

PRAYER IS POWERFUL

DATE: SUNDAY, 29TH OF AUGUST 2021 | STEVE WIMBLE

MATTHEW 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray: '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.'

MATTHEW 18:19

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

1. This week our LifeGroup discussion questions are centred around prayer. We recommend that you avoid getting into a discussion over any controversies about the COVID vaccine. For reference, Sundays message notes are below, and it centres around acceptance of others and faith for whatever you decide to do about the vaccination.
2. Commit to praying for your small group members during the week. Make sure you ask for their prayer needs so that you can pray specifically for them.

START TALKING

1. Share a "high-five" moment from the last week.
2. You can have an unlimited supply of one thing for the rest of your life, what is it?...

START THINKING

1. The Lord's prayer begins, 'Our Father in heaven...'.
 - a. How do you think of God when you pray?
 - b. As a group, make a list of the names of God and how they relate to us, e.g. He is the Father, and we are His children; He is the Potter, we are the clay; He is Master, and we are His servants... etc.
2. What keeps most of us from praying on a regular basis? What are some specific ways we can overcome those challenges?
3. Read Matthew 18:19. Why is prayer more powerful in a group (even a small one) than just individually? What are some things you could do to increase the amount of corporate prayer (group prayer) in your life?

START SHARING

1. What do you tend to pray for most? What are you most reluctant to pray for? Why?
2. What practical suggestions have helped you most in your prayer life? Why?
3. Praying "out loud" in a group can be challenging for many of us. Would anyone like to share how they overcame the challenge and built confidence to pray "out loud"?

START PRAYING

In your group, pray for

1. Our government (1 Timothy 2:1,2)
2. Our city (Jeremiah 29:7)
3. Our church (1 Peter 2:9)
4. Ourselves (Matthew 6:11)

Encourage those who don't usually pray out loud to pray just one sentence out loud.

START DOING

This week, find a scripture to pray for each of the following categories:

1. Our government
2. Our city
3. Our church
4. Ourselves

Pray through each category above one by one over the next couple of days, e.g. government on day 1, our city on day 2... etc.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Steve tackled the question, "Should a Christian take the vaccine or not?". This is a topic that some people have very strong opinions on - either for or against the vaccine. Many people don't have hugely strong views but, at the same time, don't want to make "the wrong choice". And of course, everyone is keen to return to 'normal life' sometime soon. So what does the Bible say?

Unsurprisingly, the Bible has nothing to say directly on the topic of vaccines.

- Anti-vaccination Christians may argue that the body is the temple, and we shouldn't be putting a foreign, untested substance into it. Other opinions include the thought that this is the kingdom of darkness looking to control us... it's a money-making scheme... some are saying it's the 'mark of the beast'...
- Pro-vaccination Christians may argue that we are called to love one another. Anything we can do to save lives - ours or others - is an act of love, and we are called to love one another, so surely we should get the vaccine.

There are many scientific and emotional arguments for and against the vaccine, but we're looking at a Biblical response. In Romans 14:1, Paul tells us that we shouldn't argue over disputable matters ("*... without quarrelling over disputable matters*").

Disputable matters are not "closed handed" but "open-handed" issues (things that are not heaven or hell issues). e.g. Jesus' incarnation vs the age of the earth. Basically, Paul is saying that we can still love one another without having to agree on everything. The Covid-19 vaccine falls into the category of "disputable matters."

However, what is of grave concern is that the topic of vaccination is becoming so divisive and polarizing among believers.

Paul addresses some "big deal" items in the passage of scripture in Romans 14:1-12...
One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another ... eats only vegetables. Romans 14:2
One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Romans 14:5
 ... and then goes on to say: *Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.* Romans 14:5

Romans 14:3 reads: *The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.*

Let's substitute in the word vaccine:

*One person's faith allows them to be **vaccinated**, but another ... goes without the **vaccine**. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.*

*The one who is **vaccinated** must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who refuses the **vaccine** must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.*

So, if our response is contempt and judgment to those that differ in opinion to us on the topic of the Covid-19 vaccine, we have a big problem

because God has accepted them regardless of their opinion! So, we can choose to respond in judgment and contempt or with acceptance and respect on disputable matters.

It's concerning that while we hunt for "the truth" about the vaccine, we forget the higher truths that are at stake.

God has appointed the time of our birth and our death. The big question at the end of our lives is not, "What did he/she die from?"... The big question is, "What did he/she live for?"

In Philippians 1:21, Paul says: "*To live is Christ and to die is gain.*" It doesn't matter so much as to whether we die of Covid-19, or the vaccine, or anything else... The big question is did we live for Christ?!

Whatever you choose to do, act from a position of faith and not fear. *And without faith it is impossible to please God.* Hebrews 11:6. If you take the vaccine, do it with some kind of faith. And if you refuse it, the same thing.

It is very possible to take the vaccine out of fear or to refuse to take it out of fear! The strong arguments on both sides (for & against) are mostly couched in "fear" terms.

We need to have an increasing revelation of the 'bigness' of Jesus. If the devil can control our whole life through an injection in our arm, then our picture of Jesus is not very strong. Similarly, if we have more faith in a vaccine for our health and safety than in Jesus, we clearly don't see Jesus as very strong!

SO, if you choose not to take the vaccine, you are still accepted here at CityHill. And if you decide to take the vaccine, you will be accepted here at CityHill.

In Summary, to answer the question, "Should a Christian take the vaccine or not?":

1. It is an "open-hand" issue
2. We can choose to respond with judgment and contempt OR acceptance
3. Make decisions out of FAITH, not FEAR
4. Who we live for is more important than what we die from.