

Solitude & Direction
Mark 1:35-39

Kids Message:

How Should We Pray?
Anyway

When Should We Pray?
Anytime

How Should we Pray?
Anywhere.

Solitude & Direction

Mark 1:35-39

Solitude

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Early because it is quiet that time of day.

Solitude because it is away from people.

Why did Jesus wake up early and find a solitary place?

1. Freedom from relentless power of our culture and society

so that we can attend to the voice of God.

Solitude can be difficult because there is no one to provide or to be controlled.

Only God is present.

Solitude is the cure for busy-ness.

It is the first step in living a life that is counter-cultural.

Kingdom vs. Worldly - even other religions know this.

But in Christian life, it is specifically time with the King.

2. Establishes our true identity.

Being alone allows Jesus to call us from loneliness to solitude.

Loneliness is the sense of alienation and inner emptiness.

Solitude is has the sense of connectedness, security and inner fullness.

They are opposite places.

From making a name/identity for ourselves we receive our identity from God.

We hear from the King who we are.

3. Reveals our True Purpose & Direction

If you are apart from the demands of society

And you are secure in your solitude - with God and others,

You will be able to discern your direction and purpose in life.

We hear from the King our orders.

³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus went into the wilderness before preaching or healing people.

Jesus went into solitude before choosing his disciples.

Jesus went into solitude before shifting his ministry.

The practice of Solitude:

To meditate on picture for 5 minutes.
And then to share thoughts or feelings.

A Communal solitude:

The church, the community of Jesus is a community
that must practice solitude and prayer together.
Not hermits, but a people who together know the meaning living differently.
That is the meaning of being God's holy people.

**FROM WELLS TO RESERVOIRS:
THE FUTURE OF FAITH COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

A Fire in the Bones

This past Christmas Season I had the opportunity to meet many next generation Chinese Christians at a Winter Conference and hear their stories. They openly shared with me their sadness, despair and frustration regarding their spiritual communities. They were starving for purpose, a call and a direction. They longed for mentors, for encouragement. They wanted to be loved and valued for who they were without hiding their hurts and doubts behind the incessant demand to dutifully run programs. Yet this is all some had ever known since childhood. To be a good follower of Jesus they had to be faithful and loyal and hard working. While these are indeed commendable qualities, they are unsustainable under a cloud of obligation and pretence as it bleeds you dry and leaves you with an broken and empty heart. This is not the way of Jesus.

This experience reminded me of the reasons for starting Faith community Christian church where we uphold the values of Mission Discipleship, Authentic Relationships, A Culture of Empowerment and Embracing Diversity. It reminds me of how Bill Hybels of Willow Creek once shared that he would spend his time off sitting in the pews of failing churches to fuel the holy discontent within himself. In the same way it stokes the fire in my bones and reminds me of our mission.

Converting a Well into a Reservoir

Faith Community Christian Church has been an experiment in digging a well in a desert under the direction of Jesus. We have dug it deep and we have drawn refreshment from it. We have tested it, learned from mistakes and enjoyed it. It has given us life in a dry and dusty land. We are tempted to exchange our pick-axes and shovels for deck chairs and margaritas with nice paper umbrellas in them. But as we stand around Jesus tells us to look over our shoulders and see many other people wandering in the desert.

The well is big enough for all of us but not big enough to serve others around us. We look at Jesus and he has that look that tells us he knows what he is doing. He has refreshed us with a well but we in turn need to refresh others by building a reservoir. He wants us to keep the depth of the well and dig deeper still, but we also need to expand the breadth of the well so that more people can come and be refreshed. He wants a shallow end where the young in faith can drink easily until they can reach the depths where the water is best.

F3C is has finished digging a well. It is time to build a reservoir. Not a fancy pants pool with gazebos and tiled poolside bars, just a reservoir. But only this, we need to send people out to dig other wells and reservoirs too.

How Do we Do This?

Prayer

Unless we all listen and follow the voice and direction of the Holy Spirit we can lose our direction. This is not something we do out of our own ability and wits but we submit our gifts and resources to God who will give us the wisdom and direction to use them properly. This need to be from him and not just our own plan. We are praying as a tangible form of our obedience.

Also, our enemy will see us digging and will do everything in his power to sow dissention, doubt and discouragement. We need to pray for protection.

I Invite you to prayer for the following in your own prayers and in our small groups:

for a change in our own hearts that we will do whatever God asks of us.

for the Holy Spirit to fill us and guide us.

for wisdom and discernment to grow our church his way.

for our relationships with one another in the church, that we might care and share our lives - pray for unity.

making a list of the people in our lives who do not know Christ and pray for them consistently.

for direction in your own life to know how you are to serve in the church and shine in the world.

Discipleship

There are two areas in each Christian that needs to be cultivated. The first is that of the inner life of thoughts, feelings and decisions. The second is to live an act outwardly according to the faith and wisdom.

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of hearts. It is about the conversion of the human soul from being self-seeking and self-reliant to becoming Christ-centred and Spirit-empowered. The growth of the soul takes time and energy and is not a matter of efficiency. There is, however, one fundamental trait that every growing Christ follower has - the willingness to live a life of obedience. Some call this conversion but it goes further because it is a daily conversion, a constant reality where we say in our hearts, "Not my will but your Kingdom come, your will be done."

Having established our allegiance and direction, we move towards both wisdom and understanding that comes from both knowledge and discernment grounded in Scripture and a real indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Every person in the church to be baptised, discipled and reaching out missionally.

Diana's Development as a Congregational Pastor

Discipleship that equips people to disciple others

Training of Elders to disciple in group and individual settings

Outreach

Our church worship service should be inviting but focussed on God.

We actively invite our friends into our church community.

Develop entry points into the church such as Sunday Service but also introductory small groups.

Begin to engage with a more public presence and profile.

Initiative:

Be attentive to the Holy Spirit and sensitive to your friends.

Listen and get to know the people in your life.

Pray for them that God will work in the heart and in their lives and meet their needs.

Share your life your struggles and your hope in Christ in your conversations.

Prayer Evangelism: Always ask if you can pray for others when there is appropriate opportunity.

Partnerships