

Michael's Message

As I mentioned last month, spiritual disciplines are extremely important in the lives of Christians. Since so many activities compete for our attention, and some of them quite loudly, we frequently lose focus and neglect reading scripture or daily prayer. When reading scripture and prayer becomes firmly established, they become much harder to forget.

When I forget to pray or read scripture, I notice that I lose my perspective and little matters become so much more important than they did. The small mole hill problems of my life start to loom like mountains and I begin to wonder how I will ever accomplish my goals. The mountains are too high and my abilities are too little.

When I return to scripture and prayer, the mountains will shrink back to mole hills and my problems become much more manageable. Prayer reminds me that I have an ally who can help me climb the highest mountain. Scripture reminds me that God has aided people like myself and that he will guide and aid me today.

Now I need fewer reminders as I regularly try to read and pray every morning. When something does get in the way of my routine, God reminds me that I have not talked or listened to God that morning. I lack the wisdom, the perspective, and the feeling of God's presence and I simply must stop and take the time to talk and listen to God's voice.

In the elder training course that many session members attended, we learned about the importance of elders becoming spiritual leaders. This does not mean that elders become other worldly or disconnected from earthly concerns. Rather it means that elders begin to see their roles as God's representatives or as people who see things from God's point of view. They begin to look at the ways that churches can reach out to communities in the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, or as the man who fed the hungry, healed the sick, and confronted evil and injustice.

We also learned the importance of individual members of the church. Each member is to become a little Christ who is to extend the compassion, power, truth, and justice of God's kingdom into the world. If people want to be able to do that, then they must actually take on the characteristics of Jesus Christ. The only way that they can do that is through intense study of God's word and frequent conversations with God.

If you are already engaged in prayer and scripture reading, that is great. If you are not, this is a good time to start. I believe that you will find that prayer and reading God's word will help you experience God's presence more frequently and God's power more intensely. May God continue to bless you as you study God's word and listen to God's voice.

Michael

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