**The Holy Spirit and Prayer**

**Part 1**

**The Word**

Read together Romans 8:12-17

**The Big Idea**

When the Spirit gives us Jesus’ own “Abba” experience of God, our prayer lives are transformed as we learn to approach our father has his beloved children. Through the Spirit we find freedom, authenticity, and intimacy in prayer with our Father.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. As you consider the multitude of obstacles we face when it comes to prayer (theological, personal, practical, etc.), which is the most significant for you at this time?

2. Consider this big picture question: If God is sovereignly working all things according to his plan, then what difference do our prayers make?

3. On Sunday, we talked about the Spirit’s role in helping us pray like children again. As you consider the many images and quotes about children on Sunday, which one do you most need to grab onto that this time in your life?

4. On Sunday, we discussed the idea of intimacy in prayer in which prayer moves from going through a list of requests to simply spending unhurried time with your father. What experience do you have with that kind of prayer? How would you counsel someone who is interested in that kind of prayer in terms of how to go about doing that in a fruitful way?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Obstacles to prayer

A. What good does it do?

1. This can be a theological question: If God is sovereignly working all things according to his plan, then what role do my prayers have?

2. This can be a personal question: I have experienced deep disappointment in God because of unanswered prayer

B. It’s just not that enjoyable

1. We don’t like who we are in prayer: distracted, restless, anxious, unspiritual

The act of praying is like making popcorn in a pot without a lid: distracted thoughts keep popping up

2. We don’t like who God is in prayer

We don’t imagine God to be an insanely wonderful person to be around

We have a theology of God as Father, but not an experience

II. The Abba Experience (Romans 8:14-17)

A. The Spirit’s role is to give us an experience of God as our “Abba” (v. 15)

B. The Spirit is the “Spirit of his son” who can give us the same experience of God that Jesus himself had of God: delight, trust, affection, intimacy (Galatians 4:6)

C. The Spirit can go into that inner place in our spirit and convince us from inside out that God is our Abba (v. 16), moving us from a theology of God as Father to an internal experience of God as Father

III. The Spirit and prayer

In Sum, the Spirit takes us deeper and deeper into this “Abba” experience of God that transforms our prayers and teaches us to pray like children again

A. Freedom

1. When you experience God as “Abba” prayer becomes the most natural and spontaneous thing in the world

2. Ephesians 6:18 identifies “praying in the Spirit” with praying all the time, on all occasions, in all sorts of ways (see also 1 Thes 5:16-18, Phil 4:6, Mt 7:7-11)

3. Children are totally free in their requests to their parents: they ask often, repeatedly, and without guile

4. Children assume that their parents are interested and responsive

B. Authenticity

1. The Psalms model a life of coming to God exactly as we are, messy, raw

2. While the Lord’s Prayer and ACTS prayer provide great models for praying to God, don’t let your feelings of needing to be more spiritual and cleaned up keep you from approaching God. Just come as you are and bring your mess to him.

3. Trust that the same Spirit who frees you to be authentic will also work in you through praying to bring you around to God’s perspective on things

C. Intimacy

1. When Spirit starts to speak ABBA into our hearts, prayer increasingly becomes about the relationship with God itself. It moves from being a list of request to being about simply spending time with our father

2. Jude 20-21 identifies “praying in the Spirit” with keeping ourselves in the love of God. Prayer is one of the ways we root/ground ourselves in God and his love.

3. The Spirit begins to heal our broken/dysfunctional views of God, so that we increasingly become convinced he is truly a wonderful person to be around

4. “You don’t create intimacy. You make room for it.” –Paul Miller

IV. Recommend reading: A Praying Life by Paul Miller