



Confirmation Prayer Retreat

Session 4: Practice & A Letter from God

Supplies: TV and DVD player to watch Ironman movie clip; paper and writing utensils; handout; timer

ASK

- Tell me some things that you weren't very good at when you first started doing them but are now pretty good at? (what about: walking, talking, writing, reading, riding a bike, tying your shoes, etc).
- What did you do to get better at those things? (practice; try it over and over again)

TELL

- Listening prayer is just like these things that you've named.
- The more you try it, the better you'll get.
- But you have to put the time in.
- When you first start, you'll experience both set-backs and excitement.
- We're going to watch a film clip of the movie "Ironman" to help demonstrate what practice looks like and also to serve as a little bit as inspiration.

WATCH Ironman movie clip

TELL

- Anytime we start something new, there'll be highs and lows.
- There might be a few crashes before we ever get off the ground.
- But once we do get off the ground, it can be exciting.
- (Until we freeze up or fall through the roof.)
- Just expect that, in practicing the discipline of prayer, these ups and downs WILL happen. With this expectation in place, this can help you, especially when you hit the lows, to not quit or think you are doing something wrong. Just keep going!

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- I'm passing out a handout right now.
- On it, you'll see "components of a letter."
- What we're going to do is use our knowledge of the faith stories, our knowledge of letter writing and our imagination.
- With those three things, we're going to each sit down and write a letter to ourselves from God.
- As we've talked about before, our brain is our communication center, and just like we use it to talk to others, so does God use it to talk to each of us.
- One way God "speaks" to us is with imagination.
- So as we imagine what God might say to us, and as we write it down, God can be working with us, offering words and images that on our own we wouldn't come up with.
- The sheet isn't just components of a letter though, it is also an outline of a letter.

- So instead of sitting down and saying, “I got nothing,” you can sit down and write the first line, “Dear...” and whatever name it is that you think God calls you.
- Then you can imagine and write down how you think God would greet you.
- Then you write down the reason(s) God is writing to you.
 - What is it that God wants you to know or to see or to think about?
 - Maybe God is responding to what you wrote in the last session?
- Then you write down how you imagine God expresses care for you.
- Then you write down how God ends a letter.
- I’ll give us 20 minutes or so to do this.
- Put some thought and effort into this and you might be surprised at what happens.

DO letter writing activity 15 to 20 minutes (keep an eye out on them, if they’re all done, call ‘em back early – to wrap up, first give them a 2 minute warning and then a 30 second warning to finish up the sentence they are on.)

NOTE: Have the letter writing finish about 20 minutes before the end of this session/end of the retreat

ASK

- How was the letter writing for you?
- I’m going to ask for some of us to share either an idea or understanding that came while we were writing, or simply to read some of what we wrote.
- Before we do that though, I want to be very clear that whatever is shared is to be honored and treated with respect. Understood?
- Who is willing to share?

SHARE

TELL

- Thank for sharing of yourselves this weekend.
- What we’ve talked about this weekend is central and integral part to being a disciple.
- You won’t be good at praying, though, just because you did these few things this weekend.
- It is our hope that you choose to keep practicing being still and finding silence, that you practice saying the five parts of prayer that we talked about that are in the Lord’s Prayer and that you practice listening to God, using both the forms from Session 3 and Session 4.
- It is our hope that you do one of these things every day.
- Thank you for being God’s gift this weekend.

CLOSING PRAYER

CLEAN UP

GO HOME

Components of a letter

Session 4 Handout

1. Address it to the person...Dear _____. In this case, the letter will be addressed to you. How might God address you? Dear Son? Dear Daughter? Dear Beloved? My dear Gift to the World?
 2. The greeting. This is where the person writing tells you how much they miss you or love you or what they like about you or what makes you you or what makes you so special to them. What might God say to you about you?
 3. Purpose for writing (The reason I'm writing is Why might God be writing to you?) The purpose for writing can include one or more of the following:
 - A. Sharing of the self (There's some things about me I want to share with you). What might God be wanting to share about God with you in this letter?
 - B. Inquiring of the other (I've heard you've been up to this, or quit this other thing...and I'm concerned....what's going on?) How might God express care/concern for you?
 - C. Giving observations/information/advice (Think about this specific thing this way; Have you considered...?) What perspective might God share with you about certain things that you are interested in or that are going on in your life?
 4. Expressions of Good wishes/blessings/care and the desire to communicate again soon. What might God say to you about talking to you? What kind of experience has writing this letter been for God?
 5. Closing/Signature - How might God end a letter....*would* God end a letter...?
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Encouragement:

Don't worry about getting it wrong. You are practicing. When you practice, you'll make mistakes. That's alright. Don't worry about it. Just jump on in.

There might be some concerns or questions that you have for God about you or God. Pretend that you wrote God a letter with those concerns and questions. And now you are imagining what God's response to that letter is.

Start by being still. But then you will have to put the pen/pencil to the paper, even if you don't have the words. Use the "Parts of the Letter" format above to help you get started.