

ULC Sermon Study Resource

Teach Us to Pray: Prayer as Encounter

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Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What's a subject or skill you had to wrestle with to learn? Discuss!

Reading: Ephesians 3:14-19

Outline:

- I. We encounter God in prayer as we are strengthened by His Spirit (v14-16).
 - a. We're invited to not just know God's Spirit is at work in us, but to experience it.
 - b. The truth of the gospel is not meant to just reside in our heads, but to be experienced in our inner being.

Q: What does being "strengthened with power" look like?
- II. We encounter God in prayer as we grasp the love of Christ (v17-19a).
 - a. We're invited to grab, wrestle with, pin down, and seize hold of Christ's love for us.
 - b. Meditation and pondering the love of Christ through prayer allows us to encounter Him.

Q: What does it mean to be "rooted and grounded in love?"
- III. We encounter God in prayer as we are filled with His fullness (v19b).
 - a. In a time of isolation, we can still be filled with God's Spirit and all the goodness He brings.
 - b. God longs to meet with us, so much that he sent His Son that one day we might experience his fullness in eternity one day.

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) Have you had a spiritual encounter with God, in prayer or otherwise?
- 2) Is Jesus' love for you something you've ever wrestled with? What did it look like?
- 3) Do you take time to meditate on and ponder God's love for you in your prayers?
- 4) Which dimension (breadth, length, depth, height) of God's love resonates most with you?
- 5) How are you encountering God in a time of social isolation?

Suggestions for further study:

- Psalm 103:1-14 **Q: What imagery does the psalmist use to describe God's love?**
- John 10:22-42 **Q: What does Jesus promise for those who hear his voice?**
- 1 John 3:1-3 **Q: What relationship does the writer use to illustrate God's love?**

Closing Prayer: *"Lord God, we thank you that in the midst of a time in which we can't encounter each other as fully as we'd like, we can still encounter you. We thank you that you meet us, that you sent your Spirit into our lives to strengthen us, in order that we can grasp the love you have for us in Christ. We pray that all who hear this message would encounter you. We pray that they'd seek to encounter you, the One who sent Jesus for them, who gave up everything for them, and who longs to meet with them, in prayer. Lord, teach us to encounter you in prayer. We pray this in your Holy Name. Amen."*