

He's Listening

Big Idea: Why pray? Prayer changes things, because God changes things. And God changes us as we pray.

Ice Breaker: Give a response to both of these questions: “Why do you pray?” “Why don’t you pray?”

- **Read Nehemiah 1:1-3.** What news has Nehemiah heard from Hanani and what does that mean to him? How do you respond when you hear bad news about people you know and care for? Were you ever stirred to act when you heard the news? Were you ever stirred to pray when you heard the news? Which is harder for you - to take action or to pray for people who are in distress? Why is that?
- **Read 1:4.** What are Nehemiah’s immediate responses to Hanani’s report? Have you ever responded like that to news? Why or why not?
- **Read 1:5-11.**
 - List the specific concerns that Nehemiah mentions in his prayer. (Nehemiah is concerned about the people's walk with the Lord, about sin/confession and about God's promise to gather Israel back to their land. He prays for help with the king.)
 - What specific evidence do you find here that Nehemiah believed God heard his prayer and would answer it? (Nehemiah assumes God hears him and will answer his prayers! He is confident in God's ability and so he asks boldly and does so continually for days.)
 - Why is confession necessary as we approach God with our requests? (v. 6-7)
 - Nehemiah’s prayer includes statements that God keeps His promises. How does he state this? (see v. 5 and 8-10) Do you trust that God keeps His promises? What is a promise that God has kept for you?
 - Did Nehemiah become more or less confident as he prayed and fasted? (see. v. 11) How does prayer better prepare him to get more involved in the far off events of Jerusalem? How does this compare with what you have experienced in prayer?
 - What’s a “cupbearer to the king”?

- **Read 2:1-8**

- What risk does Nehemiah take by presenting his concerns to the king? (He risks even his life by both grieving before the king and initiating a request without permission.) Knowing that he is about to risk his life, how did Nehemiah's prayers in chapter one prepare him for taking this initiative?
- Why does Nehemiah pray again in v. 4? What effect does prayer have on Nehemiah? How can prayer have that effect on you for events you face today?
- Why is Nehemiah successful before the king?
- As you think about your ministry, are there any reports you are hearing that you need to petition God for? What will you do to take a risk and become part of the answer for that prayer?
- What excuses could Nehemiah make for not getting involved? What excuses have you made? How does prayer keep us from making these excuses?
- WHY PRAY?

Final Charge: Why Pray? Nehemiah thinks about what his needs are and believes **God will act for him and through him**. We find it hard to wed holy piety and personal hard work of getting involved. We somehow think that God will come through irrespective of what we do. That is not a biblical pattern. God will do his part, but only if we will do our part! We need to pray because there is a connection between believing, persistent prayer and our ability to take risks for God.

Back To Basics

Ice Breaker: SOME PRIOR PLANNING WILL BE NECESSARY – READ BEFORE THE BT BEGINS

- Bring a couple of decks of cards.
- Before BT
 - o Choose one person be very rough and negative about asking for cards.
 - o Choose one person to ask with repetition. “Do you have any nine’s, Do you have any nine’s, Do you have any nine’s?”
 - o Choose one person that stands up and asks loudly so that everyone can hear what ...have to ask with long and drawn out sentences. Getting someone very dramatic would be very good for this.
- Play a big game of go-fish
 - o Have everyone involved and asking for lots of cards.
 - o Keep the game going...Change the rules as necessary to make it work for a large group.
- How did you feel about the different methods of asking for cards?
 - o Who appealed to you the most? Who made you want to give cards to them the most?
- READ Matt 6:5-13
- What is God’s expectation for our prayers?
 - o Why does Jesus say “When you pray?”
 - Why would he make the assumption that everyone pray?
- How can we sometimes be like the hypocrites or the Gentile’s that Jesus refers to?
 - o When are you most likely to pray?
 - o What is your habit?
- Go through the direction on How to pray
- Talk about each one
 - o How can we make sure we are including each of these in our daily prayers?

- Practical – Pray together to finish the BT.
 - Choose one person to pray the different portions of Jesus' prayer
 - Thankful prayer
 - Kingdom focus
 - Sin focus, etc.

Prayer Busters

Icebreaker:

Q1. Have you ever called someone and they did not return your call? How did it make you feel? How do you feel when God doesn't answer your prayers?

Q2. Have you ever avoided/ignore someone's phone call? Why did you not answer it? How do you feel when God doesn't answer your prayer?

- God doesn't answer: James 4
 - o What is your motive when you pray?
 - o Why do people covet?
 - o God did not answer Balaam's prayer: Joshua 24:8-10
 - o Why wouldn't God listen to Balaam?
- Mark 11:22-24:
 - o What do you need in your prayer?
 - o How easy is it to believe in your prayer? Why is it hard?
- James 1: 5 - 8:
 - o What does it mean to be double-minded?
 - o How can double-mindedness creep into your prayer life?
 - o What are ways to fight off double-mindedness?
- Hindered Prayers: 1 Peter 3: 7
 - o What causes your prayer to be hinder in this passage?
 - o Why do you think the husband's prayer would be hindered?
- Delayed Answer: Luke 18:1-8
 - o Why is hard to wait for an answer?
 - o Do you imitate this widow's faith?
 - o What does faith have to do with being persistent?

- John 17 – Jesus prays for unity?
 - o Do you think this prayer has been answered?
- 1 John 5: 14:
 - o Are you being persistent about something that isn't God's will?

Conclusion: Let us make sure we pray in accordance to God's will. Let us believe and be persistent because maybe God will answer it's just a matter of his timing.

Psalm 66:18

Why wouldn't God answer a prayer from someone who cherishes sin?

Draw Near

Opening Question: Share something in your life that you have asked/prayed to God for and you received. Have you ever asked God for something and you got it and later wished that you had never received it? What was it? *job/relationship/situation.*

Q. How can we be sure when we are **“listening to God”** that it is He that we hear and Satan is not involved? Or How can we identify the voice of God?

Identifying who is doing the talking is essential if we are to listen accurately. Let's look at someone who heard a voice in his head but it was not the voice of God.

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-23

Q. What is your first reaction when you read this?

Q. What do you think was going through Peter's mind when he rebuked the Lord?

Q. Was he trying to lead Jesus' astray or be a stumbling block? How do you know?

Q. What in Jesus' response would you have found hard to hear? –being called Satan

Q. How would you have responded? **Honestly**

Q. Why do you think that Jesus responded in such a radical way?

Q. In vs. 23 Jesus makes it clear what Peter's main problem is. What is it?

Q. How can we be sure that we have in mind the things of God and not the things of men?

DISCUSSION: Have you ever been ***convinced in your mind*** that you were making the right decision and it turned out sour? Explain. Financial/relationship/career/etc.

Q. What can we learn from Peter's situation?

Let's look at how we can make sure that we are hearing the voice of God.

Read Matthew 16:24

Q. What does this passage mean?

Q. How can denying ourselves and carrying our crosses daily help us to hear the voice of God?

Q. How can ourselves, our thinking, or our desires get in the way or distract us from listening to God?

Share one thing that you know that God calls people to do but they find it hard to listen to? Why?

To listen to God's voice means that we have to constantly put God first in our lives. We must deny ourselves and obey his word over our own words.

Conclusion

Turn to John 10:27

Q. According to this passage how can we be positive that it is God's voice that we hear?

-- We must walk with Him. Follow Him

Q. What does it mean to follow Him?

Q. How can we go about practically following the Lord in our daily walk?

-- Read the bible

-- Pray consistently

-- Deny ourselves and carry our crosses

-- Fellowship with those who are listening to the voice of God