

If, then, we would pray aright, the first thing that we should do is to see to it that we really get an audience with God, that we really get into His very presence. Before a word of petition is offered, we should have the definite and vivid consciousness that we are talking to God, and should believe that He is listening to our petition and is going to grant the thing that we ask of Him. This is only possible by the Holy Spirit's power, so we should look to the Holy Spirit to really lead us into the presence of God, and should not be hasty in words until He has actually brought us there..

If then we would pray correctly, these two little words must sink deep into our hearts, "UNTO GOD."

The second secret of effective praying is found in the same verse, in the words "WITHOUT CEASING."

In the Revised Version, "without ceasing" is rendered "earnestly." Neither rendering gives the full force of the Greek. The word means literally "stretched-out-ed-ly." It is a pictorial word, and wonderfully expressive. It represents the soul on a stretch of earnest and intense desire. "Intensely" would perhaps come as near translating it as any English word. It is the word used of our Lord in Luke 22:44 where it is said, "He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

And how appropriate for us on this Easter weekend to consider the prayers in the Garden of our Lord. How he intensely prayed to the Father.

May we intensely pray for Christ Church and our work together advancing His Kingdom!

Living The Dream

Text: Luke 15: 11-32

The Plain Truth

Living God's dream is to never trade the _____ for a ____.

One Year Bible Reading

Apr. 5: Deuteronomy 28:1-68, Luke 11:14-36, Psalm 77:1-20, Proverbs 12:18
Apr. 6: Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20, Luke 11:37-12:7, Psalm 78:1-31, Prov. 12:19-20
Apr. 7: Deuteronomy 31:1-32:27, Luke 12:8-34, Psalm 78:32-55, Prov. 12:21-23
Apr. 8: Deuteronomy 32:28-52, Luke 12:35-59, Psalm 78:56-64, Proverbs 12:24
Apr. 9: Deuteronomy 33:1-29, Luke 13:1-21, Psalm 78:65-72, Proverbs 12:25
Apr. 10: Deut. 34:1-Joshua 2:24, Luke 13:22-14:6, Psalm 79:1-13, Prov.12:26
Apr. 11: Joshua 3:1-4:24, Luke 14:7-35, Psalm 80:1-19, Proverbs 12:27-28

April 4 & 5, 2015

Living the Dream

Life Group Lesson • Week of April 5

What causes us to miss the living Christ who stands before us? Could it be that we are not really looking for the risen Christ but instead to the things of this world, unwilling to dwell on eternal matters right now? For many of us, it's often about the next thing, the prize just out-of-reach. We have a home, but we want *that* home. We have a man, but we want *that* man. We have a wife, but we want *that* gal. We have a job, but we want *that* job. We have a family, but it's not what we imagined so we check out. The idea of "living the dream" soon becomes a force that drives us—not to the Lord, His cross and empty tomb—but deeper into darkness and madness.

Read Luke 15:11-32

Like the prodigal son, we dismiss the Father who loves us. Like Adam and Eve, we believe lies the Serpent has used from the beginning—God won't come through for you, what God has provided isn't good enough, you're stuck here, there is more out there, be smart and make your own way.

1. In what ways can you relate to the prodigal son?

In what ways do you relate to the father in the story?

In what ways do you see yourself in the older brother?

The story of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), and the parable of the lost son (vv11-32) all point to the extravagant love God has for lost people. God is not indifferent to our indifference. Like the father in the story, God keeps looking for you and longs for the day you "finally come to your senses" (v17) and return home.

2. Have you returned to your heavenly Father—what is your story, what brought you to your senses?

Who are the people around you that you love, that you would like to see acknowledge their need for the Lord?

Why is admitting our need so difficult?

We cannot hang on to pride and kneel at the foot of the cross at the same time. There comes a point we must humble ourselves—to see our sin for what it is, and then to admit our need for a Savior. Easter is about life. It's about living God's dream and never trading the truth for a lie.

3. In the privacy of your own heart, honestly consider whether or not this statement is true for you: "I really have no desire to part with the idols I've grown to love."

If this statement is true for you, write down the idols you love and why you love them.

In addition, answer this question: Where does the longing _____ originate? Why *is* my desire for _____ greater than my desire for Christ (or anyone or anything else, for that matter)?

What (who) could possibly cause me to rethink my "dreams" and idols?

4. If the statement above (question#3) is not true for you—in other words, you *do* have a growing desire to part with idols—write down the things (events, people) influencing you to re-think your dream and go God's direction.

What does Easter mean to you?

Are you willing to share your story with a friend? If so, who comes to mind?

How To Pray With Power

In the 12th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have the record of a prayer that prevailed with God, and brought to pass great results. In the 5th verse of this chapter, the manner and method of this prayer is described in few words:

"Prayer was made without ceasing of the church UNTO GOD for him."

The first thing to notice in this verse is the brief expression "unto God." The prayer that has power is the prayer that is offered unto God.

But some will say, "Is not all prayer unto God?"

No. Very much of so-called prayer, both public and private, is not unto God. In order that a prayer should be really unto God, there must be a definite and conscious approach to God when we pray; we must have a definite and vivid realization that God is bending over us and listening as we pray. In very much of our prayer there is really but little thought of God. Our mind is taken up with the thought of what we need, and is not occupied with the thought of the mighty and loving Father of whom we are seeking it. Oftentimes it is the case that we are occupied neither with the need nor with the One to whom we are praying, but our mind is wandering here and there throughout the world. There is no power in that sort of prayer. But when we really come into God's presence, really meet Him face to face in the place of prayer, really seek the things that we desire FROM HIM, then there is power.