

Series: Being with Jesus, a study in the spiritual disciplines

Sermon: Prayer

Primary text: James 4:1-8

Discussion guide:

- Share a time in your life, comical or serious, where a lot of heart ache or confusion could have been avoided if someone had just asked or spoken clearly to the appropriate person.
- What is prayer?
- How many of the other spiritual disciplines does prayer play a role in?
 - Meditation, prayer, study, fasting, solitude, simplicity, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, celebration
- Read James 4:1-2,
 - Why do you think prayer is often neglected?
 - Why do you neglect prayer?
- Read 2 Chronicles 7:14, Exodus 32:14, and Jonah 3:10
 - What do these passages tell you about prayer?
 - Why is it important to know that prayer makes a difference?
- Read James 4:3-8
 - What do you think James is saying here?
 - What role does the world play in this text? (see also Romans 12:2)
 - Why is submission to God and drawing near to Him the solution?
 - How do these verses show us that the primary purpose of prayer is to change us?
- Read Exodus 4:13
 - What is Moses' prayer?
 - What is God's answer?
 - What was Moses' motive?
- Read Exodus 33:12-18
 - What is Moses' prayer?
 - What is God's answer?
 - What was Moses' motive?
- Consider the disciple's request of Jesus in Luke 11:1
 - Why is it important for us to know that prayer is a learned discipline?
 - Why should we practice it before we master it?
- Consider Romans 8:26
 - How do we listen in prayer?
 - What should we do when long to pray but don't know what to say?
- Consider Matthew 17:20
 - What role does faith play in prayer? (see also James 1:5-6)
 - What might the "faith the size of a mustard seed" look like?
 - Why is it important not to think that prayer doesn't work when we don't get immediate results we expect?

- In the story of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 4) what is God's answer to Moses' concern that he is "slow in speech"?
 - How is God's answer different from Moses' desire?
- In the story of Gethsemane what is God's answer to Jesus' request? (consider the resurrection)
 - How is God's answer different from Jesus' desire?
 - How is Jesus' response different from Moses' in Exodus 4:13?
- Why is imagination important to prayer (considering these stories)?
 - How is it helpful to imagine what you're praying for as you pray?
 - How imagination helpful to being able to see how God might answer your prayer differently than you expected?
- Read Psalms 73:12-13
 - What sort of honesty do you see here in David's prayer?
 - Consider the same question with Moses' prayer at the burning bush and Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.
 - Why is honesty essential to prayer?