

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday August 29, 2021. "Dear God: Honest Prayers to a God Who Listens. Finding God."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're well into 2021 and fully committed to gathering in person. A growing group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's, youth areas and coffee spot have been fully open also and we're seeing a good response. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Recap.

We're in our final Sunday of the series following the spiritual journey of influencer and author Bunmi Laditan, (watch the message online to see how to pronounce her name), in her book; ***"Dear God: Honest Prayers to a God Who Listens."*** Here's a quick recap. The first week on this spiritual search, we discovered the first step begins with honesty about where we are spiritually and our understanding of and relationship with God. We have to be comfortable that our faith and understanding of God will come in spurts and slides. And we give ourselves grace on that journey. The second week we talked about finding God in those difficulties in life, and how we can grow in those moments. Those are tough lessons, but looking back those moments are always pivotal in shaping who we are. And that's why seeking God during difficult times is so essential to our spiritual journey. The third week we used the 23rd Psalm to talk about finding beauty all around us to help us find God. He's everywhere and everything if we take time points to him. Then last week Nelson Furtado talked about *"leaning into"* those questions and doubts and finding God in those moments. We don't have a devotional for last week, but I would encourage you to watch the message.

III Sunday.

Sunday we hit our final look into this unique book of a person's journey into seeking God. And followed the journey of two people who were on a literal physical, and a spiritual journey wrestling with all of their preconceived understanding of who God was supposed to be, and how they worked through that. So, as always.

Think of a time, event, situation in your life that challenged your beliefs of who God was supposed to be?

What happened to your faith, and how are you different now because of that event?

The primary teaching passage is the account of The Road to Emmaus. It tells the story of two men who are processing their questions, struggles, and doubts in who they thought God was supposed to be, what actually happened, and now what they're going to do with all that. **Read Luke 24:13-35.**

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did it say to you about the journey of understanding and seeking God?

Kal felt this specific story is the journey of what seeking God looks like in real life.

1. Personal honesty. The journey of seeking and finding God begins with personal honesty. Saying to yourself and other people, the things you don't know what to do with, and can't quite figure out. Maybe you've lost a child, a spouse, job, been abandoned or betrayed, processing a tragedy, etc. And you've said; *"This is not how I thought my life would go."* This journey begins by building into your daily life, routine, moments where conversation gets real and honest. And we do this with others.

2. Dealing with difficulties. In real, honest, conversations, we have to talk about how we understand, and hold, the difficulties we face. If we don't hit the real stuff, then we may be 'talking', but it's probably not dealing with the things that actually affect us and would help us grow.

3. Tension between doubts and beliefs. Sometimes doubts, the tension between these two positions, hit us REALLY hard. We need to be open enough to examine whether we really have or understand truth or not. This is often what the tension between doubt and belief can feel like. Our doubts are not questioning God, but carefully and thoughtfully examining things we believe are true.

4. Finding beauty in presence, caring, everything around you. On this journey, doing the work, being honest, open, expressing your feelings and frustration with difficulties, doubts in your life, **there is God...already in your midst.** *"We knew it all along."* We doubted God because we were letting our beliefs define what God should be like, rather than being open to the presence and movement of God. We confined ourselves, imprisoned our minds, locked up our hearts, because we believed God was only 'this'. What we've been taught and always just accepted, and he was infinitely more.

5. We found him. He was there all along, and when we took off the blinders we could actually see him. When we finally let go of all of our expectations, and our self constructed understanding of who he should be for us, THEN we found him. Our journey, questions, honest conversations, struggles, doubts NEVER chased God away, or made him disappear. He was right HERE all along. We just need to adjust, change our lens to see him. And it's then we find him...like Bunmi did.

IV Challenge.

So, we finished our look into this important and insightful little book. We looked at all the ways we need to cultivate a life that helps us find God. Which means even though we finished the book, our journey in seeking God is never finished, and we have to be okay with that. It's not about having a nice neat little belief system about God. It's about continually doing things to grow your relationship.

So, what would that look like practiced in your life?