

Life Group Questions

Gaining Perspective / Pastor Ray / Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 / January 9-10, 2021

How can we prevent the sublime – true, awe-inspiring beauty – from becoming routine? Pastor Ray began his message with an illustration of a journalist who covered the launches of NASA’s space shuttles. At first, it was exciting but after a few launches, even the thrill of viewing such technological miracles was gone. It was when the journalist was invited to witness a launch from 8000 feet in a special helicopter – when he was able to regain *perspective* – that the thrill returned. In the same way, Jesus’ teaching on spiritual disciplines are a means of cultivating intimacy with the Father, enabling us to see his beautiful way in the routines of life.

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- Which spiritual disciplines do you regularly practice?
- Which spiritual disciplines have you found most difficult to maintain? Which ones have brought you the most delight?

Opening Prayer

(Begin your prayer with these words from Psalm 27.) Lord, you are our light and salvation. Whom shall we fear? You are the stronghold of our lives. Of whom shall we be afraid? One thing we have asked of you, and this is what we will seek: that we may dwell in your house all the days of our lives; to gaze upon your beauty and to seek you in your tabernacle. We ask you to open our eyes to see you more clearly, and to open our ears to hear you voice. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Message Recap

Review the message using the questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week’s message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing that you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Choose discussion and application questions

Reflect on Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 and the message by discussing the questions.

1. **If you possess Jesus’ kingdom character, you are the salt of the earth.**
 - a. The geneticist Francis Collins said that what is most needed in human DNA today is the beatitudes of Jesus (Matthew 5:3-10). How do you respond to this statement?
 - b. The main point of the beautiful way of Jesus is not to become more religious or good, but to become like our Father in heaven. Take a few minutes to scan through Matthew 5:21-44. Which aspects are most challenging to you?
2. **Followers of Jesus have the Father’s heart.**
 - a. Pastor Ray said, “Watch out for the tendency to be more attentive to the presence of people than God’s presence.” Why do you think this is such a common challenge for most people?

- b. A.B. Milne said, "Show when tempted to hide; hide when tempted to show." What aspects of our Christian life should we try to keep hidden? Which aspects should we make obvious to others?
 - c. Jesus referred to God as "Father" 17 times in the Sermon on the Mount. Have you found it difficult in any way to relate to God as Father?
- 3. Practice spirituality because you love the Father.**
- a. In terms of charitable giving, what is the negative lesson from the religious leaders (6:2)? Do you see this approach to giving today?
 - b. What does it mean to give without letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing?
 - c. If people don't know about our giving, do you think this will decrease our motivation to practice it?
- 4. Be generous because the Father is.**
- a. Pastor Ray asked the question, "When it comes to giving, what would it look like for us to reflect the Father's heart in 2021?" How would you answer that question?
- 5. Prayer and fasting**
- a. Jesus describes the essence of prayer as an individual meeting alone with the Father. How do you feel about your own practice of prayer?
 - b. Share with the group any experience you have had with fasting (either fasting from food or any other types of fasts).
- 6. Reflection questions / guidance**
- Pastor Ray asked 3 reflection questions at the end of his message. You could take some time to discuss these in your group.
- a. In the area of giving, what would it look like for you to reflect the Father's heart?
 - b. How would Jesus want you to strengthen your prayer times before the Father? Ask him.
 - c. What kind of fast (e.g., food, social media, Netflix, sports, video gaming, etc.) would Jesus be inviting you to take to attune your heart to the Father's?

Digging Deeper

Read Colossians 3:1-4 and then discuss the questions.

1. What does the text say?
2. What is God teaching you through this passage?
3. How is God prompting you to respond?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

- Individual**
 - In a journal, list your responses to the three reflection questions from above? Ask God to help you honor your intentions to grow in this spiritual disciplines.
 - Take 10 minutes to meditate on Colossians 3:1-4 as a way of setting your mind on Christ.
- Christian community**
 - Share with at least one other person your commitment to give, pray and fast.

□ **The world**

- Is there Lord prompting you to give financially to anyone in need?
- Are there specific people or places for whom you can commit to pray for regularly?

Closing Prayer

(Conclude with this prayer from Ephesians 1:17-19.) Our Father, we ask that you, the Father of glory, will give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of yourself, that you will enlighten the eyes of our hearts to know the hope to which you have called us, the riches of your glorious inheritance in the saints and the immeasurable greatness of your power toward us who believe. Increase the capacity of our hearts to know you, delight in you and be satisfied by you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.