

Wednesday with the Word

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“The church in the heart of Atlanta with Atlanta in its heart!”

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We find ourselves today at the point where Peter has finished preaching his first sermon and the people are responding to the preached word.

Acts 2:37-38

37 When the people heard this, they were very upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles, “Friends, what shall we do?”

38 Peter said, “Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. **39** This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live.”

Two Demands & Two Promises

The Demands / Requirements:

1. Turn back to God, repent of what you have done. Repent for how far you have moved away from God's word, God's way and God's commandments. This is Peter's message to crowd. What is Peter's message to us?
We have to repent for what the church has become. We have to repent for how far we have moved away from what God desires of God's church and God's people. The church does not belong to us. The church is not about memberships and members versus non-members. The church is about discipleship. The church is to develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ who do life together. In many cases and in many churches discipleship maturation has taken a back seat to tradition, annual days and fund raisers. There are some churches that are more concerned about what people where than they are about how people live.
2. After they repent and turn back to God Peter says they are to be baptized in the name of Jesus. This is visible sign of the inward turn. Baptism doesn't save them or change them it is a sign of what has happened in them.

How has the church turned away from God?

Are there things we need to repent of and turn back to God?

Are there things you need to repent of and turn back to God?

Two Promises:

1. After we repent and turn back to God we will be forgiven of our sins.
2. After we repent and turn back to God we will be blessed with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The thing about the Holy Spirit is we have to yield to the Spirit. We have to allow the Spirit to lead us. We have to allow the Spirit to over take our flesh and be the master of our mind and life. The Holy Spirit must be allowed to guide our minds.

What is the flesh and Spirit battling over in your life?

What are your fleshly struggles?

Where is the war in you?

Are there times that you know you resist the Holy Spirit?

Are there times when you know you just relax, release and give the Holy Spirit complete control?

Ephesians 6:10-20

10 Finally, let the mighty strength of the Lord make you strong. **11** Put on all the armor that God gives, so you can defend yourself against the devil's tricks.

12 We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world.

13 So put on all the armor that God gives. Then when that evil day comes, you will be able to defend yourself. And when the battle is over, you will still be standing firm.

14 Be ready! Let the truth be like a belt around your waist, and let God's justice protect you like armor.

15 Your desire to tell the good news about peace should be like shoes on your feet.

16 Let your faith be like a shield, and you will be able to stop all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Let God's saving power be like a helmet, and for a sword use God's message that comes from the Spirit.

18 Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people.

19 Pray that I will be given the message to speak and that I may fearlessly explain the mystery about the good news.

20 I was sent to do this work, and that's the reason I am in jail. So pray that I will be brave and will speak as I should.

Acts 2:40-42 - What did they spend their time doing? What were they devoted to?

40 Peter told them many other things as well. Then he said, "I beg you to save yourselves from what will happen to all these evil people." **41** On that day about three thousand believed his message and were baptized. **42** They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. CEV

Acts 2:42

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (NRSV)

After they repented, turned back to God, received the power of the Holy Spirit, they did life together. They began to grow in their faith. There were four keys to their growth. These are four keys that we must focus on if we desire to continue to grow in our faith. We are going to find that each of these four keys reappear in chapters 3 - 6.

#1. 42 They spent their time learning from the apostles (CEV) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (NRSV) -

We have to learn, devote, be committed to being taught the word and ways of God! There is no way around it! We like them have to make this a priority. To study God's word, to be devoted to being taught by those who God has assigned as teachers of God's word where you have been called to serve is a must.

#2. 42b and they were like family to each other. (CEV) They devoted themselves to fellowship (NRSV)

They did life together, they took care of each other, they watched out for each other. They loved each other. They were like family. They stuck together in the midst of oppression. They worshipped together. Being a part of faith community was key to their faith. This is about coming to to worship as much is about living in deep, authentic, transparent, honest relationships that is rooted in our love for each other.

1 John 3:11-18

11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. **12** We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his

brother's righteous. **13** Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. **14** We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. **16** We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. **17** How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? **18** Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (NRSV)

See Simple Love:

Matthew 17:1-21; 20:20-28; Mark 1:16-22; 3:13-19; 5:21-43; 14:32-42 Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-16; 9:46-56; John 13:21-25, 33-35; 19:25-27; 20:1-10; 21:1-14; 20-25; Galatians 2:7-10; 1, 2, & 3 Joh; Revelation 1-5; 13-14; 18-22

#3 42c They also broke bread (CEV) 42 They devoted themselves ... to the breaking of bread (NRSV)

They took time to eat together. This is an important, often overlooked spiritual discipline. We have communion, we have these common meals. The disciples and Jesus spent time eating together. Some special happens over a meal.

#4 **42d** They ... prayed together. (CEV) They devoted themselves ... (to) prayer. (NRSV)

They spent time praying and praying together.

Why do you think they did this?

Lord Teach Us How to Pray

Luke 11:1-4 NRSV

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. KJV

Teach Me How to Pray: A Model for Prayer

The first thing we notice is that John taught his disciple to pray.

Secondly we notice that the one thing the Disciples sought from Jesus, asked of Jesus, was to be taught to pray. They wanted to know how to pray. They knew that prayer was a primary spiritual discipline that would sustain them, keep them, direct them and empower them.

What do we see in this prayer that stands out?

What is the template for prayer, as taught by Jesus?

How should we pray and what should we pray about?

This Prayer is:

- About what God wants and not what we want
- Half of what Jesus tells us to do in prayer is worship God
- Keep God Holy, keep God first and primary in our daily walk
- Ask that God's kingdom and God's will be done and that we will be in God's will
- God is the center of attention in this prayer
- The prayer calls for us to recognize our need for forgiveness and to receive that forgiveness as we repent / turn from our sins
- We seek and thank God for our "daily bread" - one day at a time with God - don't fret about the future but rather thank God for God's presence in our present - live in and stay in the moment
- Recognize God's power to free us from evil / power over evil
- There is nothing in this prayer about getting stuff from God
- The prayer is focused on God and God being GOD and God's will be done!

A Model for Prayer: Seven Observable Principles that Inform Our Practice

1. Recognize the sovereignty of God (God is God and God has the right / power to do what God wants to do)
2. Reverence God
3. Seek to know and be in God's will
4. Thank God for God's daily provision / live in the grace and power of the present
5. Seek God forgiveness, and correction as you repent of your sins (wrongdoings, missteps, proclivity, and mess)
6. Accept God's forgiveness
7. Seek God's guidance to lead you away from your sin issues and into a life that is more in line with God's way and God's will for your life

Jesus Prayer Practice and Principles

1. Pray in the Temple:

Luke 2:37 And now she (Anna) was eighty-four years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.

2. Find a Place and Time to Regularly Pray:

Luke 5:16 But Jesus would often go to some place where he could be alone and pray

Luke 6:12 About that time Jesus went off to a mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night there.

Mark 1:35 Very early the next morning, Jesus got up and went to a place where he could be alone and pray.

3. Pray for Those You Want to Curse or who Curse You:

Luke 6:28 Ask God to bless anyone who curses you, and pray for everyone who is cruel to you.

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you.