

## The Three Gremlins of Prayer

1. Warm-up Question: Tell us something good (large or small) that's happened to you this past week.
2. The scriptures tell us that prayer is the key to a deep spiritual life. Prayer is our lifeline to God. So we try to pray. Some of us may be in a really good place with prayer. But many of us find it hard, and that's ok. We're all at different places on the growth curve of learning how to effectively incorporate prayer into our lives. On Sunday we tackled some of the most common obstacles to a thriving prayer life.
  - a. If you had to pick one word that best describes your current prayer life, what word would you pick? Tell us the word and why you chose that word.
  - b. Read Philippians 4:4-9, as printed on p. 3. This passage indicates that prayer is the key to experiencing "the peace of God which surpasses understanding." Why is that? Why is prayer so critical to our ability to experience deep peace?
  - c. On Sunday, Pastors Jeff, David, and Tandy identified three prayer gremlins: (a) I don't know what to say; (b) distraction; my mind wanders when I try to pray; and (c) I'm too busy; I can't find time to pray. Which of these three gremlins most haunts you? Say a little bit about how your gremlin impacts you.
3. Pastor Tandy talked to us about the *first prayer gremlin: I don't know what to say*. She began by asking us to break into small groups, laid out three questions, and asked us each to pick one of the questions to answer. Let's do that again. As time permits, pick one of the three questions below and answer it.
  - a. How was your day yesterday?
  - b. What's one of your biggest anxieties right now?
  - c. What's something you're really grateful for?
4. After we discussed the foregoing questions, Tandy said that prayer is simply talking to God about the kinds of things we just shared with each other. Sometimes we get the impression that prayer has to be formal and stilted and requires certain special words and consists only of asking for stuff and saying thanks. In reality, prayer means sharing life with God like we'd share with a friend. Just talk to God about what's on your mind, then quiet yourself and sense what God might be saying back.
  - a. Can you see yourself praying that way? Have you tried it before? If so, how does that kind of prayer impact you?
  - b. What's the point of sharing our thoughts with God if God already knows everything?
  - c. James 2:23 says, "Abraham believed God . . . and he was called a friend of God." In John 15:14, Jesus says, "You are my friends. . . . I no longer call you servants

... , but I have called you friends.” Do you feel like a friend of God deep in your soul? Why or why not?

5. Pastor Jeff talked to us about the ***second prayer gremlin – distraction; my mind wanders when I try to pray***. Often that’s because as kids we were taught to pray in a way that’s awkward and uncomfortable – get on your knees by your bed, fold your hands, close your eyes, and talk to God. Jeff said, “If I do that, if I sit still and close my eyes, my mind will inevitably begin to wander in less than 60 seconds.”
  - a. As a kid, how were you taught to pray? Did that work for you then? Now?
  - b. Jeff suggested a more physically active approach to prayer. Instead of kneeling or sitting, get up and walk – outside or in your room, get up and move! And as you walk or pace back and forth in your room, talk to God out loud about whatever is no your mind. And if your mind wanders, talk to God about what your mind wanders to – whatever that is, even if it feels trivial or uncomfortable. Have you ever tried walking or pacing when you pray? Does it help?
  - c. Jeff said, “There’s just something about talking out loud that keeps the mind focused and makes conversation with God more engaging.” Have you ever tried talk aloud when you pray? Does it help?
  
6. Pastor David talked to us about the ***third prayer gremlin – I’m too busy; I can’t find the time to pray***. He had us play a game under tight time pressure, then noted that life often feels like that. There’s so much to do and never enough time to do it. Something has to give, and prayer is usually what gives. To combat this pattern, David offered several practical suggestions:
  - ✓ Schedule your prayer time with God.
  - ✓ Get away from noise and distractions.
  - ✓ Make it a regular time.
  - ✓ Don’t make it longer than you can reasonably do – maybe just 10 minutes.
  - ✓ Make those ten minutes sacrosanct; keep that time come hell or high water.
  - ✓ Don’t be a clock watcher.
  - a. Do you think it would help you to actually put time with God on your calendar, perhaps even with an automatic reminder message?
  - b. If you’re looking to pray at a regular time, what time would be best for you?
  - c. What’s a realistic amount of time for you to schedule for prayer? Would 10 minutes work?

- d. Where's the best place for you to get away from things to pray?
- e. Given all we've talked about, what's the best prayer idea you're taking away from this conversation?

## **Philippians 4:4-9**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.