**Wednesday Night Bible Study**

**Wednesday 19 April 2023 – Spring Semester**

**Queens Chapel UMC \* 7410 Muirkirk Road \* Beltsville, MD 20705**

**Instructor: Rev. Dr. Will Butler**

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**Making Decisions According to God’s Direction for Your Life**

**Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)**

“In their hearts, humans plan their course, but

the Lord establishes their steps.”

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1. **Pray for guidance.**

***“A man is a fool to trust himself! But***

***those who use God’s wisdom are safe”***

**(Proverbs 28:26 TLB)**

**Week 1:** The Power of Prayer

**Week 2:** What are the Facts?

**Week 3:** If you don’t know, ask Somebody.

**Week 4:** Count the Cost

**Week 5:** Expect Complications

**Week 6:** Facing the Giant of Fear

 Why does it seem so hard to discern which direction God wants us to go? Why does it seem so mysterious? Is Our risen Savior playing games with us? Does God enjoy seeing us confused? Of course not. It’s not in God’s character to see us wondering without His direction.

 **God has given every believer a roadmap that consists of Prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.**

 Prayer and Word become our compass and the Holy Spirit is always standing by to counsel us and provide an understanding of God’s Word.

 God never intended for us to figure out the steps of our journey without Him. **How we start and succeed in life is God’s responsibility.** Our responsibility as disciples is to seek God’s guidance. **But it starts with prayer**.

**Q** **What is Prayer**?

1. Prayer is a dialogue between God and humanity.

* Prayer is not a ritual of words we must say in order to get God’s attention
* Prayer is not a chore we check off our to-do list before the day is over or after the day ended
* Prayer, for some people, is like the national anthem at the start of a game: a nice opening ritual that has nothing to do with what happens on the field
1. Prayer is part of our relationship with God
* One cannot have a relationship with God and not have a two-way communication everyday
1. Prayer is so important that God commands all believers to **“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:16)**
2. Prayer provides benefits for the believer:
* 1) Prayer gives us access to Heavenly blessings

**Ephesians 1:3**

 **“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.”**

**Ephesians 2:6**

 **6 For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.**

* We have direct access to Heaven to receive direction for our journey on earth.
* God our Father lives in Heaven, therefore, prayer is the means by which we relate to and communicate with God when we need guidance
* 2) Our Prayers can take many forms
* Formal or Corporate Prayer—Solomon’s Prayer **(1 King 8:1-54)**
* Personal Cry for help—Peter’s experience walking on the water **(Matthew 14:30)**
* The woman with the issue of blood **(Mark 5:25-29)**
1. Satan does not want us to reach the destinations God willed for our lives
* 1) Satan doesn’t want us to understand how powerful prayer is because once we do, he loses his ability to throw us off track
* **Satan can’t stop us from praying**
* However, he can try to make us feel awkward, frustrated, and powerless so that we will give up because we become either sleepy, run out of things to say, or find our minds wandering minutes after we started praying

***“A man is a fool to trust himself! But those who use God’s wisdom are safe”***

**(Proverbs 28:26 TLB)**

 If we have a personal relationship with God, we should be open to listening to God’s direction when making decisions in our lives.

**Q = How to Listen to God**

**Isaiah 50:4-5 (NLT)**

 **4 The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom so that I know how to comfort the weary. Morning by morning, he wakens me and opens my understanding to His will.
 5 The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me, and I have listened. I have not rebelled or turned away.**

1. Our ability to listen to God is contingent upon our relationship with the Lord.
* We listen to God through the Holy Spirit.
* We can’t hear God through our minds, emotions, feelings, or our flesh.
* The moment we received Christ as Lord and Savior, we were indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**John 14:26**

 **"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”**

**Romans 8:9**

 ***“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”***

* **The Holy Spirit is God’s divine GPS system programmed only for believers**
1. We Listen to God by learning and understanding how God speaks
* There are three primary ways God speaks
* 1) Through the Word of God—God written revelation.
* We must be willing to get alone with God, in a quiet place, and read God’s Word
* We must be willing to meditate on what we read in God’s Word **(Psalms 1:2-3)**
* 2) Through other people—God uses people to speak to us.
* We know it’s God speaking if it lines up with God’s Word directly or indirectly.
* Is the word we heard from someone principled with God’s Word
* We can only check this out if we’ve read and meditated on God’s Word
* 3) Through various circumstances—when doors of

 opportunity opens or closes.

* God speaks through our sickness
* Through physical, mental, or verbal pain
* God speaks through our abilities, spiritual gifts, and the opportunities He gives us
1. God’s ultimate goal is for every believer to learn His voice so well that we will not have to wait until we get alone with God to hear Him speak
* We can hear God speak either right away or when we need Him to guide us **because we are reading and meditating daily upon God’s Word.**

**Psalms 1:2**

 **2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.**

**Q = Why don’t my prayers get answered?**

 **A) Matured faith will allow us to realize:** *“we are blessed by what*

 *God grants and we are blessed by what He denies”*

**“Ten Questions Christians are Asking…” Jeremiah, Dr. David**

**Matthew 6:32b**

 “But your heavenly Father already knows all your needs”

 **B) It’s helpful to be specific:** There is a time for generalized prayers, but if you want specific answers, it’s better to be specific

* When Daniel was praying for insight concerning a vision—**Read Daniel 9:20-23 (NLT)**

 **20 I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people, pleading with the Lord my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain.**

 **21 As I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came swiftly to me at the time of the evening sacrifice.**

 **22 He explained to me, “Daniel, I have come here to give you insight and understanding.**

 **23 The moment you began praying, a command was given. And now I am here to tell you what it was, for you are very precious to God. Listen carefully so that you can understand the meaning of your vision.**

1. **Unconfessed Sins:** **Psalms 66:18**

 **“If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”**

* Please note that the Scripture does not say “If I sin, the Lord will not hear my prayer.”—we all sin everyday
* If there is sin in our lives we have not confessed, we must first deal with that sin
* If we hold sin in our heart, excuse it, tolerate it, neglect it, and cover it up—God will not hear us
* **Confession is a vital part of a healthy prayer life**
* Unconfessed sins will clog up the prayer lines and hinder the answers
1. **Because of Unbelief**—**James 1:6-7**

 **6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.**

 **7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.**

**Mark 11:22-24**

 **22 Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Have faith in God. 23 I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart.**

 **24 I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you’ve received it, it will be yours.**