

PRAYER

Session 2

Impediments to Prayer

This is the second of six sessions on prayer. In this session we will explore what impediments or struggles we have with prayer. For some it comes easy - others, not so much. Whether it's time, fear, or not feeling you know how to pray, many things tend to get in the way of having an open and consistent prayer life with God.

Opening Activities



Centering Moment

Light a candle and observe 30 seconds of silence as a reminder of God's presence among us.



Mark 9:2-8

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.



Peter interrupts the experience of Jesus' transfiguration with ideas of how to improve it, preserve it, or do something useful with it rather than simply being present with God. What interrupts or impedes you from simply being present with God?



Opening Prayer:

Dear God, help us to perceive our blocks and excuses that get in the way of our relationship with you, that keep us from a deeper, more meaningful prayer life. Give us the courage, hope, persistence and willingness to enter into daily conversation with you. Amen.



Music (optional)

Sing or listen to "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"



Share

Share with one another any thoughts from last weeks' exercises or session.



Watch: Impediments to Prayer



Discuss

- The video listed off a variety of ways that our prayer life can be impeded. Time, not knowing what to pray for, etc. What are some of your impediments to prayer? What are the things that tend to get in the way of you having a robust prayer life with God?
- Read Matthew 26:36-46. What do you think might have caused the disciples to have trouble staying awake and available to Jesus?
- What contributes most to your difficulty staying awake spiritually?



Closing Prayer

Patient God, we make so many excuses and justify why we don't have time to work on our relationship with you. Help us to set our excuses aside and learn to be more present and intentional about our time with You. Amen.



Exercises To Do At Home

1. **Practice Breath Prayer:** Breath Prayer is an ancient form of prayer and it is easily adaptable. They can be phrases from tradition, scripture or a hymn/song. We repeat them with our lips, carry them in our hearts, and whisper them under our breath. (Steps taken from "The Breath of Life: A Workbook" by Ron DelBene.)
 Step 1: Sit in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and remind yourself that God loves you and you are in God's loving presence. Recall a passage of scripture that puts you in a prayerful frame of mind such as the 23rd Psalm or "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46)
 Step 2: With eyes closed, imagine God calling you by name and asking "What do you want?"
 Step 3: Answer with whatever comes from your heart. (Answers can be simple, single words like "hlep, peace, guidance, love, forgiveness, or a phrase - "Grant me peace and serenity." This is personal so it will rise out of your concerns.
 Step 4: Choose your favorite name or image for God. (God, Jesus, Creator, Teacher, Prince of Peace, Light, Lord, etc.)
 Step 5: Combine your name for God with your answer to God's question, "What do you want?" Pray your breath prayer for three minutes.
 Repeat daily.
2. **Read Isaiah 44:6-11.** What are common idols today? Identify a popular image of God with which you struggle or which makes prayer difficult for you. Draw or write about this image. Now consider what image of God opens you to the divine presence and facilitates prayer.