

Message from Amy

“...in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil 4:6)

In her book, *Unbinding the Gospel*, Gay Reese emphasizes the importance of prayer for everything we do as church. According to Reese, regardless of a church’s particulars (size, strengths, weaknesses, ambitions, theology, denomination, etc.) those that truly reach people (inside and outside the congregation) who do not know the love of God start with prayer. Churches that bathe everything in prayer grow in their mission work, in their spiritual depth, in their numbers.

It sounds so basic: “Pray first.” But I think it’s something we often take for granted. Or, in a church setting, we might assume others -- our leaders, ministers, elders, deacons, committee chairs – are praying, so we don’t have to. At least not as often. At least not regularly.

We in the Search and Study Wednesday night group are making our way through *Unbinding the Gospel*, and are finding much food for thought about our own prayer lives. Last week, we paired up into “prayer partners.” For a week, we were pray daily and check in with our prayer partners several times. This has caused me to be more intentional about my own prayer life. One thing I have realized is how easy it is to let prayer slide to accommodate other activities. In being more intentional about prayer, I realized how much I miss it.

The Apostle Paul tells us to let our requests “be made known to God” in prayer. We might wonder, “Why do I need to tell God what I want? Surely God knows what I want! Why do I need to ask?” This is a good question. God does know what’s on our hearts, and knows the deepest desires of our hearts even better than we do. So why do we need to tell God we want a better job, a new puppy, a baby sister, Aunt Martha to get well, or peace of mind? God knows we want this already, right?

One way to think about prayer is to imagine a cool mountain stream on a hot day. When we pray, we take off our shoes and socks and go stand in that cool stream. We open our hearts and minds to God, and put ourselves in the cool, refreshing stream of God’s love for the whole world. As we rest deeply in the prayer stream, we notice that the desires we had on shore have drifted away. Other hopes take their place.

In this way, praying isn’t so much about telling God what we want, but about aligning ourselves with God’s desires for the world. And this is a very peaceful, refreshing thing to do. It certainly feels more authentic to me than giving God a list of what I want!

I hope each of us is mindful of our prayer life, and will find time each day to take off our shoes and wade in!

Blessings,

Rev. Amy Lignitz Harken