



THE HEART OF A METHODIST

STUDY GUIDE

Mark #4: Prays Constantly

Book: *Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper

SCRIPTURE

5a "I am the vine and you are the branches... 15 I don't call you servants any longer, because servants don't know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you."

John 15:5a, 15

23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel."

Joshua 24:23

17 pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

STUDY & REFLECT/DISCUSS:

The Five Marks of a Methodist, Mark #4: Prays Constantly

Prayer is the word we use to describe the state of connection and communication with God. Methodists understand that Jesus, and the general tenor of Scripture, calls us to a relationship with God that is ever present.

1. Spend a few moments reflecting on the sermon. Where did you relate? What didn't make sense? How did God communicate with you during it?
2. Regarding John 15:15, "John Wesley described this shift in terms of his own experience, referring to it as the movement from being a servant to being a son...discipleship moves from regulation to relationship, from the impersonal to the personal." **Do you believe God wants this shift to happen? Have you experienced God as loving parent or close friend? Or have you experienced God more as authoritarian overseer or supervisor?**
3. Wesley said, "This is true prayer, lifting up the heart to God. This is the essence of prayer, and this alone." God does love you unconditionally and does desire personal relationship with you. Does this spark in you a desire to respond to God's initiative? **What would an appropriate response from you to God look like?**

4. Prayer is the word we use to describe the state of connection and communication with God. Consider whether you have experienced meaningful prayer (sensed God's presence, heard God's voice, or felt God's touch) in the following ways:

In individual, focused prayer;

When another person prayed for you;

As part of a larger group where prayers were lifted up;

In corporate worship through song, sermon or sacrament;

In a surprise moment where you were not in a setting of intentional prayer.

Consider one of those experiences: Where were you? What was happening? How did you sense something different about this experience?

5. Praying constantly is possible, because we believe constant connection with God is possible. **What are some components you could lay for a foundation of intentional prayer that a life of constant prayer could be built upon? What possible obstacles can you see in laying that foundation? How can God empower you to overcome those obstacles?**

LIVING IT OUT

As our name indicates, Methodists have found methods to be very helpful in living out our faith. The sermon presented several methods for guidance for daily prayer:

- Using the Lord's Prayer;
- Using the ACTS model (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication);
- Journaling a conversation with God: writing my part and attempting to discern and write down God's part.

If you do not currently have a pattern for intentional prayer, commit to trying these different models over the next week. Set aside a time on your calendar for each day. Pay attention not only to your experience during this focused time, but the effect it has on your sense of connection to God throughout the rest of the day.

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to empower and increase your prayer life. Ask God to make unmistakable and unexpected appearances during your days. Pray for each other, and pray for other needs you may be aware of. Pray for the "empty chair," for those who are not yet with our group/our church. Thank God for the transforming work that God has done and is yet to do in our lives, families, the community, and the world.