

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

October 22, 2023. "Connected: Prayer, the ultimate connection."

I Intro.

It's fall y'all. Enjoying the cooler weather? There's a lot going on behind the scenes, and we want you to be a part of this great community. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

There's a lot of foundational information to this series, and we don't want to bury you under all of it. So, we'll try to keep it as brief as possible. This series is solely about deep meaningful, mutual relationships that help us grow. It's not just about friendships or the number of people we're around on a daily basis. We all have lots of people in our lives. But the primary question is; do those people in our lives challenge us, encourage us, and are a source of wisdom and insight. And does our connection to them work to make us better people? Connection isn't about just being around people. Connection is about having an inner circle of others who are all moving in the same direction we are. They may be different from us in a lot of ways. And the more diverse our connections the better. But do we benefit from our relationship with each other?

The first week we talked about disconnecting from being disconnected. Sometimes we drift into not having meaningful, mutual, relationships, and we find ourselves isolated. Just out there on our own. We talked about what may cause us to isolate, and how to push past that.

The second week, we talked about why we were created, and how connections can help us be the best us. There is this divine inner longing for our lives to matter, to have impact. And that is best accomplished in community. Connected to others.

Today we talk about prayer: the ultimate connection.

III Sunday.

Ugh...prayer again...right? I mean we know prayer is really important. It's talked about a lot in scripture. And every minister pushes the importance of a good prayer life. But let's just set the cards on the table. Prayer is hard. For many of us it doesn't come naturally. We know we should make time for it. We know it's important. But when we set time aside to actually try (YES...try) to pray, it often doesn't go well. We get distracted. It feels clunky and not natural. And we're not sure we really accomplished anything of importance. We can check it off our list of things we're supposed to do. But did we actually do anything that made our life better?

Let's dig into the weeds about prayer. We've asked versions of these questions before. We hope they challenge you to consider how and why you pray, then we'll connect it to overall communication..

What makes prayer difficult for you?

What helps you to pray in a way that feeds you?

What would you want to happen in your prayer life?

The scripture Sunday was one we've used several times before. It highlights the importance of this truth about prayer. Read **Matthew 6:5-13** and we'll look at how this prayer talks about connection.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What elements do you think speak to communication and connection within prayer?

I think we can find specific parts of this passage that speak directly into how connection happens within the context of prayer. Knowing these things about connection not only makes prayer more powerful, but it also enhances our day to day relationships.

1. Intimacy in connection. This prayer begins by the instruction for us to do it privately. This isn't about going to church and getting your God on. This is about nurturing a relationship. Growing close. Growing trust. A desire for the betterment of both. This is the foundation of connection...intimacy. A full on commitment to the other person. This one truth deals with many of the hindrances we've mentioned above. And it's in prayer we grow this with God and learn to do it with others.

2. Honest communication in connection. This passage is obviously about prayer. But as with all of these it works in relationships also. Don't just babble on, just barely engaged. Be fully present. We've talked about the things we need for real communication to happen. And that has to be a real back and forth being fully engaged in communication for connection to happen.

3. Respect in connection. We all know the difference between love and respect. Love is wanting the best for the other person. Respect is seeing and embracing the dignity, worth, of the other person. There has to be this mutual respect towards the other for real connection to happen. And this isn't waiting till you grow respect before you build connection. This is learning to grow respect in order to build connection. And in order to do that we often need to be reminded of the dignity of the other. Especially God.

4. Interdependency in connection. This is the difference between independent and dependent. Interdependence is a mutual need for the relationship. Each person benefits from the other. We need to keep in our awareness we are in a relationship where we need the other person. And they benefit, and need, what we each have to offer. Even if we don't feel it at times. Even though God is self-sufficient, he doesn't need us, he created us to experience the joy of our relationship with him.

5. Surrender in connection. Basically this is an honest acknowledgement of powerlessness and inability to control or fix ourselves. This is related to interdependence. Real connection, of all types but especially with God, is the recognition we cannot do life isolated...disconnected. The last two lines of this prayer are asking for help in areas that we had to admit we cannot do on our own. This prayer reminds us that we cannot live in isolation and we thrive in our relationship with God. And with others too.

These apply to communication in all of our relationships. Intimacy, honest communication, respect, interdependency, surrender. They are essential in our relationship with God and to each other.

IV Challenge.

Even though this message was about prayer, it was prayer in relation to connection. To find this energetic, mutually beneficial relationship with both God, and others, that can help us to become what God has created us to be. And the gift of prayer, intimate communication, is key to making connection meaningful. So, hopefully this will give you a slightly different perspective on prayer, some new and helpful things you can incorporate into your regular prayer life. And to help you incorporate better communication practices to find the connection you were designed to have.