

# Week 4

## Day 22: Discern God's Plan

Read Matthew 6:9-15

*"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10*

In this passage, Jesus teaches us how to pray. Each portion of His teaching gives us an important aspect of prayer. Verse 10 reminds us that God has a plan for our church. Our church is a part of God's kingdom. His desire is that His kingdom penetrates neighborhoods, communities, cities, and ultimately the world with the gospel. When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we are praying for God to work in and through our church to extend His kingdom.

When God views our church, He sees its potential. In the mind of God,

He envisions what it can and should become in the future. We call that "God's preferred future." He loves our church so much that He doesn't want it to remain where it is today. He has in mind a "preferred future."

When we pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we are asking God to reveal to us what He envisions for us. Through prayer, we discern "next steps." When entering into a process to become the church God desires, the voice we need to hear above all others is the voice of God through prayer.

Prayer

Pray today, asking God to reveal to you and to other church members what God envisions for the future of our church. Share your willingness to yield to what He wants. Prayerfully consider this question: How do you want our church to carry out the Great Commission in our context?

## Day 23: Choose your side

Read Joshua 5:13-15

*"Neither," He replied. "I have now come as commander of the Lord's army." Then Joshua bowed with his face to the ground in worship and asked Him, "What does my Lord want to say to His servant?" Joshua 5:14*

When Joshua, preparing for the heat of battle, saw a human figure with a sword drawn, he naturally went to the man and asked if he was for them or against them. The man, who Joshua soon discovered to be an earthly appearance of God, answered that he was not for them or against them, but instead the Captain of the Lord's army. Joshua appropriately bowed down and worshipped him.

During a growth effort, it is possible for us to begin to choose sides in the church. We distinguish between those who are for our vision and those who are against. A better route is to make sure we personally are lined up with the Lord. We will know that we are with God when our desires for His

church match His desires as seen in Scripture, when we are submissive to God-ordained leadership, and when our actions and attitudes reflect Christ-like character.

So, based on the above-listed criteria, are you for God and His vision for the church?

Prayer

Consider praying today that God will help you align your- self with His vision for your church. Pray that His desires for your congregation, in the community where He has placed you, would be reflected through your words, actions, and attitudes.

## **Day 24: Pursue the keys to healing**

Read II Chronicles 7:12-14

*"(If) My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land." II Chronicles 7:14*

Excitement and optimism ruled the day. After seven years of construction, the Temple was built and dedicated. God's presence was manifested in an unusual way. Fire fell from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and God's glory filled the Temple.

Later, God appeared to Solomon at night and told him that not every day would be like the day of dedication. There would be days when, in an effort to draw His errant people back to Himself, God would send drought and pestilence.

At such a time, God told Solomon His people were to pursue four keys to healing: humility, prayer, seeking God's face, and repentance.

Today, God's people are His church. In many churches, indicators mark the need for growth. If this is true of your church, are you pursuing revival with the keys of humility, prayer, seeking God's face, and repentance?

Prayer

Ask God to help you and others in your church to humbly walk with Him, prayerfully depend upon Him, diligently seek His face, and honestly repent of sin that hinders fellowship with Him.

## **Day 25: Love Jesus above All**

Read Revelation 2:1-7

*"... But I have this against you: you have abandoned the love you had at first." Revelation 2:4*

The final line of the refrain from my favorite childhood hymn is, "Oh, how I love Jesus, because He first loved me." When sung from a true heart, it is a beautiful offering of worship to our Lord. Our love for Jesus should not only be hailed in our worship, but it should be the motivating factor for everything we claim to do for Him.

The church at Ephesus outwardly appeared to be a wonderful congregation. Jesus Himself pointed out their hard work, faithful endurance, worthy walk, and doctrinal integrity. The problem was that these works were performed out of duty, rather than out of love for the Savior. Though they did not know it, the Ephesian Christians needed revival. They were running the risk of losing their light for the Lord.

Many believers are wearing themselves out with a manic schedule of church programming while seeing few results. In their harried lifestyle of "Christian" activities, they do not spend time cultivating their love for Jesus. They need a revival of the heart. They need to heed the words of Christ, "Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first" (Rev. 2:5a).

Is your love for Jesus the motivation for your work for Him?

Prayer

Tell Jesus how much you love Him. If needed, repent for allowing your love for Him to grow cold.

## **Day 26: Seek God first**

Read Matthew 6:33

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you."*  
Matthew 6:33

A bank statement, a day planner, a church calendar, or a hospital stay often reveals our priorities. Misplaced priorities generally lead to hurt and confusion in our lives, marriages, families, and churches. Jesus gave His followers a simple and conditional promise. If believers would make the Father's kingdom a priority, then they would lack for nothing in life. That's a priceless guarantee! Unmet needs may be an indication that our priorities are out of order.

Seeking God first says that we're dependent on Him, that we're desperate for Him, and that we're dedicated to Him. It's worth noting that this is a great way to live and serve in ministry. The daily responsibilities of life, the challenge to raise godly children in an ungodly world, a fresh vision for the church, and the ability to live on less than we make testify that we need to see our decisions from God's perspective.

As you consider your life, marriage, family, and church, are you seeking God first? What decisions are you facing at this moment?

Prayer

Take Jesus' challenge and seek the Father's kingdom first. Ask God to help you see your life, marriage, family, and ministry from His perspective.

## **Day 27: We have never done it this way before**

Read Mark 2:1-12

*"He got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" Mark 2:12*

Ancient sailors recorded many times that in the midst of a coming storm, the top of their ship's mast would be circled with a mysterious circle of light. Many times, their hair would begin to stand straight out as this light appeared. They called it St. Elmo's Fire. Experienced sailors knew it was time to take cover because the air was so electrically charged that a lightning strike was imminent.

The air must have been so charged in Capernaum at the time this Scripture passage took place. There was a crowd. This crowd was curious about the ministry of Jesus, and the scribes were scowling as they watched this new Rabbi, hoping to catch Him in an error. The room was charged with excitement. Everyone knew something dramatic was about to take place – not St. Elmo's Fire, the King of King's fire.

When He is present, miraculous things happen. Sure enough, excitement mounted as four men tore up the roof to let a friend down in the presence of Jesus so he could be healed. The Bible says they literally "took off the roof." When we gather, it should be a "roof-raising experience," and we should be able to say, "We've never seen anything like this before!" According to this passage, these three things are needed to have a "roof-raising" experience with Jesus: a Savior who can save, God's word being proclaimed, and a flock who has faith.

Prayer

Pray that our church will be filled with people of faith like these four roof removers, for they did everything possible to bring their friend to Jesus. Ask the Lord to make you like one of these four.

## **Day 28: Unify us**

Read Psalm 133:1-3

*"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!" Psalm 133:1*

There are not many things more discouraging or distasteful than a heated church business meeting over a trivial issue. At the moment, when tensions are high and voices are raised, no issue seems trivial. Later on, however, when relationships have been severed and people have left the church over an issue regarding taste and not substance, those meetings do leave an unpleasant feeling for the people involved.

Consider, on the other hand, the beauty and pleasing atmosphere created in the vision described in Psalm 133. When a congregation is unified around knowing and serving God in the fulfillment of His purpose and vision for the church, it is a beautiful thing. Not only is God pleased with appropriate church unity, but also the people of God are pleased and enabled to experience more of the power of the Holy Spirit in their work for the Lord.

As you move into health, in what ways are you seeking to promote unity in your church? And is there anyone in your church family with whom you need to seek Christian reconciliation?

#### Prayer

Would you pray today that God will help you be a person of peace in your congregation? Consider praying that God will give you a peace-making, conciliatory spirit to aid your church as it moves forward toward becoming healthy.