

FOLLOW: LESSON ONE (Leaders Guide)

Falling on My Knees in Prayer Regularly

BIBLE CONVERSATION

- 1) **Open to these passages describing the prayer life of Jesus: Mark 1:35-39, Luke 5:15-16, Luke 6:12-16. What do each of the passages tell us about prayer? How might Jesus's practice of prayer impact your own prayer habits?**

Several times in these passages, we see that Jesus is *withdrawing* from great crowds of people. He is seeking for both a time and a place to be alone with the Father. Sometimes the time is before dawn; other times it is in the deepest hours of the night. On certain occasions He goes off to the wilderness, while at other moments He climbs the mountain to be alone.

The precise time or exact location that we choose for our communication with the Father is far less important than the principle being set here by Jesus – we should seek a situation in which we can focus our attention on aligning our hearts with the Father's. In today's world, we are faced with so many distractions: social media, family, friends, even church activities. Each one of these things can be a blessing, but we must never forget that even "good" things can ultimately be a distraction from our times with the Lord.

As we see in the passage from Mark, Jesus could very easily have chosen to stay where the crowds were (after all, they were begging to see Him and searching everywhere for Him). Jesus, however, spent enough time in private communication with the Father to be assured of His purpose – to go elsewhere and continue to spread the message of the gospel. We too can choose to heed the loud voices of the world (and seek the attention that it brings) or we can tune our hearts to what the Father wants to say to us and how He wants to direct our decisions – both big and small. Sometimes where He leads us may be unexpected, but it will ultimately be to our good and to His glory.

Read Ephesians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 3:14-20.

- 2) **The Apostle Paul frequently prayed for fellow believers in various churches where he ministered. What specific things does Paul pray? Why would he pray for these things?**

Paul prays for his brethren in deep and challenging spiritual ways. He asks for supernatural, spiritual blessings to be poured out upon his friends. To cite a few examples, he asks the Lord to grant them wisdom and understanding, spiritual eyesight and strength, depth of faith and knowledge of God's love. He does not simply desire for these believers to have "comfortable" circumstances in their lives. Rather, he wants them to develop into true, committed followers of Jesus. He prays for these things not only for God's glory, but for the benefit and building up of the saints.

- 3) **How might these types of prayers contribute to the accomplishment of the mission to help others say "yes" to Jesus? How is this prayer similar to (or different from) the way that you pray for your Christian friends?**

The strong, deeply-rooted believers that Paul prays the saints in Ephesus will become are exactly the type of individuals who will carry the message of the gospel around the world. Those who have grown spiritually mature (in the ways for which Paul prays) have a commitment and devotion to Jesus that will naturally spill out into evangelism.

Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus in ways that should cause us to reconsider our own intercession on behalf of our brothers and sisters. Often, we are quick to pray about specific concerns and circumstances that others share with us. Most commonly, we pray for physical healing or the resolution of some difficult situation (whether relational, financial, or otherwise).

Read Acts 4:23-31

4) The early Christians faced many trials, rejections, and persecutions as they shared the Good News of Jesus. Were these threats real or imagined? What threats do we face today?

The early believers were facing a very real threat from the Jewish ruling council (the Sanhedrin), who desperately wanted to snuff out the message of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. They were under threats of imprisonment and (eventually) death. There was a very genuine possibility that if they stood for the truth of who Christ was, they would lose everything that they had – even their own lives).

There are parts of the world where the threat of death or imprisonment, or loss of livelihood are still very real. In the United States, however, the threats might not look quite so severe. We could lose our reputation with those around us. We could be estranged from our unbelieving family members or friends if we take a stand for the gospel. We could be mocked and ridiculed by the world who does not stand for truth. While these are not as deadly as the early church, they are nonetheless real concerns which we must face if we are to be on mission to help people say "yes" to Jesus.

5) How did the church pray and what did they pray for? What happened as a result of their prayers?

Rather than praying for safety, or that the threats would be removed from the world around them, the early believers pleaded with God to have His sovereign way with them, and to give them boldness to stand up in the face of those threats. God granted those requests to the believers. His purpose was that the gospel message would be spread, not that life would necessarily be easy for His people. We would be wise to consider that God desires our holiness and spiritual maturity more than our happiness or comfort. Often, it is the situations that push us out of our comfort zone in which God can do the most work of growing us.

6) Read Colossians 4:2-4. How did Paul ask believers to pray for him as he spread the Gospel?

Paul asked the church at Colossae to pray two primary things for him as he was "on mission" to the world around him. First, he asked that a door would be opened for the message. In other words, he was looking for the *opportunity* to share the gospel with others. Secondly, he asked that he would be able to proclaim that message clearly – which requires both the *wisdom* to see

the opportunity and the *courage* to take the opportunity and share the gospel accurately and winsomely.

7) How could we apply these prayer principles at RBC for both personal and corporate prayer times?

During our Equip classes, we have learned to pray those same three requests of an everyday missionary: an *opportunity* to share the gospel, the *wisdom* to see it and the *courage* to take it. We can also follow Paul's example of praying for the spiritual growth and maturity of other believers, and follow the pattern of Jesus in seeking the Father's guidance and heart in every aspect of our lives, away from all the busyness and noise that can sometimes crowd our lives or call for our attention. Committing to specific prayer at specific times during our day, as well as praying "without ceasing" throughout the day, keeps us in constant communion with our Father, and can only bring us to a deeper place of faith, trust, thankfulness, obedience, and love.