

Pray First - Part 1
January 4-5th, 2020
"Seek First"

Intro:

- Happy New Year!!! Huge Announcement: It's 2020!!! - What?
 - We are so excited about all this New Year represents & has the potential to bring in our lives!!!
 - 2020 can be our best year yet if... it is our Best Year Spiritually!!!
- The New Year is when we Set Goals & Think Long, we Dream of what could be & Make Resolutions & Hope is high!!!
 - In Mt. 6, Jesus is talking to a group of people who were trying to figure out how to navigate life & were getting overwhelmed...

Matthew 6:32-33 "For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

- Church, Let's start a New Decade well by "Seeking God 1st"!!!
- **The truth is, we are all facing some Big Things in our Lives this year!**
 - Big Hopes! - Big Dreams! - Big Aspirations!
 - Big Problems that need Big Breakthroughs!!!
- Our World is facing Big Things as well!!!
 - Political Uncertainty, War / Rumors of War, Presidential Election,
 - Patriots didn't get a Bye in the Playoffs
 - It's Leap Year!!! (Talk about Uncertainty!!!)
 - All joking aside, Our World needs God's Miracle Working Power!!!
- Segue: There's a story of a man in the Bible who had a Big Need as well.
 - His son was very sick & under the influence of Demonic Power.
 - He brought him to Jesus' Disciples, but they were unable to see Breakthrough!

Matthew 17:14-15 "When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.

v. 16-17 "I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

"You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."

- Jesus says we have 2 Problems: (He's talking to his disciples, btw)

1) Unbelieving. - Too Disconnected from God.

2) Perverse. - Too Connected to the World.

v. 18-19 "Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment. Then the disciples came to Jesus *in private* and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

v. 20-21 "He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

*** MIP: Some of us feel like the Disciples felt: Like what we are facing is Bigger than our Faith Ability to Conquer it.**

- MWK - There are things in my life...

- Thankfully Jesus never just gives us the Diagnosis, He always gives us the Prescription as well!!!

- Jesus gives us the Strategy for Being Effective in our Lives!!!

- Prayer & Fasting.

1. Prayer connects us to God.

- Whenever we Spend Time w/ someone, we get closer to them!!!

- The more time we spend together, the closer we get!

- Time together builds confidence in that relationship!

- US & OUR SPOUSE ILL.

- We go from Unbelieving to Believing.

2. Fasting disconnects us from the World.

- 1 of the least known disciplines in the church.
 - It's not punishing ourselves b/c God wants us to suffer!
- He wants us to disconnect from the things of the world!
- Over time, When we involve ourselves in the things of the world, they start having more control over us & we have less control over them!
 - APPS ON YOUR PHONE ILL.
 - The more you click on them, the more you'll click on them!!!
 - ANY AREA: Food, Social Media, Thought Life,
- This is why I'm so excited about our 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting!!!
 - This is why we LOVE starting our Year with these 21 days!!!
 - It allows us to Disconnect from the World & Reconnect to God in a Intentional & Focused Way!!!
 - Let's be honest: The Holidays are a time where we Over-Connect to the World & all it's indulgences & we probably Dis-Connected with God more than we would like to Admit!
- In the Sermon on the Mount, that we read earlier, there is an Assumption in Jesus' Teaching toward 3 Spiritual Disciplines:
 - **Matthew 6** (Where we read from earlier...)
 - 3 "When you's"
 - 1) **Giving.** v. 2 "So when you give to the needy..."
 - 2) **Prayer.**

v. 5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

v. 6 "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

v. 7-8 "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

v. 9 "This, then, is how you should pray..."

- We will break this down next week!

3) Fasting. v. 16 "When you fast..."

? Why does Fasting Make a Difference?

*** We are a Triune Being. - Body, Soul & Spirit.**

- Tree: 1 part. - Body only.
- Animal: 2 parts. - Body & Soul.
- Us: 3 parts. - Body, soul & spirit.

*** We have a Connection Problem.**

- The Reason we face things we can't overcome is because we have a Connection Problem!!!
- (Unbelieving & Perverse remember?!?)

1. Body - keeps us connected to ourselves.

2. Soul - keeps us connected to others.

3. Spirit - keeps us connected to God.

*** Whichever of these is the Strongest Controls Us!**

- Body - Do what I want, eat what I want, etc.
- Soul - Depression - It will kill the body!
- Spirit - When this is in charge, we win!!

- The beauty of Fasting is: The 1st 2 weaken in their control over us, & the 3rd one strengthens!!!

Practicals:

1. Decide what your 21 days needs to look like.

- Ask this Question:

 - "Lord, where have I become "Unbelieving" & "Perverse"?

 - Then listen. - That's the Holy Spirit's job... conviction!

- When we ask this Question, God will tell us what kind of fast He wants us to do!!!

 - Body Elements? "No Bread, No Meats, No Sweets!"

 - 1 meal / day? - All Day on Fridays, etc.

 - NLC.com/21days

 - Soul Elements? "Social Media, TV, Video Games"

- I challenge you to: Turn off the World, so the Voice of God can get loud.

2. Prioritize spending time with Him DAILY.

- The goal of a season like this is not just Fasting, but more importantly spending time with God!!!

 - Up your time with Him.

- The more time we spend with someone, the more confidence we have in that relationship!

- I promise, God's Voice will get louder when the voice of the world & the flesh gets softer!

 - Again Resources like crazy at NLC.com/21days

3. Expect God to Move.

Isaiah 58:8-9 " Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

v. 9 "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I."

1. Healing.

2. Holiness.

- Righteousness. Wholeness, set apart, right standing.

3. Help.

- Answers.

Challenge:

? What are you believing God for in 2020?

- Let's start the year with Turning the World & Flesh down & turning the Voice of God up!!!

? Will you Pray & Fast with us for 21 days?

- Let's Give God the 1st of our Year & see what He can do!!!

PRAY