



WEEK 3 – RESTORATION

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... how into restoring things are you? Do you refurb antiques? Have you gotten into thrifting for your TikTok channel? Maybe you just watch all the Flippin' tv shows? Or are you a “only brand new for me, thanks” kinda Joe?

OPENING PRAYER

God of Reconciliation, give us the courage to mend broken relationships when possible, and when not, to pray for the healing we need.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we're going to talk about a different type of restoration, one that can bring you closer to God this Lent but can also bring you closer to others in the process. This is week 3 of our series, The

SCRIPT, where we have been focusing on how to utilize various types of prayer in order to prepare our hearts for Easter. For centuries, Christians have used this season to prepare for the coming celebration of the resurrection of Christ. And to achieve that, we incorporate things like self-reflection, repentance, and sacrifice to help us remove anything that stands in the way of our relationship with God. (If you gave something up for Lent, you're nearly halfway through, keep plugging away!) If the goal is to deepen our relationship with God, then, like any healthy relationship, that has to start with communication. And communication with God we call, *prayer*. And, for this series, we're focusing specifically on what you say. See, most of prayer should be listening... quieting your heart and mind, quieting the world around you, and then listening for God's voice. But what *you* say can be truly powerful for deepening your relationship with God. So, that's what we've been doing, and what we'll continue doing, until we get to Holy Week and our celebration of Easter. And hopefully, by then, you'll have a solid repertoire of what you can say when you pray. And that repertoire is what we're calling... the SCRIPT.

Setup Question: Well, we're at the halfway point of Lent, so let's check-in. How has your prayer practice been going this season? Have you been incorporating the SCRIPT? What has made it difficult? (Or are you just knocking it out of the park?) Discuss!

THE SCRIPT SETUP

Now, the SCRIPT is not just the title of this series, it's an acronym. Each of these six letters is a type of prayer, six tools in your toolbox, that will help you with what to say when you pray and unlock the power of your prayer. The first 2 are about us, the middle 2 are about others, the final 2 are about God. Today, we'll move to the middle section, the *praying for others* part. But first, let's recap...

The last two weeks, we've covered the first two letters, the section that was about us... and we got our first two tools, the 'S' and the 'C'...

SUPPLICATION

CONFESSION

R

I

P

T

Supplication was simply asking God for what we want. To help us understand this one, we looked at a prayer from the prophet Nehemiah who went to God in humility and desperation to make a personal request. And his Prayer of Supplication taught us, first, that it's okay to ask God for what we want. God already knows, you might as well vocalize it. Second, if we take the time to align our desires

with what God wants for our lives, and then, take that to God in humility, we are way more likely to receive what we need. And so, we were challenged to pray our prayers of supplication with humility, knowing that we may not get everything we want, but that God loves us and wants to supply our need. Then last week, we looked at the 'C,' Confession, and a prayer from King David, written in the Psalms, after a particular instance where he screwed up... well... royally. But his heartfelt prayer of confession gave us some tips on why we need to do it, and how we need to do it. First, Confession gives us a clean heart. It's like cleaning your house... the longer you go without doing it, the more cluttered it gets, the less hospitable it is for a guest, and the longer it takes to clean. But confession cleans out our hearts and lightens the weight of the load we're carrying. Then, David gave us some tips on how to do it. First, it takes an open heart... laying our souls bare before God. And then, also, it helps if we get specific... when we get specific, it breaks the control that thing has over us. The result? A clean heart, a path back to joy, and a deeper relationship with God. David's story also helped us see that you are not beyond forgiveness, no matter what you've done, no matter how you feel about it... you are worthy of God's forgiveness. Pretty good stuff. So, where do we go from here? Well, today we'll look at how we can turn our focus outward and begin praying for others. But first...

Question 1: Last week, we were challenged to go to God with our Prayers of Confession. How'd that go? Were you able to make Confession a part of your practice? Why or why not? If you were, how did it feel to unburden yourself in that way?

SCRIPTURE

Today, we're going to switch gears a bit, and move to the two letters of The SCRIPT that deal with others. For the first one, we're going to look at a prayer from the man himself. (If you're going to model your prayer life after someone, might as well be the GOAT, right?) So, let's look at a prayer from Jesus. Here's your set up... It's the very night Jesus is going to be betrayed and turned over for his arrest and eventual crucifixion. He's been hanging out with his followers, trying to explain to them the gravity of what's about to happen. And then, at the very end, he takes a moment, (an entire chapter in the gospel of John, 17,) to pray for them. He has a real open honest moment with God, and then he shifts a bit to simply praying for them, and amazingly enough, praying for us. Let's take a look...

Read John, Chapter 17, verses 20 through 21.

How incredible is it, that when Jesus walked this Earth 2000 years ago, he took the time to pray for you? And if we are to be like Christ, and this is the example he set, then we are required to pray for others, too. When we pray, it opens up the spiritual space in someone's life for the Holy Spirit to work within them. Jesus did that for you. So now it's your turn. Who knows the life you might change through your prayers?

Question 2: Consider this prayer of Jesus. What stands out to you? Is there anything that catches your attention about the setting or the

content? He's praying in a room while the disciples are still listening... how would you have felt were you there?

REFLECTION

What Jesus is doing for us in this prayer, and what we are called to do for others, is the next letter in our SCRIPT, the 'R.' The 'R' stands for...

RESTORATION

So, what are we talking about *restoring* in Prayers of Restoration? Well, the definition of restoration means, "to make whole" or "to return to a previous, better condition." And Jesus gives us two things we can pray to be restored, starting with this.

²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one— as you are in me, Father, and I am in you.

Jesus prays that we will all be one. So, the first Prayer of Restoration you can pray is... restoring broken relationships with each other. Jesus thought this was so important, that we would have whole and meaningful relationships, he made *this* one of the primary things he prays for here. When he prayed for you 2000 years ago, he could have prayed for a lot of things. He could have said, "God, I'm praying for all of those who will believe in me... that they might all agree that pineapple does in fact belong on pizza." But he didn't. He didn't even pray that we would all agree on what music to have in worship, or

that our theology would match, or that we'd be in the same political party. He prayed that we would have right relationships. And so, that's the first way we pray for restoration... by praying for the restoration of broken relationships in our lives. If you have a relationship that is in need of restoration, it can become a weight that holds your heart back from your relationship with God. Just as we talked about last week, how the weight of sin on your heart can prevent you from deepening your relationship with God, a strained relationship can do the same thing. It can harden your heart, distract you from your prayers, and consume your thoughts and emotions. So, if Lent is about removing the barriers between us and God, restoring relationships has to be a part of it. "But, it's not that easy... you don't know what I'm going through with this person," you're probably thinking. And you're right, this is probably not one you're going to get sorted by Easter. But it's the prayer that matters. Just start praying. When you start praying for that person, for the restoration of the relationship, for your heart to change toward them, for God to work in you and them, and for God to carry that burden for you, spiritual stuff starts to happen. The weight on your spirit starts to lighten. Your heart softens. You don't obsess over it quite as much. You don't get as angry or hurt. It doesn't control your life any longer. The prayer can change them... sure... but it can also change you. So, pray for the restoration of your relationship with others.

Question 3: Time to do some soul searching. Is there anyone God has laid on your heart with whom you have a tense relationship? What would praying for restoration in that situation look like? Feel

free to take a few moments to pray for that person and restoration right now.

Now, there's another type of restoration that you can pray for. And it comes from the next sentence of Jesus's prayer. He prays that, all these followers to come...

...they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

So, the first type of prayer of restoration is praying that the person's relationship *with you* can be restored. The second type of Prayer of Restoration is that their relationship *with God* can be restored. It's a simple prayer but can be incredibly powerful. Jesus prayed it for us in today's Scripture. Your prayer can be the same... "God, I pray that this person will be drawn to you." And no, it's not the snarky, "uh wow, you really need some Jesus" prayer. It's a genuine request, "I pray that they would come to know you better. I pray that they would find you again." Pray for their relationship with God. This type of prayer opens the spiritual space for God to work in their lives. Yes, they can still shut God out, and run away, kicking and screaming. But you never know the power that prayer might have. There is someone in your life who needs you to pray that their relationship with God be restored. Now, invitation is the focus of our church this year... your challenge is to bring one person with you to this faith community. Begin by praying for that person... begin by asking God to work in their life... But maybe the way that relationship deepens is by inviting them here,

inviting them to worship or Connect Group or the next trivia night we do. Your invitation might be their path back to God and the restoration of the most important relationship they will ever have.

Question 4: Flip the coin. Is there someone in your life for whom you need to pray for the restoration of their relationship with God? Could you do more than just pray to help them on their path back to Christ?

CLOSING

Okay, we've got 3 under our belts now... Supplication, Confession, and Restoration. Keep doing the first two. But now, God is laying someone on your heart for whom you need to pray a Prayer of Restoration. Pray that your hearts can be restored to a previous, and better condition, And pray that they their relationship with God might be made whole. Ya never know the heart that might be flipped.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations and close in prayer.