

## CROSS TRAINING – ESSENTIALS 2, CLASS 11

### PRAYER AND FASTING

*“Emotional intensity is in itself no proof for spiritual depth. If we pray in terror we shall pray earnestly, it only proves that terror is an earnest emotion. Only God Himself can let the bucket down to the depths in us...Now the disquieting thing is not simply that we skimp and begrudge the duty of prayer. The really disquieting thing is it should have to be numbered among duties at all. For we believe that we were created “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” And if the few, the very few, minutes we now spend in discourse with God are a burden to us rather than a delight, what then?” – C.S. Lewis*

1. **Prayer and fasting are integral to the Christian’s relationship with God (Mt.6:5-15).**

These two things are vital to experiencing the victorious Christian life, but they can often become “duties” for us if Jesus is not our focus. Today we will talk about each of these, but we will keep them separate. There is so much to discuss about these topics we will try to focus on the most important issues – enough, hopefully, to encourage you and further prepare you in these areas.

2. **Prayer.** Prayer is very simply communicating with God. Without communication a relationship will become very stagnant.

3. Intro:

a. Sticky situations

- i. Ever been in one?
- ii. Know that it is impossible to get out of.
- iii. Reflecting that wisdom would have prevented it?
- iv. Thailand

1. Mission trip 6 years ago.
2. “Pray” Mountain.
3. Monsoon season.
  - a. Rain switch.
4. No power steering, rear-wheel drive, no 4x4.
  - a. Realize our predicament.
  - b. Start praying
5. Sharp turn, nearer to the rice patty.
  - a. Really start praying.
6. All alone, no telephone, no speaky Thai.
  - a. Nearest house ½ mile, “10 miles”
  - b. Hello, thank you, fried rice, I have an older sister.
  - c. Get out and push, a little help.
7. 10 little Thai men come out of the wood work.
  - a. 2 little girls.
  - b. Lots of prayer.
8. End of story

b. Sometimes prayer comes easy.

- i. Pulling teeth,
- ii. Mind control.

c. So easy to memorize a prayer, ask for a few blessings, then go about the day.

- i. Children's nightly prayer.
    - ii. Our Father
  - d. Prayer has just become a habit because we were raised that way.
    - i. When we stop to think, we really have no clue.
  - e. Told it is communication with God.
    - i. What does that really mean?
    - ii. Tonight...
- 4. Purpose of prayer.
  - a. Why pray?
    - i. Matt 6:8b. "...for your father knows what you need before you ask him."
      - 1. Why pray if God already knows?
      - 2. Yes it is communication.
        - a. What does that mean?
  - b. Develops our intimacy with him.
    - i. Psalm 62:8 "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."
      - 1. example from my marriage
        - a. Creates trust.
          - i. I can see him working.
        - b. Honesty.
          - i. No longer afraid.
          - ii. Helps me understand his character.
            - 1. Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
            - 2. Psalm 37:4 "Delight yourself in the Lord."
              - 1 Experience great pleasure and joy in His presence. Only comes from knowing him well.
            - 3. Psalm 34:8 "Taste and see that the Lord is good..."
              - 1 "Try this, I know you'll like it."
              - 2 The more we know him the more we see how good he is.
    - c. Develops our character.
      - i. Gal 5:16, 22, 23 "So I say live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." "...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
    - d. Talking to my Grandpa!

- i. “Well hey there!”
    - ii. God really likes it!
      - 1. Prov. 15:8 “...The prayer of the upright pleases him.”
      - 2. He really likes talking to us!
  - e. We get to take part in what God is doing!
    - i. James 5:16 “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”
  - f. Glorifies God.
    - i. John 14:13 “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”
      - 1. God’s desire is that everyone sees how good he is to them.
  - g. How we seek and find God.
    - i. Matt 7:7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”
    - ii. Jeremiah 33:3 “Call to me and I will answer you...”
  - h. Keeps us from temptation.
    - i. Matt. 26:41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”
  - i. Meets our needs.
    - i. James 4:2b “...you do not have, because you do not ask God.
      - 1. striving by yourself, not giving it to God.
      - 2. Takes humility.
    - ii. Matt 7:11 “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”
      - 1. If we can give gifts imagine what he can do!
    - iii. 2 Cor. 3:5 “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves but our competence comes from God.”
  - j. Helps us to depend on him.
    - i. 2 Cor. 12:8,9 “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”
  - k. Gives us a heart that’s fully His!
    - i. Psalm 63:1-8
5. Procedure of prayer.
- a. Prayer and the Word of God are inseparable.
    - i. Andrew Murray, “When I pray, I must seek to know God aright. It is through the Word that the Holy Spirit gives me right thoughts of Him. The Word will also teach me how wretched and sinful I am. It reveals to me all the wonders that God will do for me, and the strength He will give to me to do His will. The Word teaches me how to pray-with strong desire, with a firm faith, and with constant perseverance. The Word teaches me not only what I am, but what I may become through God’s grace. And above all, it reminds me

each day that Christ is the great intercessor, and allows me to pray in His name.”

- ii. How can I talk to someone if I don't take the initiative to get to know them?
  - iii. A one way conversationalist.
- b. Is God my personal piggy bank?
- i. Let me be rich, with a job I like, a nice house, lots of cars, a perfect spouse, perfect kids, let me be happy forever and please take all my problems away!
  - ii. Taken out of context.
    1. Mark 11:24 “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.”
    2. The truth:
      - a. James 4:3 “When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”
        - i. God doesn't want to be used and abused.
        - ii. He definitely has good boundaries.
        - iii. How would the right character be produced in us?
        - iv. Would a good parent give a child everything he wants.
  - iii. According to God's will.
    1. People say that: It's not God's will that his people should suffer, be sick, be poor, die...
    2. Not Biblical
      - a. Important to read God's word.
        - i. Meaning for these things.
      - b. Romans 8:28..
      - c. Heb 12
      - d. Paul
      - e. Blessed are those who mourn...
        - i. With the comfort...
        - ii. Rejoices in the death of his saints.
          1. He gets to be with them.
          2. They get to be with him.
          3. They finished the race.
            - 1 They are done with sin.
        - iii. Abiding in Christ and Mourning.
    3. Explain why we need to pray this way.
      - a. Understand his heart.
      - b. Will be on the same page with him.
      - c. Will produce a character change in us.
      - d. Will help us to trust in him completely

4. John 15:7 “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.
    - a. A heart like his, will receive anything!
  5. John 14:12 “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.”
    - a. A heart like his will want what he wants!
  6. 1 John 5:14,15
    - a. We can have confidence in him!
- c. With Earnestness.
- i. Not taking a break from God, being relentless! He wants to be bothered by us!
- d. With Firm Faith.
- i. Heb 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”
    1. If we can’t trust him why do we serve him?
    2. Heb 11:1 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”
      - a. A child’s birthday party.
        - i. Know he is going to get presents.
        - ii. Can’t wait to find out what they are!
      - b. Faith is being confident in God and eagerly anticipating whatever he has for us next!
- e. With perseverance.
- i. Luke 18:1 “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”
    1. Does that mean that God only answers only after we bother him for a long time?
    2. Luke 18:7, 8 “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice and quickly.”
    3. Continual dependence on God.
- f. The Lord’s Prayer.
- i. Matt 6:9-13 “Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from the evil one.”
    1. A.C.T.S.
- g. Adoration.
- i. Praise: telling of his character and actions.
    1. Remembering what he has done.
      - a. Israel forgot.
      - b. Get a bad attitude, become proud, selfish, dependence on self, meaningless suffering.

- ii. Why should we praise?
  1. Nothing is too hard for him.
    - a. Jer 32:17 “Ah Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power on outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”
  2. He loves us and saved us.
    - a. 1 John 4:10 “This is love: not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”
  3. He will help us reach maturity in character and in our walk with him. He doesn’t give up on us.
    - a. Phil 1:6 “Being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
  4. It is the result of trusting in him.
    - a. Heb. 13:15 “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.”
  5. The list goes on.
- h. Confession.
  - i. Why do we need to confess?
  - ii. Psalm 66:18 “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” Also Isaiah 59:2
  - iii. 1 John 1:5-9
- i. Thanksgiving.
  - i. Phil 4:6 says to pray with thanksgiving.
  - ii. Eph 5:20 “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - iii. 1 Thes 5:16-18 “Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
    1. Keeping us in line with God’s heart.
    2. Romans 8:28
    3. Helps us recognize how good God is to us.
- j. Supplication.
  - i. Intercession & Petition.
  - ii. Intercession
    1. praying for others.
      - a. 1 Sam 12:23 “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you...”
      - b. Remember we are to love others as ourselves.
      - c. He wants us to be outward focused!
      - d. James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

iii. Petition.

1. 1 Pet 5:7 “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
2. Romans 8:31,32 “...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”
3. Eph 3:12 “In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

k. What should our prayer life look like?

i. Mind control.

1. Rom 8:26,27 “In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the Saints in accordance with God’s will.”

ii. Luke 11:1 “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’”

1. This is his example.

- a. Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16; 6:12,13; 9:18,28,29; 10:21; John 17

- i. Jesus prayed in the morning.
  1. before the sun rose.
- ii. Most of the time he prayed alone.
- iii. He prayed before making decisions.
  1. all night before choosing the disciples.
- iv. He continually prayed during the day.
  1. He took time out of his busy day more than once a day.
- v. He modeled prayer.
  1. He prayed with others
- vi. He prayed for others.
- vii. He always prayed according to God’s will.

6. Promises of prayer.

- a. Estimated: over 5000 personal promises in the Bible.

i. He can do more than I imagine.

1. Eph 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us...”

ii. He will answer when we call and tell us amazing things.

1. Jeremiah 33:3 “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

iii. He will give us whatever we ask for in his name.

1. Matt 21:22, 1 John 5:14,15, John 14:14
  - iv. He meets my material/physical needs.
    1. Phil 4:19 “And my God will meet all you needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
    2. Psalm 84:11 “...No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”
  - v. He gives me guidance
    1. Pro 3:5,6 “Trust in the Lord with all you heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.”
    2. Ps 32:8 “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”
  - vi. He meets my spiritual needs.
    1. Eph 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father or our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”
    2. Phil 4:13 “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”
    3. Isaiah 41:10 “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand.”
  - vii. He meets my emotional needs.
    1. Phil 4:6,7 “Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
- b. Jesus says not to pray with many word’s because God already knows what you need. He says when you pray, pray like this (this is a template or guideline, not an incantation).
1. Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
    - a. Make sure Christ is on the throne.
    - b. Put Him in His rightful place, and your self in its rightful place (humility).
  2. Your kingdom come your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
    - a. Pray according to His purposes and desires.
      1. For your self.
      2. For other’s.
      3. For situations.
    - b. Avoid selfish wish lists.
  3. Give us today our daily bread.
    - a. Ask God to meet your physical, spiritual and other needs and desires that are in line with His will (Mat. 7:7-12, Phil. 4:6).
    - b. Ask God to mature you and develop you – meeting your spiritual needs (James 1:5).

4. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
    - a. Make sure there is no un-confessed sin (Ps. 66:18, 1Jn.1:9, 1Peter 3:7,12).
    - b. Make sure that you have no animosity or unforgiveness when you pray.
  5. Lead us not into temptation.
    - a. Seek God's power to live a Christ like lifestyle – this requires application of God's Word also.
  6. Deliver us from the evil one (Spiritual warfare).
    - a. Pray for God's purposes to be accomplished, as he directs you to pray.
- b. Other important parts of prayer.
1. Pray continually and in all circumstances (Acts. 6:4, 12:5, 16:25, Eph. 6:18, Col.4:2, 1Thes. 5:17). This doesn't mean that every hour of every day needs to be on your knees. It means that you should live a lifestyle of talking with God throughout your day. This includes set times but it also includes random times throughout the day.
  2. Pray fervently (James 5:13-16).
  3. Pray soberly, being alert (1Peter 4:7).
  4. Pray specifically and with a purpose (Col. 4:3, examples of...Jn. 17:9, Rom. 15:30).
    - a. Top 10 list.
    - b. Prayer journal.
    - c. Freedom bracelet.
    - d. Other?
  5. Pray faithfully, don't give up. Be constant (Rom. 12:12, Daniel 10:12-14).
  6. Pray in faith not doubting (James 1:6, example... Philemon v.22).
  7. Pray in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18), according to the Holy Spirit's direction and leading.
  7. Pray individually and as a group. Both kinds of prayer are talked about throughout the Word (an example: praying with your spouse is one of the most strengthening things for a marriage).

**Remember:** When you pray, make sure that Christ is on the throne. Confess all known sin. Make sure there is no unforgiveness or animosity in your life. Have a thankful attitude, remembering all He has done. Pray according to His purposes and will, not for selfish wish lists. Ask Him to meet your needs and the desires that are in line with His will and purposes (physical and spiritual needs and desires). Ask for His strength to live a Christ-like life – ask for Him to mature and develop you. Be a spiritual warrior – pray for God's purposes and work and pray that He will “deliver us from the evil one.” Pray continually and in all circumstances – have scheduled times of prayer (like during your morning QT) but maintain conversation with God throughout the day. Pray fervently. Pray soberly, being aware. Pray specifically and with a purpose, according to His direction and leading. Pray faithfully. Pray in faith, not doubting. Talk with God as a friend, pour out your heart to Him. Make your needs and desires known and intercede for other people and situations. Pray individually and corporately. Pray out of love for God – not because of duty.

- c. Jesus was the best example of prayer (Mt. 14:23, Luke 5:16). He is devoted to

prayer and does nothing without seeking the father first.

7. **Fasting is refraining from some type of activity (usually eating) to focus on God (Mt.6:16-18).** Fasting is not one of the most eagerly anticipated parts of the Christian life but it is a very important one.
- a. God intended fasting to, “loose the chains of injustice and to untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and to break every yoke; to let your light break forth and your healing quickly appear, to let your righteousness (*note: through His work*) go before you and the glory of the Lord be around you and to have answers to your prayers (Is.58:3-11).”
    1. We often reduce this awesome blessing to a very disliked chore.
    2. Fasting like every other act of obedience must be done out of love.
    3. Christians are called to fast.
      - a. Jesus said that when He went to be with the Father, His followers would fast (Mt.9:14-15, Mk.2:18-20, Lk.5:35).
    4. Fasting always has a reference to repentance (a change of our thought life). Fasting was often done in “sackcloth and ashes,” a term which was used to express deep conviction, humility and repentance.
    5. Fasting builds your faith by strengthening your spirit – and controlling your soul (emotions, appetites, attitudes, desires, etc.). Fasting is referred to as a way of “humbling” the soul – putting the soul in its proper place (Ps.35:13, 69:10). When you put your most basic human desires on the back burner, in order to focus on God, your faith will be strengthened.
    6. Fasting is a way of serving and worshiping God (Lk. 2:37).
    7. Fasting can be done to seek guidance (Ex.34:28, Dt.9:9, 2Sam. 12:16-23, 2Chr. 20:3-4, Ez.8:21-23, Acts. 13:2-3, 14:23).
    8. Fasting can be done along with prayer and intercession to seek God’s working in an area or situation (2Chr. 20:3, Mt.17:21, Mk.9:29).
    9. Fasting can be done to glorify God and humble your self, by putting God in His rightful place (Ezr. 8:21, Ps.69:10).
    10. In the Old Testament fasting was often done to express grief and apology to God. We now live under His grace and don’t fast to get His forgiveness. Fasting is a way to practice controlling the flesh.
    11. Fasting is supposed to be done correctly, not out of a religious or proud attitude, but in sincerity (Is. 58:5-12, Jer.14:11-12, Zc.7).
    12. Fasting is a way of serving God (Lk. 2:37).
    13. Fasting can be done individually or corporately. There are several Biblical examples of groups fasting together (Judges 20:26, 2Chr. 20:3).
    14. Fasting can be done according to a schedule, as the need arises and also according to the Holy Spirit’s daily leading.
    15. Fasting from different types of things is possible. You don’t just fast from food. You can fast from anything that can distract you from God. Christians often do “Daniel’s fasts” where they eat only fruits and vegetables (Dan. 1:8-14) – note that this is one way we can fast but Daniel didn’t do it as a fast. Married couples



**4. How will you start implementing these principals in your life this week?**