

WEEK OF PRAYER 2017

PRAYING WITH CONFIDENCE

**“Let us then approach God’s
throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help us in our
time of need.”**

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

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January 8th “Fasting and Prayer” by: Pastor Dan Lund

As we here at Bethel Christian start our week of fasting and prayer for our church I feel it's important to first focus on what it's all about. The one thing that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them about wasn't carpentry, although it was his family trade, or even fishing, although he could fill the nets when others weren't catching a thing. What they wanted to know about was his prayer life. They had seen the power of his prayer life as people were healed from sickness and disease and set free from demonic affliction, oppression and possession. They were keen enough to know that because he got up early in the mornings and sought the Lord and made those times of solitude in the Father's presence, it was the reason He moved in power. His public prayer life was a manifestation and overflow of his private prayer life. And Jesus would challenge us to do the same. Jesus said, "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" Matthew 6:5-6. There's nothing wrong with praying out loud or with exuberance and we'll never confuse God, but if it's for show and the only time you pray is to be heard then it's in vain. Whether you pray loud, quietly or silently, your public prayer should always be an overflow of your private prayer life. Jesus also taught that some prayers will only be answered when they are connected to fasting, Matthew 17:21. So, my Resolution Challenge for us all this week is to make a private place of prayer in our home where we can spend daily time in His presence. And secondly, pray about how you'll fast in some way this week by refraining from certain foods or media or recreation, and take that additional time to pray more. I believe that as we all join in this time of fasting and prayer – victories will happen in Jesus Name!

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January 9th “Commitment” by: Pastor Bryan Hart

One of the greatest things I believe that Christians struggle with is their daily commitment to a personal prayer time. What a great opportunity we have as a church to start off 2017 with a week of fasting and prayer. (Read Luke 5:3-11) We say that we are committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. How committed? Total commitment means that Jesus Christ is Lord in every area of our lives. He must be Lord on Saturday as well as Sunday. He must be Lord of our bodies as well as our brains. He must be Lord of what we save as well as what we sacrifice. He must be Lord of our careers as well as our life. Are we totally committed to Jesus Christ? My prayer and challenge is that we make a New Year's resolution in 2017 to be committed to Christ in all we do. Lets commit to grow, to tithe, to pray, to be better husbands and wives, to be a light, and to be better witnesses for Christ. At the beginning of Luke 5, we see that Peter is on the beach washing his fishing nets. When we come to verse 11 we see that Peter has left his boat, his nets, and everything to follow the Lord. The miracle of the great catch of fish has resulted in a miracle in the life of Peter. The steps toward total commitment, which we see Peter take, are steps that growing Christians must take as well. So, for today I want to give us two steps we need to take in order to live out our commitments for 2017. The first step is get involved. Peter allowed Jesus to use his boat. This is a huge step in the right direction. We too must be willing to get involved and turn over what we own for the Lord to use: we own time, money, and even our talents. We must be willing to surrender and give these to God and let Him use them for His Glory! It is hypocrisy to speak of total commitment to the Lord when we are not willing to turn over our "boats" to Him. The next step is dependence, Peter left it all and now all he had was the Lord. It is when we depend and trust in the Lord that our commitment is no longer a sideline, this is a place of all in and no return. I pray and challenge us all to commit to the Lord in all we do and remember to pray!

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January 10th "Holiness" by: Pastor Dale

We serve a great God! He has blessed us with life and another year to serve Him. As we start this new year many of us have set some New Year resolutions, or goals we want to accomplish before the end of the year. Some goals may be to spend more time with our families, work less hours, make more money, spend more time with God, and the list goes on. Being "Holy" may not be one of the things on our list. But I want to challenge you today, "to be holy". Why? Because God commands us to. All throughout the Scriptures God calls His people to be holy, because He is Holy(Lev 11:44), and what is true of God should be true of his people. When we refer to God, holiness relates to his absolute purity, perfection, completeness and separation from evil. In relation to ourselves or to God's people, we think of holiness as being morally pure, spiritually whole, separated from the lusts or ungodly ways of the world and it sets us apart to love, serve and worship God. Holiness is not only avoiding evil, it is also pursuing holiness or godliness. Holiness is a goal of our calling to follow Christ (Eph 1:4). It means being like God and being dedicated completely to him. We are made holy by the sanctifying or purifying work of the Holy Spirit, by Christ's sacrifice, by being renewed in the image of God and by the gift of God's grace which enables us to obey God and live by his Word. In First Peter 1:13-25, Peter is encouraging the exiled Christians throughout Asia and the surrounding area's to be set apart for God (Sanctified). Even though they are being persecuted and living in an ungodly world, he encouraged them to remain holy, because He is Holy. He didn't want them to lose what they had in Christ and return to their old life.

Today, I want to encourage you to be set apart to God and be Holy. Throughout the next year, set a goal to read the Word and pray daily. When we do this, the Holy Spirit changes us and we become more like Him.

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January 11th “Investment” by: Pastor Jeremy Burnett

One important thing to consider when reflecting on life as a new year starts is INVESTMENTS. I’m not necessarily talking about stocks and bonds, but they say you can learn a lot about a person from looking at their checking account register. If someone looked at yours, what would they assume about you by what you are investing your finances in? The same could be said about your time. Are you investing on things that will help you become the person that you want to become? Are you giving more time to your loved ones, your church, and other things you care about or is your life filled with work, stress, and the next project? Luke 16:10a says, “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.” Being wise and faithful with the way you invest now prepares you for the future that God has planned for you.

It is so important to take care of yourself, and this is a great time to make changes that will help. I want to encourage you to invest in YOU! Identify things you want to be, and make and follow a plan to get there. Spend time in the Word, in prayer, and worshipping God (both at church and on our own.) Next, invest in your FAMILY! If you are married, invest in your marriage. Take time to regularly date your spouse (even if that means getting a babysitter.) Schedule family fun with your kids before the calendar gets filled up with the busyness of life! Spend time praying together and leading family devotionals. Finally, spend time investing in OTHERS! That might be your friends, or your neighbors, or the cashier at Wal-Mart! Ask God to help you identify people in your community that you can focus on. Show them God’s love. That might mean inviting them over, just listening to how they are doing, or it might mean sharing your testimony or praying for them. God will help you to be Christ’s ambassador if you are willing to be used. You are uniquely qualified for the position as God made you just the way you are and placed you purposefully in the lives of those you interact with regularly. Are you willing to make an investment in yourself and others this year?

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January 12th "Growth" by: Pastor Dale

Are you growing? Growth can pertain to many different areas of life. It can be physical, from conception until our late teens, we are physically growing. In our education, we grow every year in wisdom or knowledge until we graduate high school or college and earn a degree. In our relationships, we grow as we spend time together and get to know one another. There are many ways to grow, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc. Our walk with the Lord is no different. When we give our hearts to Jesus we are "Born Again". At that point we are new born babes and we start to grow in our walk and relationship with Christ. Some Christians stop at this point and never grow, they remain babes, only drinking the milk, as the author of Hebrews puts it in Hebrews 5:12-14. Milk can help a new born child grow only to a certain point, but then they need solid food to help their bodies mature. In the same way, Christians can only survive so long on the milk, but they need solid food to help them mature. "Milk" stands for elementary instruction in the Christian walk. "Solid food" is, of course, more advanced instruction, the kind of teaching beginners cannot make much of but which is invaluable to those who have made some progress.

In the New Testament we see Peter and Paul and other writers, writing to Christians about their growth. It seems that they stopped growing in their spiritual walk with Christ. The writers were upset that the Christians still needed "milk", when they should be teachers themselves. As I asked earlier; are you growing? After conversion, our lives should be marked by continuous growth (1Cor 3:1-4; Heb 5:11-14). This growth comes from the teaching about Christ and God the Father. We need to be reading and studying the Word of God and praying, we cannot stay idle. Our world is corrupt and sinful, if we are not growing(maturing) in Christ, we are in danger of falling away. We have started a new year, I want to encourage you to be in the Word and prayer daily. Make it a goal to grow in your spiritual walk with the Lord this year.

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January 13th “Stewardship” by: Pastor Christa Lund

One of the busiest times for retail and when you see the longest lines in stores is the week before Christmas. People are filling their carts with last minute items to wrap and place under the tree and praying that when they're gift is opened it will be a hit. But the week after Christmas is when the return lines look like the checkout lines did the week before. In the month after, which is right about now, people begin to cringe because the reality sets in that all that shopping on credit cards and accounts has to be paid off. Right about now is when buyer's remorse kicks in and people begin to regret what they spent and what they bought. It seemed like such a necessity at the time but weeks later it appears to be nothing but an unnecessary extravagance. And we all know that hindsight is 20/20 and you can't undo what you did a month ago, but you can plan to be proactive instead of reactive for the year to come. So my prayer is that we'll all make a New Year's resolution in 2017 to be Godly stewards of everything He places in our hands as we put Him first.

Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Dan and I have things we have planned and saved and prepared for over the years and there are things we're saving and seeking now. For example, when Hannah moves out, we'll need a new car for him so we're saving now and we'll seek later. But the first thing we always need to seek is God's wisdom to know God's will so we can do things God's way. And this includes stewardship. So first of all, let's resolve that this year we will put our giving to God first. The Bible calls it the tithe and it's the 10% of our income. Then secondly, let's resolve to run all of our other spending through God first as well. What does that mean? It means that before you spend money you will pray, you will line it up with God's Word, and you will remember that “Godliness with contentment is great gain” 1 Timothy 6:6.

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January 14th “Relationships” by: Pastor Dan Lund

So as we've talked about New Year's resolves for 2017 and challenged our hearts in prayer this past week, we end on something that is vitally important to us all. The entire reason Jesus came into the world was to restore broken relationships. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin and shame covered their lives and the perfect relationship they had with God was severed. Why you ask? Because God cannot abide with sin. It's the same reason Satan fell from heaven. He was in perfect relationship with His creator and yet, when pride entered his heart and he sinned against God, he was cast down from his place in glory and was eternally separated from the loving, protective presence of God. Sin always separates us from our relationship with God. But it not only separates us from God, sin also separates us from others. How many friendships and families have been destroyed because sin entered in? The greed that destroyed the friendship, the lust that destroyed the marriage, the anger that came between the siblings and the list goes on. But I'm praying that we will all make a New Year's Resolution in 2017 to build healthier relationships with each other and to strengthen our relationship with God.

Let's first pray for our relationship with God and that if there is any sin coming between us and Him, that it will be revealed to us so we can repent and draw unto the Lord in a deeper and closer way. Secondly, let's pray for God's heart and mind in our relationships with others. Many times we only see things from our perspective and we're unwilling to walk in their shoes, but if we have the heart and mind of God, He'll help us see things more clearly and give us full understanding of the big picture. Thirdly, let's pray for our relationships in the world. We are not to be of the world, but we are to be a light unto the world. So let's pray that in 2017 we'll build relationships with purpose to lead others to the cross! "...I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one," John 17:20-21.