

10.23.05

Rhythm; Part 4

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Luke 18. Did you do your homework? Yeah? Some of you? I want to look at a couple of stories tonight. Jesus won't call them stories, He'll call them parables, but they're just stories with a point. And I want to look at two of them tonight. Both of them, according to Jesus, are going to teach the same lesson. And so I want us to look at that tonight, and I want us to kind of eat that up tonight, and then we'll go from there. So Luke 18. If you're a first time guest with us tonight, let me tell you what we're doing, we're trying to follow Jesus. I mean pretty simple. And what I mean by that is that the invitation from Christ isn't to memorize junk about him for repetition and to repeat; it is to follow him. Jesus' invitation was "come, follow me." It was his way of saying, "come live as I live...come, walk as I walk...come, follow me." That was the invitation. And so we're trying to figure out what that looks like. And so we're following or shadowing the life of Jesus, and trying to get behind and follow Him. Because there is a difference between respecting Jesus and having Him as Lord. There is a difference between affirming the teachings as good and having Jesus as Lord. It's a process called discipleship. And we said from week one that Jesus has a lot of admirers, but few followers. It's what he meant when he said "narrow is the path, and few find it." And so we're trying to figure out what it looks like to follow Jesus.

So all that being said, let's look into Luke 18 at these stories. Now, we're going to luck out here, because Jesus is going to tell us exactly what He's talking about. When it comes to parables, that's a rarity. Normally, He just tells a story and just walks away, and then later someone will go "what were you talking about?" And He'll say something like this, "well, I speak in these stories so you would be ever hearing, but never understanding." And they're even more confused, right? But we're going to luck out on this one, because He's going to tell us exactly what He's talking about. Not once, but twice. And this story is odd, but it's deep and that's what we're after, depth. So, let's go...Luke 18:1, "He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart." Now I want to stop right there, and this is kind of what we're going to do tonight. We're going to read a little bit, talk a bit, read a little bit, talk a bit. He connects two ideas here: one that we don't talk about enough and one that we talk about all the time. He says, "I'm going to tell the story...the whole reason I'm going to tell you these stories is so that this vitality of life in your soul..." (We say vitality...we say depth...we say real life, not just existence, but life) "I'm going to tell you these stories so that you'll pray and this vitality, this depth, this life inside of you won't dry up and leave you bankrupt." He's saying "I'm telling you this story, so that you'll pray and that you will not lose heart." So that in praying, we don't lose heart. So Jesus is weaving together two ideas. This idea of vitality and life and vibrance and depth, He's going to sew it together with prayer. So right out of the gate, He's saying, "you want vitality? You want deep life? You want all that I came to bring? Let's pray." So let's look at the story now. "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'" Now, let me try to explain why a widow would be going to a judge. In the first century, a widow, an older woman without a husband or sons is in a lot of trouble. She can't work. She doesn't work. In fact, it will be the mercies of others that will feed her or she'll starve. And you're going to see this happening like...if you've read the scriptures any...like you see this happening in the book of Acts when the disciples are feeding the widows, feeding the widows, feeding the widows. And the debate comes up

whether or not it was wise to have them feed the widows rather than study and preach. Remember that argument in Acts? Well, that's what's happening. They were feeding the widows. The widows were at the mercy of culture if they didn't have sons or a husband. It's evident that this woman does not have a husband and she doesn't have a son. So she's in a lot of trouble. So she goes to the only place where she thinks she can get help, and that's this judge. Now, let's watch. You've got this evil judge, and you've got this widow. Luke 18:4, "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself," and this is why I like the guy, "Even though I do not fear God nor respect man," So at least he's not playing the game, right? At least he's not pretending. He's going, "ok, I'm evil. I know it." And we'll talk here in a minute about what these two parts are talking about. When it says here, that "he does not fear God", it means he's not doing what is right because he's not afraid of there being a God that will judge him. Because people who understand God don't let elderly widows starve. Right? People who understand the essence of God, do not let the elderly starve. And what it means by "he has no regard for man," it just means that if he doesn't know you, you're not his problem. So this guy isn't completely bad. If this was his mama, he'd probably help. But this isn't his mama so he isn't helping. He's like, "Look, that's a tough deal, your husband died and you don't have any sons. That's probably God's judgment, and so there we go." And so, he refuses to help her for this season. But look at verse 5, I love this, "yet because this widow bothers me..." I don't know why I like that that's in scripture. Because everyone has someone that bothers them, alright. Someone that you just don't like, but you don't know why. "Because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out." Now, if you got kids right now, you're giggling. Because this is the game. This is the game that every child plays on their parents. "I will bother them until they give in...Can I have it now?...How about now?...No?...Now....What about now?...Would you reconsider now?...Well, I've got more facts to show you. How about now?" Just to whittle down until we would just rather give it to you to not be bothered by you anymore. That's the story. And the story's over. You've got this judge who doesn't fear God and has no regard for man, and you got this widow who pesters him until he gives in. End of story. Good night. I said we were lucky because Jesus is going to interpret it. He's not just going to leave us hanging. So, let's watch the interpretation of the story that was just told. "And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said; Now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?'" Now these look like rhetorical questions, but He's actually going to answer them in just a second. But here's what he's saying, "if this unjust man...if this man with no compassion and no mercy...who does not know this woman and has has no love for her...if he'll do what's right by being asked enough times...will I not as God who...I do know you...I do love you...I have extended mercy...I have extended compassion to you...would I abandon you?...would I ignore you?...I who elected you, called you...I who saved you...you didn't save yourself, I saved you...do you really believe I saved you, patted you on the bottom and said 'good luck, see you in heaven?' Do you really think that's what's going on? If the unjust can be pestered to right doing, do I even need to be pestered? I'm God...I love you...I chose you...I will not abandon you." See, He's going to answer it, that's exactly how He's going to answer it.

But I want to talk about one word here, because I think in our culture it's kind of deceiving. Verse 7, "now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them..." what? "...quickly." Now, here's the thing, "quickly" in the first century and "quickly" today are two different things. Because some of you hear "quickly" and are like, "I'll pray and be a millionaire and have a spouse by the end of the

night.” No...maybe...but no. So, here's something I'm learning...I'm 31, and the older I get the faster time moves. Hmm? Does it get worse? Dang it. Like I'm 31 right now, and things move fast. Like it feels to me like it was just June. Like it just turned June last week, but we're actually about to do Thanksgiving. Time moves fast. Now, not to my daughter. Like my daughter is two and a half, and six months to my daughter might as well be eternity. Because it's a fourth of her life. Ok...now...so it moves fast for me at 31. God, who is infinite, who has always been, who will always be, probably doesn't define quickly like we do in our microwave culture. But here's what we hope in...God is not random. Look right at me. He doesn't abandon, but He will most definitely chisel. He will never abandon, but He will take the hammer to you.

Now, this is one of dozens of teachings by Jesus on prayer. It's just one. In fact, we're going to read another one here at the end. But this is one of Jesus' great repetition on prayer. He's going to teach on it over and over and over and over again. In fact, some of them have become very popular coffee cup verses, right? “Ask and it will be....?” “Seek and you will....?” “Knock and the door will be...?” He's going to teach on it often, but here's the thing I want you to see tonight...so we're going to have to flip around a little bit. He doesn't just teach on it, but he lives it. I mean, prayer to Christ isn't just a teaching, but it's something that he is always in. So much so that at every major mark in the life of Christ, you'll find him praying. Let me show you what I'll mean. It'll take me a little bit to set this up, but trust me we are going somewhere. Keep your finger in Luke 18, and let's flip back to Luke 3. In Luke 3, Jesus is about to be baptized. If you have any kind of church background, you know the story. Jesus is baptized, He comes up out of the water, and what happens? Ok, dove descends, heaven opens up, audible voice of God speaks, crowd thinks it's thunder, but let's look at the details of the baptism. Starting in verse 21, “Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.’” So baptism for Christ wasn't an empty ritual, but rather He is actively engaging God the Father as He gets into the water, praying at His baptism.

Flip over just a couple of chapters to Luke 6. In Luke 6, He is about to choose the 12 disciples. He hasn't chosen the 12 yet. He does have some disciples who are following Him, but He doesn't have the 12. He doesn't have that 2nd core, not the inner-inner core, but the inner core, that's going to be the foundation of the early church outside of Judas who gets hung. So Luke 6:12, “It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.” So, before He chooses the twelve, He heads to the mountain and spends all night on the mountain praying about the selection of the twelve. So at his baptism, the beginning of his ministry, He's praying. At the selection of the twelve, He's praying.

Let's look at several more, I won't go through all of these for time's sake, but I want to be sure we do enough to make a point. Let's go to Mark 1. Mark 1 has a great verse in it, and it's specifically for college students, so you'll see what I'm talking about when we get there. Mark 1:35, “In the early morning...” Ok....ambiguous term...what does that mean? 9:30? 10:00? “...while it was still dark...” Alright, so early in the morning is not 10:00AM. That's midmorning. “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place,” and He was doing what there? Praying. So early in the morning, He's praying.

Matthew 14, it's too your left. Matthew 14:23, "After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray..." and what's the next line? "...and it was evening."

Ok...so at his baptism, He's praying...the selection of the twelve, He's praying...early in the morning, He's praying...late into the evening, He's praying.

Let's look at a couple other major moments in the life of Christ. Go to Luke 9. What huge, monumental part of Jesus' life is in Luke 9? Transfiguration. Luke 9:28, "Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James..." Let's call those the big three. They are his inner circle. There's the twelve, and then there's the three. We'll read about them in a second. "He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah." Now, why is that weird? Because they had been dead for about 800 years. It's always strange when guys who had been dead for 800 years show up. Right? So Jesus, at the transfiguration, praying begins to perfectly reflect the glory of God, and the Law and the prophet show up. But He doesn't just walk up to the mountain and click his sandals three times, "there's not place like home...there's not place like home." No, He's praying. And as He's praying, He reflects purely the glory of God.

At His baptism...praying. At the selection of the twelve...praying. Early in the morning...praying. Late at night...praying. At the transfiguration...praying.

Flip back over to Matthew, right before the cross. Matthew 26. I said when we started this series that when we looked at the Apostles Creed that there's all this focus on the divinity of Christ that we sometimes lose the humanity of Christ, and they both have to be present for this thing to work. And I wish, doctrinally, I could get into that right now. Starting in January, we're going preach through the book of Hebrews. We're going to just go until it's done. We're just going to line-by-line that mug. When we get to that, we'll talk about that, but for now He's 100% God and 100% man. Verse 36, you're going to see the humanity of Jesus here, "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and" what? "distressed." Ask 1000 people to give you a word for Jesus, none of them will give you "distressed." That's how He's described here. Let's keep going, "Then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.'" And this "keep watch" is just a biblical or 1st Century way of saying, "pray with me." Jesus doesn't need a lookout; He knows exactly what's coming for Him, which is why He's grieved, distressed, overwhelmed to the point of death as He would say. So "keep watch with Me" is the "pray with me here."

At His baptism, praying...before He selects the twelve, praying...early in the morning, praying...late at night, praying...before the cross, praying...on the cross... Let's go back to Luke so we can get us back close to chapter 18. Luke 23.

And I always want to use this time to kind of chat a little bit, because there are these things that we get taught in church, if you grew up in church. And sometimes, they're just traditions; they're not true at

all, they're just traditions. For example, on the cross, Jesus says "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" And historically, for some reason in this area, that has been taught that in that moment, all the sin of the world was put on Jesus and God turned His back on Jesus. Which is why the clouds rolled in, it got all dark, because God turned His back on Jesus. How many of you have heard that? That's horrible, horrible, horrible. How does God turn His back on Himself? And by the way, just for the record, He can see through clouds. It's not like on a cloudy day we're like "Woohoo! Debauchery! We can't be seen!" Come on now. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" is a quote straight out of the book of Psalms 22. And in that same Psalm, you'll find this, "They have pierced my hands and my feet. They have stabbed my side. They gamble for my garments." Does that sound familiar? Does that sound like another story? Does it sound like it might be a messianic prophecy? Jesus is going, "I had to be this way. You've read this in the temple." That's not a prayer; that's a quote. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" is a quote directly out of Psalm 22. God did not turn His back on Jesus. And listen, on so many levels, it makes no sense that that's been taught to us. The sins of the universe were always there. It's not like the world was a jack-in-the-box. (Humming 'Pop Goes the Weasel') Pop! [God] "Ohhh! I gotta turn away from that." I mean it's always been there. God knew them, that's why Jesus came. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" It's not a prayer. God did not turn his back on Jesus, but what a great lesson that is. "All of a sudden I'm going to turn My back on you." Does anyone else even think that runs contrary to all that God is? Anyway, that was completely different.

Luke 23:34, "But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And then, look in verse 46 as He gives up his spirit, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT."

So, at his baptism, praying...at the selection of the twelve, praying...early in the morning, praying...late at night, praying...at the transfiguration, praying...before the cross, praying...on the cross, praying! So, follow me here. The way of Jesus is that prayer is not built around a specific time or place in life, but rather it is life. So for Jesus, this isn't just a spiritual discipline, but it's how He lives. When things are good, He's praying...when things are bad, He's praying...early in the morning, He's praying...late at night, He's praying. So although He's walking, He never seems to be off his knees. The way of Jesus is that prayer isn't built into a 30 minute block in the morning, and I'm not saying "don't do that," because I think discipline is a big part of the Christian life. But if that's all it is, then you've missed the point. Something's become mechanical and not living. The way of Jesus is that we wake up in the morning going, "Thank You for another day, because I know a lot of people didn't get it. Thank You for breakfast this morning, because the majority of the world will not eat like I'm going to eat today or cannot afford a \$2.00 cup of coffee." As my daughter runs into the room, "Thank You for my daughter's health, because there are a lot of three year old little girls in the hospital. Thank You that my car starts. Thank You that gas is under \$9.00 again. What should I do here? Do You want me to say something here? How do I handle this?" It seems like Jesus is in this consistent if not constant connection, communion with the Father. It does not, for Jesus, rotate around meals and tragedy. Are you tracking with me? Prayer for Jesus does not seem to revolve around meals and dark times. The way of Jesus is never saying "Amen." There's not a closing; there's just communion.

Now, why is prayer such a huge piece of being the people of Jesus? Let's go back to Luke 18. Let's get there, then I want us to chat some before we read the second story that will start in verse 10. Why is

prayer such a huge, huge piece of being the people of Jesus? In the first story we read, Jesus calls us the widows. He compares us...we are, in the story, the widow. And if you're going, "well, that makes God the unrighteous, not God fearing judge," well, ok, but you've got to pull the truth out of it. He also says He's going to come like a thief in the night. And His point there is He's coming in a sudden, unexpected fashion. So you pull, from the story, the truths. And here's what He's saying, He's saying here that you and I are like the widow. We're like the widow in that we are in dire, desperate need. And that if He does not help, we're in trouble. Now, let me say this to you, and this is not going to be an easy 10 minutes, but let's just do it. Prayer, more than any other spiritual discipline, reveals what's really in your heart and how much pride you operate in. Prayer, more than any other discipline, reveals what you really believe about you, what you really believe about God, and how much pride is in the tank of your soul. Because God's going, "you're the widow,," that we live in this mirage of safety, health and wealth. And we feel like we've got this control that we don't have.

When I was at The Park, which was a church in Abilene, they said, "hey, here's \$1000 a month, go get you an intern." So I went out and Abilene, although a dark and desolate land, is a very young place. And there's a gigantic Air Force base there. There's three colleges and a JuCo. And so of that 150,000 people, probably 60,000 of them are between the ages of 18 & 26. It is a very young city. And so, knowing that there were so many college students there, I didn't take that \$1000 a month and get a intern, I went and got **four**. Because college kids, you can get for really cheap. I'd say "like \$200 a month" and they're like "Oh!" And that's like \$1000 in Abilene. So I hired like four interns, and I had to set some rules for the interns. I hired like two girls and two men and said, "you can't date each other, because if you break up, then things are going to get weird." And so one of the interns, a guy by the name of John Mark was like, "fine, I won't date Laura," and he just married her. So some of you might go, "man, did you discipline him? Are you crazy?" That's the kind of ingenuity I'm looking for on staff! He didn't break the rules, but he solved the problem. That's the kind of problem solving techniques that I admire. And so he's like, "I didn't date her, but we are married." And so it worked out alright. And Johnny's a big red-headed guy and very freak-show smart. And if you ever hear a guy that's been to bible college or seminary say another guy's freak-show smart, it just that he did the languages really easy, Hebrew and Greek. That's all it means. All that "freak-show" means in the theological world is that they did Greek and Hebrew without crying and asking God to kill them. And so he was brilliant at those deals, and he's currently at Southern Seminary and pastoring a church of about 30 or 40 people, a great little church that he's learning at. I got a phone call Thursday afternoon and I asked him if I could use him as an illustration because it was so perfect as we were getting ready for this weekend. And he said, "please do." And he found out later Thursday afternoon that he was having some trouble with his left hand, like his left hand was just doing some goofy stuff. So they went in and just started running tests. And they found in the right side of his brain a pretty good sized tumor, like beyond the size of a golf ball. He's probably around 24. Now, let me ask you a question. John Mark is very physically strong. How strong do you think he feels right now? Would you say that just maybe the mirage of human strength was lifted for John Mark on Thursday? He is very, very smart. I would say that the mirage of human intellect was lifted for John on Thursday. You think you have this control, and in the end, you're the widow.

Like, with our kids, we can kiss our kids all that we can, until your lips get chapped and they push you away. You can pray with them. You can tell them all the great children's of the bible, like when God kills the whole earth except for Noah, and the bodies are floating, you know. Put that up on their

walls, and go “this is when God killed everyone. You had better listen.” I don't know how that happened, but somehow that became a children's story. And you can tell them all the great stories of the bible. You can watch who they hang out with. You can make sure they're in church and in youth group, but there aren't any guarantees. None. Ask any parent whose children have made it through high school and college unscathed by major, major sin. And I've never met one of them who'll take the credit, but almost all of them overwhelmed with gratitude at the grace of Christ in that area.

You can be roses and romance to your spouse, and that's no guarantee. You can have no debt and a huge savings account and no guarantee. The second this service is over, I walk through those back doors, I grab my computer bag, I'm going to get in the car and Patterson and I are going to catch a flight to Seattle tonight. And I'm going to put on my seatbelt and the rest is in God's hands. I have no control. So it is with life. You have no control. What do you think you have control over that can't be taken away from you in an instant? With one visit to the doctor. With one economy that collapses. And by the way, don't you think that trillions of dollars in money spent that doesn't exist is eventually going to catch up to all of us? You're the widow man...bottom line. You can pretend and spend and doubt and play games in your mind all you want. End of the day, you are the widow. You control nothing.

How many seminary boys do we have here? Ok, here's how it works out for the guy who goes to bible college or seminary. Well, this is my own testimony anyhow. Here's how it worked for me. Somewhere along those 4 to 7 years...that's undergrad and seminary golly...somewhere along the way, you begin to learn methods of biblical interpretation and exegesis. If you're not in seminary, don't every worry about that word. Exegesis or a format of how you interpret scripture. And somewhere along they way, that thing that burns inside of you in the beginning where you know you're not good enough and you know you're not smart enough and you know you can't do it. So you pray and beg and pray and plead that Jesus would speak through you. It fades under a weight of methodology. And all of a sudden, scripture has become a textbook. And I think that if we're not careful, we begin to violate the holy. Let's just be straight up honest. Do you know what I am? I'm a motivator, that's it. And how long does that last, honestly? I mean honestly, we come in here every week, and I preach my guts out and we go, “yeah let's do it!” And then we get in our car and drive home, and this is the night we're going to go home and just commune with Jesus and we're going to read our Bible. But most of the time, it doesn't even make it home. It didn't even get you to tomorrow. I cant make you write something in your notes; Jesus can write it on your heart. I can make you want to change; He can change you. Do you see the difference? So if it's just me up here and I can hold their attention and I can wordsmith and get them to write it down and I can make them want to change, but in the end, that's just smoke and mirrors if the heart isn't transformed by the Holy Spirit of God. In the end, we just wasted each other's time and birthed frustration into one another, because we want to do better, but we continually fail at getting there. That's one of the ways it happens. That's one of the ways we lose sight of being the widow. But make no mistake, that's who we are. Somebody paint that. Somebody make that movie. We're the widow

Let's look at the second story. Luke 18:10. I love that this story is in the Bible. It's another weird one. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.” If you're a guest with us tonight, here's what that means. The Pharisees were this religious ruling party. I guess you would call them a bishop. And then a tax collector was a really seedy position in this culture.

Like you almost had to steal to make money at it. So it wasn't an easy job to have and be a believer. Let's go, "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to..." who? Don't miss that. Yeah. This is Jesus' subtle way of saying, "He isn't talking to Me." The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself. 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers," and here's my favorite part, "or even like this guy!" I love that he stops and finds a guy. "That I'm not unjust and a swindler like hmmm you, sir raise your hand. That guy! I'm not like him. Stand up for us." How in the world does it get this bad? How in the world do you go from acknowledging what's right before Christ to getting to this place. It happens all the time, but it seems baffling that you can get here. Notice just the subtleties of it. Jesus says, "A man prayed to himself." Notice the subtleties. Verse 12, "I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." Let me give you a real general rule of thumb. Biblically, when men get near God, they never bring up themselves outside of little lines like "woe is me" or "kill me now." You tend not to bring up yourself in front of the creator of the universe. It would be much like bringing up the athletic conquests of your jr. high days at the foot of Mt. Everest. "Isn't this mountain glorious?" "About as glorious as my 40 yard touchdown return in 6th grade." "What?!?" "I know. It was huge!" "Are you kidding me? You were 11!" Yeah, men don't talk about themselves in front of God. They just don't. I don't think they can. He leaves the soul nothing but fearful and in awe.

In 1998, I had the privilege of going into India...Udaipur and New Delhi. I've gotten to meet a few people over the years, and this probably my favorite human being, a man by the name of Richard. That wasn't his name, but that's what people called him. He was from Sudan, Africa. His name like had a "click" in it, so he was like "it's Richard, don't even try it." I asked a lot of questions, and there were several little lines that he said that it took me awhile to get. And he would say, "we don't have Tylenol in Sudan." He'd always say that. Like I'd say something or bring something up, and he would say, "we don't have Tylenol in Sudan." He must have said it 40 times in our little 17 day excursion. I was like, "what does that mean?...Did they have Bayer?...What do they use?" Well, it finally clicked for me. Like if I don't feel good, I'll go take a nap. If I wake up and I still don't feel good, I'll get a Vente Drip. If after the Vente Drip, I don't feel better, I'll eat something healthy and go to sleep and get a full night's rest. If I wake up the next morning and still don't feel well, I'll repeat all the things I did the day before. If day three and I'm still not feeling well, the pressure put on me by my wife will send me to my doctor. At my doctor, he'll just give me random pills, "here, try this...good luck...let us know." And then if those don't work, then I pray. Then I pray. Richard says, "we don't have Tylenol...we just pray. We pray first, because we don't have Tylenol to take." Do you pray? If not, why not? What does that mean if you don't? Here's the biggest question, will you even have the courage to wrestle with this or will you shut it off the second I dismiss you to communion so you don't have to wrestle with the tough parts of your soul? Do you pray? What does that mean if you don't? Why not? This is the way of Jesus. Next week, we'll talk about how we pray...what it looks like. Until then, let's pray.

Father, I just ask for your help because of the things we've already said. Because I can motivate in here about prayer tonight and hopefully say things well enough to make everybody in here want to pray more, but I can't make anybody and put it into the hearts of anybody to engage You and pray with You and cry out to You. But I pray that You would shift the paradigm on us tonight Father. I pray instead of viewing prayer just this simple block of time built around meals or around this 15-20 minutes in the morning, but that we would start seeing it differently. That we would begin to look for communing with You. That we begin to look at being grateful that as we leave here and that burst of cold air from outside hits us that we would be grateful that life has seasons and that we would thank You and say it

out loud. And as we walk out of this place tonight with loved ones or friends, our heart would be filled with gratitude that You've given us relationships. Father, as we eat food tonight that we would be grateful that the majority of the world does not eat like us and we would tell You about it. And as we laid in a comfortable bed not outside, not homeless, not in danger that with great gratitude we would thank You. Father, that we would ask you about relationships that we're in. That we would cry out to You for directions and guidance. I don't know when it became to be a bad thing to be a spiritual people, Father, but I ask that You would restore a heart of prayer in this place. That prayer would be first, primary and always. I don't know how we can teach this better. I don't know if we teach more often on it or we start Wednesday night prayer meeting up or I don't know how we do this, but help us Father. Help us. I thank You for the Sabbath that slows us down enough to see and I pray that the Sabbath along with this teaching will slow enough to see the world and commune with you over the good, the bad and the ugly, in good times and bad times, in the morning and at night, help us. I pray that all the complicated teachings on prayer that have gone on into our ears over they years would be erased and that we would just start talking and listening and engaging and communing. I pray that the weight of Your words that would say that our vitality, our hearts being filled, that those two are separately linked to a heart that communes with you in constant and consistent prayer. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen