

Text: Luke 5.15-17
St Stephen's

March 25/26, 2006
Sat PM/Sun AM

Living the LIFE-Style: Talking Everything Over With God

Every week I have taken some time to do a little **theology** with you. Because **ideas drive your life!** For better or worse, that is true. This series has been so challenging to me that I have had to do a lot of 'God thinking' along the way – and I want to help you do the same.

This week I want to comment on **the connection between your body and your faith**. Sometimes we don't think there is much of a connection. C.S. Lewis' **Screwtape Letters** is a famous work of fiction that pretends to record the conversations of a senior demon named Uncle Screwtape as he apprentices his younger nephew named Wormwood on the subtle art of **tempting people**. Screwtape is chewing out Wormwood for permitting his patient to become a Christian!

Nevertheless, he says,

"There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the enemy's camp and are now with us. All the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favor."

Old Uncle Screwtape has some wisdom! He knows that the **habits** of our bodies are a powerful force. And that is why (here's your first blank)...

LIFE-Style Training is Essential for our Body

Have you ever thought why you have a body? Sometimes we think our body has nothing to do with our faith. But not true! St Paul says it like this...

"The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Cor 6:13 (RSV)

Would you **circle the word, 'meant'**? Your body has a God-given meaning and **purpose** and **destiny**. It is **'meant'** for the Lord. It is

created by God for you as the **means by which you can act** for him and glorify him in his great universe.

But the nature, the tendencies and the capacities of our bodies have been **twisted** by the experience and reality of **sin** in our lives. What happens to us is that for years evil has been our **choice** and our **custom** and our **character** – and then these tendencies towards evil actually become **'embodied'** in us. Sin becomes our instinct and our preference and our automatic choice.

And then when we come to Christ and start a new life, we find that **our bodies do not yield automatically** or easily to the new life Jesus gives us. We don't know if our body is a **friend or a foe of our faith**. It can become **so confusing** that we figure that we just have to live with our twisted instincts and habits, and we **just do whatever our bodies tell us to do**. While we say we are believers in Jesus. Uncle Wormwood would be so pleased with that!

But look what Paul says...

...do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, ...and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:12-13 (NIV)

Have you noticed that all the spiritual habits/disciplines we have seen in the lifestyle of Jesus are **bodily habits**? Every one of them involves the body...

Solitude, Silence, Study, Fasting, Prayer, Submission, Worship...

All of them **are bodily activities that train the body** in a new set of habits a new set of instincts. God trains our instincts, our emotions, our thoughts, our physical responses to be a partner and servant and friend of our faith, not a foe of our faith. That is why I say LIFE-Style Training is essential for our body.

This leads Dallas Willard to say...

"To withhold our bodies from religion is to exclude religion from our lives. Our life is a bodily life..." Dallas Willard

Challenge to the Fellows: Give your body to the Lord. Give that some thought!

Today we are looking at **Jesus' habit of prayer**. (Note that it was a bodily habit). He prayed so often and so effectively that at one point his disciples came and asked him...

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

Luke 11:1 (RSV)

There was **something very different** about the prayer life of Jesus that impressed the disciples. What was **so different**? Well, for one, when he prayed, **things happened**. God moved. And his prayer seemed so **intimate** – close... not the formal empty prayers the disciples were so used to. What was the difference? Let me try a summary sentence...

Jesus Talked Everything Over with His Father...

Let's take a brief **tour through the gospel of Luke**. Jesus prayed...

In Times of Deep Spiritual Blessing...

When Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

Luke 3:21-22 (RSV)

One of the distinctives of Jesus' habit of prayer was that it was **a Father-Son conversation** that had the **deep spiritual blessing** of the Father. Jesus loved that. It was his home, his life. Too many of us have never known that...

But **when you come** to Jesus, God says something like this over you...
"my beloved daughter/son in whom I am well pleased."

That love, that honor, that approval, that blessing was the ground of his readiness to talk everything over with his Father. Who wouldn't...? **If you ask him** to teach you to pray, this is where he very well may start. Wouldn't you like to ask him... *'Lord, teach us to pray..'*

In Times of Pressing Public Responsibility...

...great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed. On one of those days, as he was teaching... and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

Luke 5:15-17 (RSV)

People swarmed to him... **withdrew** and prayed... Look at the results: "The power of the Lord was with him to heal..." Do you see the **connection**? **If you ask Jesus** to teach you to pray, he will always be reminding you of where there is **power to meet the demands** of your life.

Wouldn't you like to ask him... *'Lord, teach us to pray..'*

In Times of Critical Ministry Decision...

In these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles...

Luke 6:12-13 (RSV)

The **choice of a ministry team** was a crucial decision. If look how we do that in America today, we set up **search process**, look at resume's, put people through interviews, test for their capacities and skills, call their references... all of which may be very helpful. Jesus **probably did some of this** as he got to know the people who were following him. But then he did **something even more essential**. He spent the whole night talking with his Father about it. Maybe it took all night because he got stuck on one of the names, "**Judas**, Are you sure it is Judas?" When he

came down the mountain, he was sure. Years later, when Judas betrayed him, he never showed any regrets. Because **he had settled it in prayer.**

If you ask Jesus to teach you to pray, he will show you how to turn your decisions over to your Father's will.

Wouldn't you like to ask him... *'Lord, teach us to pray..'*

In Times of Real Physical Need...

And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

Luke 9:16 (RSV)

You might remember that Jesus had sent the disciples out on a **short term mission trip** at the start of this chapter, and when they returned, he took them on a **retreat**. People found out about it and **swarmed them**. Late in the day, the disciples said to Jesus "**send them away** so they can get some food." And Jesus said back to them, "You give them something to eat." There were some 5000 men in that crowd, and women and children as well. Probably more than **10000 people**. No one had food except for some kid who brought a **sack lunch**.

What did Jesus do? He took what they had, and **turned to his Father and prayed**. Thanking Him. And blessing the little that was there. And breaking it and giving it away. And God multiplied it.

If you ask Jesus to teach you to pray, he will show you how to take the little you have and thank him for it and bless it and give it. And he will multiply it.

Wouldn't you like to ask him... *'Lord, teach us to pray..'*

In Times of Great Kingdom Advance...

A short time later they went **back on a prayer retreat**. And Jesus was again off in prayer alone, talking everything over with his Father. Coming

out of that time of prayer he put **a question** to his disciples, 'who do you say that I am.' And Peter knew.

Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "...who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

Luke 9:18-20 (RSV)

I think as he prayed that day, Jesus knew the Father had been speaking to Peter, and knew that Peter was ready to speak it out loud. *"You are the Christ of God."* That can happen when you talk to your Father about the people near and dear to you. **He will whisper to you, 'they are ready. Ask them, invite them, speak to them about my Son.'**

If you ask Jesus to teach you to pray, he will show you how to lead people to him.

Wouldn't you like to ask him... *'Lord, teach us to pray.'*

In Times of Sharp Personal Sacrifice...

The time would come, Jesus knew, when it was **time to lay his life down**. When it was time, once again he **talked it over** with his Father.

And he withdrew from them... and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

Luke 22:41-44 (RSV)

It would be **in prayer that he would make the surrender** and yield his life. Before he yielded on the cross, he yielded in prayer.

No follower of Jesus avoids sharp, personal sacrifice. To follow him is to be ready to give, even to give all for the sake of his purposes. That is a battle that must be won on our knees if it is to be won on our feet.

If that season is upon you, ask Jesus to teach you to pray, he will show you how to turn your will and your life over to your Father's will.