

St Martins C3 – September 26, 2021

Bringing out the Best – Prayer and Prophecy

Sermon Summary:

Receiving prayer from someone else can be very powerful and life-changing. We also acknowledge that sometimes we don't see the results in prayer that we would like to see. We may never know all the reasons for this, but we do know that the more we pray, the more likely we are to see God's power released to those around us.

Read: James 5:13-16 & Matthew 18:18-20

This is why we encourage a culture of praying for each other in St Martins C3. We see the encouragement it brings, we see the power that is released. However, there is another important dynamic to talk about regarding praying for each other.

Just as there is the potential for a lot of good to emerge from praying for each other, there is also the potential for harm. When receiving prayer our hearts are open and vulnerable. So, care needs to be taken to bring that which is of God and avoid that which isn't.

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:1-4, 26

Previously in this series we have looked at how to bring out the best in each other through in our conversations, but we can also bring out the best in each other through the way we pray. Here is a suggested prayer that you will hopefully find helpful: ***“God reveal to me the POTENTIAL you see in this person's life.”***

1) A prayer like this is Biblical

It lines up with the culture of encouragement Paul is promoting here in 1 Corinthians 14.

2) It will help you align your thoughts with God's purposes for the persons life.

God has good purposes for the person that you are praying for. He also wants to reveal those purposes to that person. When we pray a prayer like this, it is very likely that God will reveal something encouraging to that person.

There is a place to challenge others in the body of Christ, but not through individual prayer and prophecy. Conversations like that need to be handled with lots of care and generally another mature Christian present.

3) They are likely to be encouraged and you are likely to grow in the Spiritual gifts that God has placed in your life.

At St Martins C3, we encourage people to pray and prophecy with humility. None of us get it right all the time. Therefore we frame what we are sharing with others, with, *"I sense God could be saying.."* or, *"I feel God wants to encourage you with..."*

Let us grow a culture of praying for each other and through those prayers seek God's best for the person we are praying for. A culture of encouragement like this, will build up the body of Christ.

Suggestions for Connect Groups:

My suggestion this week is that rather than discussing this topic, that you put it into practice. Maybe take turns in your group with someone who sits in the middle of the room and the others gather around and pray for them.

The focus ought to be on God bringing the person into all that He has for them, rather than a particular need they may have in the moment. (Although it is fine to pray into that as well)

After you do that, take some time and have a debrief as a group and discuss what was helpful and what people learnt from the experience.

Monday's Devotion – The Need

Matthew 9:36

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

This week we are exploring some more practicalities around praying for others.

The first thing that is important to consider is what needs there might be in the person's life. So, the conversations usually starts with, "what can I pray for?" As we see in the Gospels Jesus ministered to the needs of many people. He cared about the challenges in life they were facing and brought the power of His Kingdom into their situation. Likewise, we ought to do the same. We support, encourage and care for each other when we are willing to pray with the person to see God address the needs they are facing.

If we have been a Christian for some time, we will be very aware that God wants to minister to us far beyond our present needs. There are changes that He is seeking to do in us. There are gifts He is seeking to pour out into our lives. There is power He wants to fill us with. So, although a person's need might be the catalyst for receiving prayer, God will often use the opportunity to minister to much deeper things in our lives. Jesus often started with the person's need but used the opportunity to minister to deeper areas in their hearts. So, as we pray for the needs of those around us, ask God to reveal the potential that He sees over the person's life. It is a prayer that will take you both into the greater purposes God has for them.

Tuesday's Devotion – Agreement

Matthew 18:19-20

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

I like how Jesus modelled this principle. Jesus knew that God had given all those He was ministering to freedom of choice. God's Kingdom was not going to be released in their life without their agreement or permission. Therefore, Jesus often questions the person, “Do you want to be healed?” What Jesus is looking for is the persons agreement, because He knew that His Kingdom would come in a place of agreement.

It may sound like a obvious and simple thing to do, but it is an important aspect in praying with someone else. What that practically looks like is a short description of what you are about to pray for and a question to them as to whether they are in agreement with as to what you are about to pray into.

I have learnt the power and importance of this over the years. I am now at the point where I won't pray into a certain area of a person's life without their full agreement. Change happens, healing comes, demons are removed when we want those things in our lives gone and not before. Remember, where two or more are in agreement, it will be done.

Wednesday's Devotion – Faith

Luke 17:19

Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

The context of this verse is Jesus healing the ten who had leprosy. One had returned to acknowledge Christ's power to heal him and Jesus in turn acknowledges that this man's faith was a factor in his healing.

We need to keep in mind that this was 2,000 years ago. There were no hospitals. There was no modern medicine like we have today. Many people were sick and had little hope for a cure. In their desperation the sick would try anything. Knowing this vendors would set themselves up as "healers" with various potions or prayers which they claimed would bring healing, but in reality, didn't.

Then Jesus begins to minister to people and they actually get healed. This was revolutionary. People now had a choice, would they put their trust in other sources or put their trust in Christ. When Jesus is talking about faith, he is referring to a person's trust in who He was as the Son of God and what He could do.

When praying for others, you are not praying in your power, but Christ's power. We are not praying in our authority, but Christ's authority. We are praying in His name. We are praying in the confidence in His power. So, once you have agreement with the person as to what you are praying for, pray in faith. Faith in the one who has the power to change lives.

Thursday's Devotion – Let God Speak

Acts 1:4-5

“wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Consider how hard it is to wait for something. It is a discipline to set aside all our other distractions and wait on God. Sometimes we can be rushed even in our prayers. Now, I appreciate that there are contexts where for various reasons you just don't have the time to wait on God in prayer, so it is better to do a rushed prayer, rather than no prayer, but where possible take the time to wait on God when you are praying with someone else. – Why?

We are more likely to be aware of His presence and word when we are still before God. God wants to bring an awareness of His presence. He wants to speak to us. However, we can often be focused on praying a fancy prayer and filling the space with our words rather than God's word.

So, when you are praying for God to reveal the potential that He sees over the persons' life, allow some space for God's Spirit to move. Silence or a gentle praying in tongues is fine. The most important thing in this moment is that God meets the person that you are praying for. It is not about me, you, or them, it is all about God and what He wants to do. So, make the space and let God speak.

Friday's Devotion – Encourage

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

After you have prayed with someone, it is appropriate that you give them a short encouragement. Hopefully they have encountered God and God has done something in their lives. However, this is just the start of what God wants to do, not the end. God has planted a seed that now has to germinate and grow.

Encourage them by reminding them of what God has just done. Encourage them to continue praying and seeking God in regard to that aspect of their lives that they are surrendering to Him. Share a scripture with them that consolidates the truth of what you have been praying into.

The important thing to note here is that prayer is a one of thing, it is the beginning of a process, or the next step in the journey. So, encourage them to keep going on the journey. Encourage them that the journey is worth taking. If you genuinely will, encourage them with your commitment that you will continue to pray for them and their situation.

Praying for other people is a privilege. It is an opportunity to encounter God and see his power imparted into others. Let us be seeking opportunities to pray for each other and make the most of those opportunities.