

First Sunday PRAYER Gathering – September 2010

Small group and student ministry group leaders:

This first Sunday of each month is critical to the life of our church for it is a dedicated time for each of us – together as one vibrant group of Christ-followers – to pray and seek God’s plan and His favor. For without His anointing on our work, it’s useless. That goes for our Pastor Search Team’s efforts – we need God’s blessing.

This devotional has been prepared by using excerpts from *The Church God Blesses*, by Jim Cymbala, the pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle. One chapter in particular has been the focal point, “The Hinge that Opens Heaven’s Door.”

Please share this with your small group or students:

“... our first order of business as Christians every day is to deal with sin. Daily, hourly, and moment by moment, we must by the grace of God bring all our sin to the Lord in sincere and contrite confession. Confession of sin is the most important key to being a people and church that lives continually under the blessing of heaven.” Jim Cymbala

Shaun Groves, in his song, *Welcome Home*, shares these thoughts about sin:

Welcome to this heart of mine
I've buried under prideful vines
Grown to hide the mess I've made inside of me
Come decorate, Lord
Open up the creaking door
And walk upon the dusty floor
Scrape away the guilty stains
Until no sin or shame remain
Spread Your love upon the walls
And occupy the empty halls
Until the man I am has faded
No more doors are barricaded ...

Take a seat, pull up a chair
Forgive me for the disrepair
And the souvenirs from floor to ceiling
Gathered on my search for meaning
Every closet's filled with clutter
Messses yet to be discovered
I'm overwhelmed, I understand
I can't make this place all that You can ...

Confession of sin opens the door to our hearts and allows God to make us into His image. Imagine the remodeling that would take place in our church “home” if each of us was serious about the confession of sin in our lives.

Prayer time:

Please begin your prayer time by sharing this thought and these Scriptures and asking individuals to examine their hearts, minds, and lives and confess any sin the Holy Spirit brings to light:

"When we honestly confess our sins, we clear the way for fresh blessing to come upon us from the Lord. It is possible that right now you are sitting in the shadows rather than in the sunlight of God's favor. The only thing in the world that can keep you there is unconfessed sin. Why live one minute longer in that condition when a loving, merciful God is calling you into fellowship with Him?" Jim Cymbala

"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with all who love Him and obey His commands... ." Daniel 9:3-4

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity ... Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you." Psalm 51:1-3, 9, 12-13

Ask someone to close the prayer time by praying that as individuals and as a gathering of Christ-followers we will constantly be reminded to view sin the way God views sin – as a roadblock to fellowship with Him. Ask for God's blessing on our church and His anointing on our Pastor Search Team and our new senior pastor.

Please share this closing thought:

Imagine how much easier it will be for our new senior pastor to lead us when he arrives and discovers we are already a 'church God blesses' because of our pursuit of holiness through the confession of our sins.

May God bless your time together!