

THE DISCIPLINE OF

Prayer

... is learning how to be with God, expressing one's self to God, and listening for his response. Prayer is talking to God privately, individually. Prayer can be silent, spoken, or in a group setting.

WEEK THREE • DAY ONE

Monday, February 26, 2007

Prayer

WARM-UP...

Psalm 130

WORKOUT ...

Luke 18: 1-14

Luke 11: 1-13

COOL-DOWN ...

Talk to the Lord the way you talk to your best friend. Let out all of the things that are weighing you down, and breathe in the Spirit of the Living God. Feel free to write below all those things that are troubling you and the people you love. Then give them to God. He'll listen, and he'll answer.

Prayer

WARM-UP...

Psalm 131

WORKOUT ...

The Prayer Chair

A man's daughter asked her minister to come pray with her father. When the minister arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. An empty chair sat beside his bed. "I guess you were expecting me," he said. "No, who are you?" said the father. The minister told him his name and then remarked, "I saw the empty chair, and I figured you knew I would show up,"

"Oh, yes, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?" Puzzled, the minister shut the door. "I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it went right over my head."

The old man continued, "But, one day my best friend said to me, 'Johnny, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here is what I suggest. Sit down, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised—I will be with you always—then just speak to him in the same way you would talk with a friend.'

"So, I tried it, and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours everyday. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm."

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The minister was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old man to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him and returned to the church.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the minister that her daddy had died that afternoon. "Did he die in peace?" he asked. "Yes, when I left the house at about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead.

"But there was something strange about his death. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on the chair beside the bed. What do you make of that?"

The minister wiped his eyes, smiled and said, "I wish we could all go like that."

—*Author Unknown*

COOL-DOWN ...

Give some thought to the ways that you can share yourself and what you have with others. Try to determine what God would have you give today—something of significance, something of value—to some person or ministry who needs your gift. Write down your plan.

WEEK THREE • DAY THREE

Wednesday, February 28, 2007

Prayer

WARM-UP...

Psalm 132

WORKOUT ...

James 5: 13–20

Ephesians 3:14–21

COOL-DOWN ...

Focus your prayer today on the church you belong to. Give thanks to God for the UBC family. Pray for people in your group—your Life Team, your Weekend Bible Study group, your friends who support you. Pray for pastors, teachers, deacons, and other ministry leaders and teams. Write the names of the ones of those you know below, and pray for them.

WEEK THREE • DAY FOUR

Thursday, March 1, 2007

Prayer

WARM-UP...

Psalm 133

WORKOUT ...

Jeremiah 29: 11–13

Isaiah 56: 6–8

COOL-DOWN ...

Give thanks to God for your own salvation. Call out to the Lord the names of people who, as far as you know, don't have a personal relationship with God. Write their names below. Take the time to pray for them, and to pray for us all, that we might have the courage and the wisdom to share our faith with those who need to know the Lord.

Prayer

WARM-UP...

Psalm 134

WORKOUT ...

Growing in Personal Prayer

David Mobley is a man growing in the experience of prayer. Initially, David felt frustration in his encounters with suffering people, and he felt that he could not offer them hope, because he had trouble understanding their situation. He often found himself not doing anything because he did not know what to say or how to help.

However, things began to change, and David discovered new insight about prayer by watching his friend and co-worker's encounters with hurting people. David's friend would simply pray for those in need. This gift was beyond David's experience, but it introduced David to the truth that prayer is not the only thing you can do—it is the best thing you can do.

Taking this truth to heart, David began to pray for people as soon as they expressed a need or displayed a difficulty. These encounters would happen in a variety of places—quiet, private places, as well as public, busy places.

If someone expresses a need, David asks if he can pray for the person. If the individual agrees, they stand in the place where the need was voiced, often with eyes open, as if they were talking to each other, but David lifts the person and their need to the very throne room of the Lord.

Moreover, David learned that those for whom he interceded were not disappointed with the prayer or the results. He

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discovered that the act of laying a hand on somebody's shoulder and taking the time to pray was meaningful. And, he found that the benefit of bringing someone into God's presence is the icing on the cake.

As God has developed David's practice of prayer, there have been opportunities to teach others how to pray. The first teaching experience David had was at a UBC youth retreat. Students studied various passages and experienced a practicum of prayer. Students he taught also interceded for David that weekend. He says, "When the youth laid hands on me to pray, the Lord spoke a clear word of healing into my life, and freed me from a fear of abandonment that had plagued me my entire life."

God has given David some very cool prayer experiences through the years. And though it has been many years since he began, praying for others continues to be an adventure that never gets old. The disciples requested, "Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1) This reminds us that real prayer is something we learn. If our praying is going to make a difference in the world, we need to be in contact with God so that his life and power may flow through us. We must realize, prayer is not the only thing we can do, but the very best thing.

—David Mobley and Jeff Waldo

COOL-DOWN . . .

As you pray today, consider what God has given you in the way of spiritual gifts for service and ministry. Give thanks to God for those gifts. Ask for forgiveness for when you have failed to use them, and write out some ways that you might use what God has given you today to serve others.

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WORKOUT ...

The apostle Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own."

Taking care of the body is important. Eating well, getting proper rest, and participating in appropriate exercise are all important to maintaining the body, which is the temple where God resides on this earth.

Today's workout is a physical one, and if you choose to participate, you should do so with care and caution. Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. Before you begin this program you should have permission from your doctor to participate in vigorous exercise. The instructions and advice presented here are in no way intended as a substitute for medical counseling.

We recognize that 20 minutes a day, one day a week is not a physical workout routine, but we include it in here for fun, and to point out the importance of regular physical care.

Thanks to Wendy Stanley, a kick-boxing instructor, for her assistance in this part of the BeTheBody workout.