and forgive them - it opens you up to being able to hear from God.

If you don’t think God ever speaks to you, check your heart to see if you need to forgive someone.

James 1:21 - So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

The word repent - is a hope-filled word! God invites us to turn around - we can change, and open ourselves to hearing the voice of God.

**We can never begin a new life until we turn from the old.**

**> A distracted heart.**

Luke 8:13 - The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation.

You can hear a great message - and it can be stolen as soon as you leave because you open up to hear other things.

Sometimes our phone gets in the way -

Kids age 8-18 spend 7 1/2 hours a day on their smart phone.

If you’re not careful, you’ll start to pray, read your Bible on your app - and you end up spending an our on Facebook & Twitter without spending any time in prayer.

So many things in this world are trying to keep us from God - hell is behind it. The competitions of this world cause of to have a distracted heart and we don’t hear from God.

Luke 10:39-40 - She had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord’s feet and was *continually* listening to His teaching. But Martha was very busy *and* distracted with all of her serving…

To hear God’s voice, we must turn down the world’s volume. Fasting … setting aside time …

**> An immature heart.**

Luke 8:14 - The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity.

Thorns grow where there is neglect.

The immature heart is a neglected heart. We think we’re fine. We think we’ve grown enough.

You talk to babies differently than you talk to adults ….

If we’re no satisfied with the way God is talking to us - maybe we need to grow up a little bit!

God wants to give us some sophisticated adult conversation, but we need to grow up a little bit .

Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus,

Notice the “we” and “us” - this is for all of us! This is why we need to be connected in groups …

When we get real with other people, we can mature and God can speak to us more - give us more -

Some of you need to think about leading a small group. It forces you to grow up a little bit.

**Maturity comes when we stop making excuses and start making changes.**

Get on the Growth Track - That’s for us to grow up -

**> A prepared heart.**

Luke 8:15 - And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.

I want us to be prepared for what God has for us.

> Repent.

Turn around. If you’re going in the wrong direction - don’t sweat it - just turn around! God gives us a do-over.

> Focus.

If you haven’t been reading the Bible for a while - just start again. God’s good. If you’re behind in the one-year reading - just keep going from where you are.

> Revive -

Fall in love with Jesus all over again.

2nd Corinthians 7:1 MSG - With promises like this to pull us on, dear friends, let’s make a clean break with everything that defiles or distracts us, both within and without. Let’s make our entire lives fit and holy temples for the worship of God.

The term doldrums comes from a sailing term - a sailboat without wind that is still expected to sail.

Have you ever felt like that…

We make bad decisions in the middle of times like that.

**God’s voice is clearest in a prepared environment.**

God wants to speak to us - Prayer is two-way - we need to be prepared. We are preparing ourselves to hear from God.

Repent of the pollution -

Remove the distractions -

Help us to grow up -

*Thanks to Chris Hodges*