School of Prayer
June 24, 2009

Praying when things get tough

Introducing the Evening:

1. Welcome – tonight we are doing something for the first time that we hope will grow. School of Prayer exists to help you grow your prayer life. Prayer is one of those things that we all want to do, know we should do, want to do better but feel inadequate at times to do right. So we need to learn. Jesus' disciples said to Him, "Lord teach us to pray." So that's the heart of the School of Prayer.
2. I want to tell you about the format for tonight.
    a. We are going to open up by having a lesson on praying when times get tough.
    b. Then we are going to have a short break for refreshments.
    c. Then we are going to practice what we just learned

Opening Illustration:

1. Robin Brock – Lord please, please, please…Tough year in our lives
2. Life is tough for a lot of people…tough for you – financial, home, family, job, health, broken relationship, grief, depression, etc.
3. How can we learn to be connected with God through this time? How do we keep praying? How can we be faithful when it seems like our prayers are not working and our lives aren't working either?

Transition: To answer this we need to answer three questions: Why? What? How?

Outline

1. Why are we allowed to go through tough times?

Entry point:

-If we are doing everything right, we should never suffer
-It's not fair, I don't deserve this. I deserve a good life and a comfortable life free from anxiety, worry, etc. It shouldn't be THIS hard!
-Why me? Why does this always happen to me?
-And I agree. It doesn't seem fair and it shouldn't be this hard especially with God's help.

Challenge:

-If God rescued you from all of your issues or corrected every single wrong for you, what if it caused another person to suffer? Ill: Jim Carrey in Divine whatever. The moon thing served his purpose but caused world devastation. If you think, "I shouldn't have to work this hard," but not doing so would cause your family to suffer. If you think, "Why didn't I get that job or why did I lose mine or why can't I get a better job?" Well, if you would have got it someone else would not have. Is that fair? Is that just? And do you deserve better than the handicapped person who cannot work or the person born into oppression, filth and poverty in an Hade.
-How could he do so without eliminating choice? You could be a pretty good person but the person you work for isn't; the kid you have; the neighbor you have. And you pray and pray for them. Where are you God? Well, in order for the other person to get in line, God would have to take away their power to choose wouldn't he? Shouldn't everyone have at least the right to choose to be a jerk? Isn't that a basic right we admire?
-Plus do you really want to get what you deserve? Lies in a relationship…

Transition: God wants us to start with a whole new framework of looking at this.

a. Let's start with a promise of encouragement (1 Corinthians 10:13)

1 Cor. 10:13 - No temptation [trial] has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

b. Sometimes hard times are a spiritual battle
    i. Fallen world (1 Peter 4:12)

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1 Peter 4:12 - Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

EX: In football a running back doesn't say, "Why are they trying to tackle me?"

ii. Satanic attack (Job 1:9-12)

Job 1:9-12 - Satan replied to the LORD, "Yes, Job fears God, but not without good reason! [10]You have always protected him and his home and his property from harm. You have made him prosperous in everything he does. Look how rich he is! [11]But take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!"
[12]"All right, you may test him," the LORD said to Satan. "Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically." So Satan left the LORD'S presence.

iii. Sin in our own lives (James 1:13-15)

James 1:13-15 - When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; [14]but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. [15]Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

c. Develop character (Romans 5:3-5)…Ill: He's like the best coach we could ever have

Romans 5:3-5 - Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4]perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5]And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

2. What does God produce in us because of tough times?
   a. Microscope evaluation
      i. Reduces pride and selfishness (Examples of successful people who failed and humbled)
      ii. Produces patience (Never ever pray for patience!!)
      iii. Increases compassion

-I used to think pain was meaningless until a couple years after the first time I got my heart broken….I was able to see other people's pain in a way I never could before. When we live lives that are relatively free from pain, we don't have any idea what another person is going through.

      iv. Prepares for greater service
   b. To develop a greater trust in God
   c. To experience His special care
   d. An appreciation for His blessings – a grateful heart
   e. Opportunity to glorify God – **Video**: Blessed be Your name

3. How can I learn to <u>pray</u> & have a <u>right heart in hard times</u>?

   a. Talk to God all the time
      i. Avoid fancy words and phrases…Avoid fakeness
      ii. Don't avoid God after your prayer time
      iii. Don't try to talk to God all day without having a prayer time
   b. Learn to be honest with God
   c. Focus on God more than self (book illustrations)
      i. Find passages that bring comfort and live in them
         EX: Galatians 6:1, Philippians 4:13

ii. Praise God in and for the struggle
iii. Anticipate what God is going to do through this (EX: Danny Hinkle)
iv. Find a prayerful place (Jesus found solitary places to pray)
v. Use other's words for prayer
    1. David (2 Samuel 17:36, 45)
    2. King Jehosaphat (2 Chronicles 20:2, 12)

d. Meditate on Jesus' life and death
e. Write it down

Break

Video: Max Lucado

Suggestions: Journal…Chair in Front

Adoration

- Be still and know that He is God
- Praise Him for who He is & what He's done
- Sing or listen to worship music
- Read a Psalm
- Long after Him in your heart - *as the deer pants for water so I pant for thee*
- Lift His Glory: Read Psalm of praise out loud - *declare His glory!*
- List His Names: You are my _____ *(Names of God or Jesus)* [nouns]

Confession – Do a spiritual inventory by asking God to show unconfessed sin.

- Your Words - *have you spoken evil of anyone, criticized, sharp words*
- Your Attitudes - *complaining spirit, depressed, grouchy, know-it-all*
- Your Thoughts - *evil desires, lusts, doubts, fears, hatred, bitterness*
- Your Actions - *broken God's laws, trespassed on forbidden ground*
- Your Unforgiveness – *letting grudges against others go*
- Your Motives – *repent of why you sin (ie pride, greed, etc.)*

Goal: Soften your heart towards God and people – to repent (change). How? Think about God's grace until you are melted and moved. Consider the cost of your forgiveness – Jesus' death, until you are moved and melted. Most sin is relational and if you consider God's attitude toward you for any amount of time your attitude towards others will be changed on the spot. This is the power of the Gospel!!!!!

Thanksgiving

- Mercies new every morning - *bread, breath, health, life, strength*
- My body which is wonderfully made - *sight, hearing, touch, smell, etc*
- All creation - *wonders of His amazing creation*
- Blessings and Benefits received - *all that I have*
- Bad, Sad, and Broken - *things that have gone wrong*

Supplication –Prayer requests

Cast your Care

- Family –
- Finances - *debts, needs, provisions, wisdom*
- Frustrations - *with spouse, self, life, job, etc*

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- Fears, worries, *anxieties about tomorrow…meditate*
- Failures - *faults, weaknesses, struggles, etc.*

Focus on Others

- 3 S's – Souls, Saints, Sickness/Suffering
- 3 M's – Ministry, Missions and Magistrates