
CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES



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SEPTEMBER 8, 2025
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC 28741

I. SERMON RECAP

Pastor Gary's sermon explored the profound themes of radical honesty and the significance of prioritizing one's relationship with Christ above all earthly bonds. He began by drawing a parallel between life in the womb and life beyond delivery, using it as a metaphor for the spiritual rebirth required to truly follow Christ. He highlighted Jesus' words from Matthew chapter 10, emphasizing that Christ's coming was not to bring immediate peace, but rather a metaphorical sword that divides true devotion from mere compliance. Pastor Gary underscored the need for believers to love Christ more intensely than any familial or personal relationship, integrating this deep devotion into every aspect of their lives.

As he broadened the theme, Pastor Gary emphasized the vital practice of maintaining a fervent, honest prayer life. He described the concept of a "prayer closet" as a sacred space where believers lay bare their hearts before God, free from external influences and personal biases. Pastor Gary challenged his congregation to evaluate the authenticity and quality of their prayer life, suggesting that true spiritual intimacy and revival come from a sincere dialogue with God, where personal shortcomings are addressed, and the burdens of others are interceded for. This, he explained, is where the 'peace' and the 'sword' converge, fostering a transformative relationship with God that should reflect in heightened compassion and proactive outreach.

Pastor Gary concluded his message by reminding the congregation of their calling to actively 'war against bondage' in the world by embodying Christ's love and sacrifice. He emphasized that the peace Christ offers is not passive or insular but rather a peace that propels believers into action against the injustices and sufferings of others. He urged his listeners to align their lives with the values of the gospel, calling for an earnest dedication to prayer and action that transcends personal tranquility to fight for freedom and healing for those in bondage. Through the symbol of communion, attendees were encouraged to bring forth their honest selves, acknowledging both personal hurts and the broader injustices that require Christ's reconciling love.

Chapters

Chapter 1: The Prayer Closet: A Place of Radical Honesty

The importance of creating a prayer context and maintaining a prayer closet for honest communication with God.

Chapter 2: The Paradox of Peace and the Sword

Jesus' seemingly contradictory statement about bringing a sword instead of peace is explored.

Chapter 3: Dying to Self and Warring Against Bondage

The importance of dying to self and actively fighting against bondage in others' lives is discussed.

Chapter 4: The Call to Radical Prayer and Action

A call to action for believers to engage in radical prayer and active compassion for those in bondage.

II. STUDY GUIDE

Key Points:

- The importance of creating a "prayer context" that informs our understanding of the world
- The concept of the prayer closet as a place of radical honesty and intimacy with God
- The paradox of Christ bringing both peace and a sword (Matthew 10:34)
- The need for Christians to prioritize their relationship with God above all others
- The role of the Word of God is a sword that cuts away spiritual death and sin
- The responsibility of believers is to "war" against bondage while enjoying God's peace
- The call to die to self and embrace Christ's lordship in all areas of life
- The importance of communion as a reminder of Christ's sacrifice and our mission

Key Scripture

Matthew 10:34-39 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn " 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' " "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Luke 4:18-19 (referencing Isaiah 61:1-2) "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Other Relevant Scripture:

Alluded To:

Matthew 6:6 (praying in secret)

Galatians 2:20 (crucified with Christ)

Matthew 5:9 (blessed are the peacemakers)

Hebrews 4:12 (the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword)

Revelation 19:11-21 (Christ's return, sword from his mouth)

Genesis 32:22-32 (Jacob wrestling with God)

John 3:3-7 (you must be born again)

Romans 5:8 (while we were still sinners, Christ died for us)

John 14:6 (no one comes to the Father except through me)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (institution of the Lord's Supper)

Matthew 25:40 (whatever you did for the least of these)

Other Relevant Verses

Philippians 4:7 (peace that transcends understanding)

James 4:7 (submit to God, resist the devil)

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (spiritual warfare)

Ephesians 6:17 (sword of the Spirit)

Romans 12:2 (be transformed by the renewing of your mind)

1 Peter 5:7 (cast all your anxiety on him)

Colossians 3:15 (let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts)

2 Timothy 2:21 (cleansing oneself to be a vessel for honor)

James 5:16 (the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective)

1 John 1:9 (if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us)

III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

Day 1: The Sword of Peace

Question: How does Jesus' statement about bringing a sword rather than peace challenge our conventional understanding of His mission and message?

Reading: Matthew 10:34-39

Devotional: Jesus' words about bringing a sword rather than peace can be jarring. Yet, this passage reveals a profound truth about discipleship. The "sword" Jesus speaks of is not a call to violence, but a metaphor for the sometimes-painful process of aligning our lives with God's will. It challenges us to examine our priorities and loyalties.

Are we willing to put our relationship with Christ above all else, even family ties? Today, reflect on areas in your life where following Jesus might create tension or require difficult choices. Pray for the courage to choose Him above all, trusting that true peace comes from full surrender to God's plan for your life.

Day 2: The Prayer Closet

Question: How can we cultivate a 'prayer context' in our lives that informs our understanding of the world around us, rather than letting the world dictate our prayer life?

Reading: Matthew 6:5-6

Devotional: Jesus teaches us about the importance of private, intimate prayer with God. The "prayer closet" is more than a physical space; it's a state of heart where we meet God in honesty and vulnerability. In this sacred space, we set aside our biases, opinions, and the world's distractions to focus solely on our relationship with the Father.

Today, create your own "prayer closet" - whether it's a quiet corner in your home or a peaceful spot outdoors. Spend time there in honest conversation with God, bringing your true self before Him. Ask Him to help you cultivate a prayer life that transcends external influences and deepens your intimacy with Him.

Day 3: Dying to Self

Question: What does it mean to truly 'die to self,' and why is this concept so crucial yet so difficult for believers?

Reading: Galatians 2:20

Devotional: The concept of being "crucified with Christ" is central to our faith, yet often challenging to live out. It means allowing God's Word to act as a sword, cutting away the parts of us that don't align with His will. This process of dying to self is not about self-hatred but about making room for Christ to live more fully through us.

Today, prayerfully consider areas of your life where you're holding onto control rather than surrendering to God. It might be a habit, an attitude, or a relationship. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you release these areas to God, trusting that as you decrease, Christ will increase in your life.

Day 4: Peacemakers in a Broken World

Question: How can we reconcile the image of Jesus as both the 'Prince of Peace' and one who brings a 'sword'?

Reading: Matthew 5:9

Devotional: Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, but this doesn't mean avoiding conflict at all costs. True peacemaking involves bringing God's presence into difficult situations and working towards reconciliation. It requires us to engage with the pain and brokenness in the world rather than insulating ourselves in comfortable bubbles of false peace.

Today, consider how you can be a peacemaker in your sphere of influence. Is there a relationship that needs healing? A situation of injustice you can address. Pray for wisdom and courage to pursue peace actively, even when it's uncomfortable or challenging.

Day 5: Born Again to a Living Hope

Question: In what ways might we be settling for an 'illusion of peace' rather than embracing the transformative power of God's Word in our lives?

Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Devotional: The message of being "born again" is about more than a one-time decision; it's an invitation to a completely new life in Christ. This new birth gives us a living hope that sustains us through trials and suffering. It's a hope anchored in the resurrection power of Jesus, promising that our current struggles are not the end of the story.

Today, reflect on the reality of your new life in Christ. How has this hope sustained you in difficult times? If you're facing challenges now, how can you lean more fully into this living hope? Thank God for the new birth He has given you and ask Him to help you live each day in the light of this transformative truth.

IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Small Group Guide: Peace, the Sword, and the Prayer Closet

Opening Prayer

Key Takeaways:

1. True peace comes from an intimate relationship with God, not just the absence of conflict.
2. Jesus brings both peace and a sword - the sword represents cutting away things that hinder our relationship with God.
3. Our prayer life should be the lens through which we understand the world and God.
4. We are called to both enjoy God's peace and to "war" against bondage in others' lives through prayer and action.

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Gary talks about creating a "prayer context." What do you think this means, and how might it differ from your current approach to prayer?
2. Reflect on the concept of the "prayer closet." How can we create a space for honest, unfiltered communication with God in our daily lives?
3. The sermon mentions that "peace is not silence" and distinguishes between peacekeeping and peacemaking. How do you see this playing out in your own life or relationships?
4. How do you reconcile the idea of Jesus as the Prince of Peace with His statement that He came to bring a sword? What might this mean for our lives as Christians?
5. Pastor Gary emphasizes the importance of dying to self. What areas in your life do you find most challenging to surrender to God?

6. How can we balance enjoying the peace God gives us while also actively engaging in "warfare" against bondage and injustice in the world?

Practical Applications:

1. Create a physical or metaphorical "prayer closet" in your life this week. Set aside dedicated time and space for honest prayer with God.
2. Identify one area in your life where you need God's "sword" to cut away something hindering your relationship with Him. Pray specifically about this area.
3. Choose one global or local issue involving bondage or injustice. Commit to praying for this issue regularly and consider one practical action you can take to address it.
4. Practice radical honesty in your prayer life this week. Journal about the experience and any changes you notice in your relationship with God.
5. Reflect on your relationships. Is there an area where you've been "keeping the peace" instead of "making peace"? Consider how you might address this situation in a manner that honors God.

Closing Prayer

Encourage group members to share prayer requests and pray for one another, keeping in mind the concepts of honest prayer and warring against bondage discussed in the sermon.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

It's time to nominate new elders and deacons here at CBC! If you have a candidate in mind, first check with them, and then email Info@cbchighlands.com to nominate them.

This is not a youth or children's activity this coming Wednesday, September 10th. Instead, the homeschoolers among them will be taking a trip to Dollywood!

Next Wednesday, Mike Armistead will not be hosting his apologetics class; instead, he encourages everyone to attend Frank Turek's talk at Western Carolina University.

There is a women's brunch coming up on September 20th; mark your calendars now!

For any questions or to get involved with anything mentioned email Info@cbchighlands.com or call the church office!