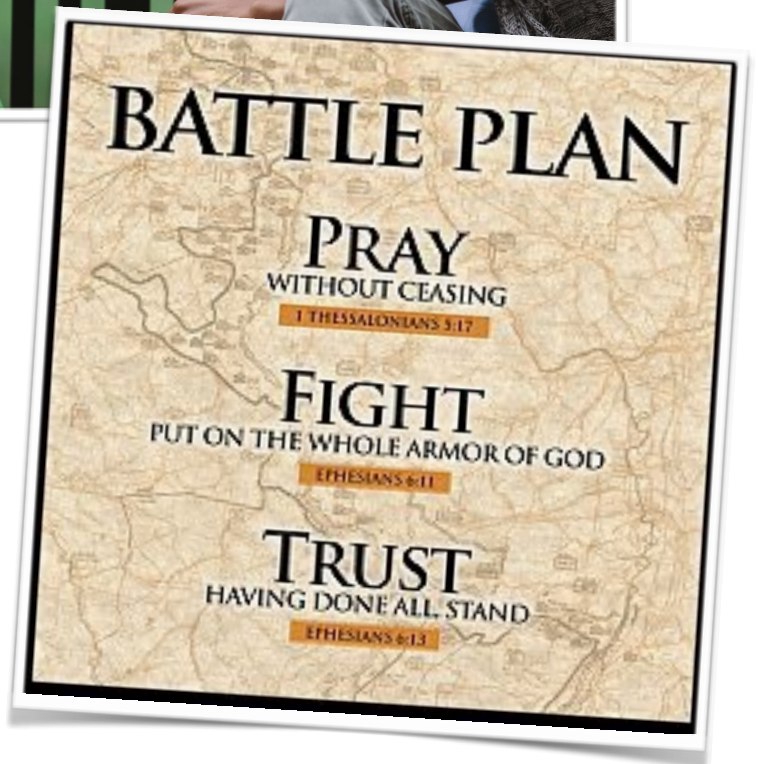


War Room

Week One - Honest Evaluation



Asking Tough Questions

Introduction

(Please read and complete this section prior to our first class together and our open discussion)

Welcome to what we hope will be not only an amazing study, but a chance for you to grow closer to God each day and comfort more to the image of His Son, rather than that of the world. God challenges each and every one of us to glorify and honor Him. One of the most important things we can do on this spiritual journey is to learn how to be truthful and open about where we really are. Are we putting up window dressing when we are truly a mess inside? Are we whitewashing the tombs?

This week we are focusing on honest and open self-evaluation between you and God. This is not intended to bring you down, make you feel bad and discourage you, but if we don't know where we are then how can we ever hope to move in a right direction? Instead, this process is designed to inspire you to greater personal growth the many days and weeks that follow. So, lets get started.

In your opinion, how close are you to God right now, if zero is frozen over, cold and distant and ten is you are extremely on fire and close to Him? _____ (list any number 1-10)

**Regarding closeness to God, where do you want to be in a year?
_____ (1-10)**

Are you currently moving at a pace to meet your goal? _____

What major decisions / adjustments do you need to make in order to help you grow? Be as specific as possible.

Stop right now and pray about these things. Be as specific as possible about them in prayer as well. For instance, don't just pray, "God let me be successful in prayer." Instead say, "God, let me overcome my fear of opening up about my sins, like _____ and embrace your grace and mercy more fully." Ask to help you through these lessons to grow and walk closer to Him.

It can be very hard to conduct self-evaluation. We often down play our shortcomings or excuse them, or we will exaggerate the good (see Prov. 21:2; 30:12; 20:6). Paul was a prideful, self-righteous pharisee until he met Jesus and heard the master's evaluation of his life. Later he would refer to himself as the chief of all sinners. Many times our actions are better indicators of where we are spiritually.

Ask yourself these honest questions:

- 1. How diligently do you seek and pursue a closer walk with God each day?**
- 2. How much time and effort do you spend each day with His word or in prayer each week?**
- 3. Do you make an effort to remember and apply the word of God after you hear it or do you usually just walk away and forget it?**
- 4. How quickly do you obey God when he tells you to do something?**
- 5. When God reveals sin in your life, how quickly do you confess and repent of it?**

If you knew that Jesus were coming back again at the end of this week, what things would you change? What sins would you get out of your heart and life? What commands would you start obeying that you have shunned or neglected? Pray now that God gives you the strength to do them now, realizing you may not even have that long until He returns.

Open discussion

The clip - Elizabeth Jordan is a successful realtor in an unsuccessful marriage. She assumes that she is doing fine spiritually, but gets unexpectedly tested. An encounter with a new client leads to a mentoring that will forever change her life. In this scene Miss Clara asks heart-to-heart to help Elizabeth be open and honest about where she is spiritually.

Discussion

1. What biblical metaphor did Miss Clara use to help Elizabeth evaluate God's place in her life?
2. Answer the same question that Miss Clara posed to Elizabeth. What is one thing about your life right now that you desire to be better? If you feel comfortable do so, share with the group. Have you been praying about this one thing?
3. Do you ever feel like you are fighting the wrong fight? explain
4. What land mines are present in your life? Are there some you have stepped on? Are there some, by God's grace, you have avoided? Are there some you fear looming on the landscape of your life ahead?

Engage

Read Revelation 3:14-22

The Laodicean church was one marked by self-sufficiency and pride. They had no direct water supply, but instead received it through a series of aqueducts. Water would often be lukewarm when it arrived. Hot water was useful for cleaning and bathing. Cold water was useful for drink and cooling. Lukewarm water was useless.

How do our lives slowly become lukewarm the further we get from the source of living water?

What evidences of lukewarm living do you see in believer's lives today? How about your own life?

According to verse 19, what was motivating Jesus to offer such a harsh rebuke and such stern discipline? (see Hebrews 12:6)

What are two things Jesus said they should do in verse 19?

The word "zealous" means to be filled with zeal and affection and love for someone or something. It means to get hot for God again! The word "repent" goes deeper than just feeling bad or even changing what we do. It means that we change our mind about something. Our hearts change and this leads to changes in our feelings and our actions. It is hard to do on our own, but with God's help is possible.

Jesus invites us into a closer more intimate relationship with Him. Read verse 20 again. Remember that this letter was written to men and women caught in their sins. Christ comes to their door in spite of that and offers them an invitation to be close to Him. Would their pride and apathy keep them from answering that door and placing Him on the throne of their lives?

What are three specific things that keep you from being more on fire for God? (remember, honesty, frankness and openness are the only way to move forward)

1.

2.

3.

Pray right now that God will search your heart and help you open to His teaching and respond to His knocking, find greater zeal and then empower you to remain faithful to His teaching.

Day One - Homework

There is a big difference between saying you are a Christian, going through the motions to convince others and actually doing the things that define what it means to be a Christian. Anyone can sit in a pew and even read the scripture from time to time. Harder still and yet more defining is the ability and commitment to do the hard things like confessing our faults, acting in humility, not judging others in matters of judgement, loving those more who need more, etc. In other words, it is harder to actually be transformed in our relationship with God (2 Cor. 5:17).

One thing that defined to first century church was their commitment to the connection between brother and sisters in Christ. They wanted to share their lives with other Christians.

Read Acts 2:44-46

Describe the nature of the connection between the Christians of the Pentecost church.

Which of these characteristics of the early church is most evident in the believers that you know? Which do you think is most lacking? Why?

Read 1 Cor. 12:24-27 and underline all the times the word "member" is used. How many are there? Why do you think God does that?

Describe a time of distress when you have experienced sympathy and concern from your local body of believers. You may also choose a time when you were there to offer the same to a member.

Now reflect on a moment when you shared personal joy and celebration with your local body of Christ. How did your church family multiply your joy?

Closing the day's study

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

What is the main point of these verses?

What was the purpose mentioned for faithful gatherings?

If your commitment to the local church is any indication to your commitment to God himself, then how committed are you?

What would your attendance say about your faith?

Prayer time

Close today's lesson with a word of prayer asking God to make the lesson real in your heart and life. Ask that he might show you open doors and windows for opportunity to practice the things we have discussed.

Day Two - Homework

In the video Miss Clara asks, "So if I asked you what your prayer life was like would you say it was hot or cold?"

Today we will begin our study by answering that question. Is your prayer life hot or cold? Explain your answer and why you think it is either. Realize that it must be one or the other or else we are back to the lukewarm idea.

Many Christians today have a shallow view of prayer that can be reduced to ideas similar to either a politician's talking point or a jingle for some product. The idea behind both is to give as little information as possible and yet entice one to believe that it will meet their needs. Most people only pray about basic things in a basic way that basically does little to mimic the prayers of the Bible or give meaningful information or reveal any meaningful thing about our hearts. What if, however, we were to use prayer as it was intended? What if we were to use prayer as a weapon in our arsenal of weapons to use against our adversary?

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

How much armor do we need to put on?

In the space below, list each piece of armor and then list its purpose right next to it.

Look back to Ephesians 6:11. Why is the armor so important for the believer?

Look up the word "schemes" or "tactics." What does it mean? How is it used here?

Name three things we are told to do as we put on the armor of God (vs. 13, 18).

Next to each phrase of verse 18 listed below, write what it means to you:

At all times -

every prayer and request -

stay alert -

all perseverance -

intercession for all the saints -

How much we pray reveals how much we depend on God. Praying is the exact opposite of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Prayer is a priceless privilege. We all need God all of the time. A richer and more active prayer life is the result of us humbly coming before Him in a consistent manner to seek His will.

What causes you to forget your need for Christ and the armor of God?

Compose a statement telling God where you want your prayer life to go in the next couple of days. Be as specific as possible.

Day Three - Homework

As mentioned in the first lesson this week, it is a great blessing to be connected to spiritual family. One of the greatest blessings that comes with this is the ability to avoid the mistakes of those who are older and far wiser than we are. As Miss Clara said, "You don't have to step on the same land mines that I did. That's a waste of time."

Read 1 Cor. 11:1 - what does Paul mean by saying "imitate me?"

Read Hebrews 13:7

Who in your life models Christlikeness for you? What have you learned from this person?

What land mines have you avoided because of this person's wise example or counsel?

Use the following questions as an evaluation tool and commit to take the steps to improve in the areas where you are lacking:

Is your spiritual life apathetic, joyless and passionless?

Do you have at least one sin you refuse to repent of?

Do you have at least one person you refuse to forgive?

Do you love and seek God less than you once did:

Do you often criticize or judge others to avoid or justify your own issues?

Are the words of your mouth displeasing to God and dishonorable to others?

Do you see no evidence of answered prayer or the power of God at work in your life?

If there is evidence, can you write it down?

Do you have time for entertainment, but not for Bible study, prayer, or sharing your faith?

Do you let pride, worry or fear stop you from obeying what God has told you to do?

Does your family see you behave one way at church and another at home?

is your worship of God half-hearted and mediocre? How do you know whether it is or is not? Are there signs and symptoms of either? What are they?

Do you often think "I have to always look like I have it spiritually all together," rather than actually doing what it takes to get it all together?

Am I more concerned about how others are doing spiritually and pointing out their flaws than I am identifying my own flaws?

If someone gave you their answers to the questions asked above and they read just like yours, what would you tell them? Would you say they are shallow? Would you say they are really digging deep? Would you say they really tried hard to evaluate or were they hardly trying?

Conclude today's lesson by reading aloud Psalm 145:4

Are there other passages in the Bible that teach the same thing? Can you list at least two?

Most of us, based on these passages are both receivers and givers of wisdom, if we are meeting this standard. Pray that God will not only give you the wisdom that you need to change your own life, but the opportunity and will to help others change for great good. Most of us, unfortunately assemble and then gravitate toward those that are "like us" or "have the same interests" or are our "spiritual equal," when we should be looking for those who are far weaker and spending a good portion of our time building them up. The church is not a social club. Prayer for wisdom and understanding.