St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups April 22nd 2007
Deeper into prayer – with Jesus
....as a child Matt 11:25 - 30

Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

This week we begin a new preaching and teaching series 'deeper into prayer – with Jesus.' Since the start of this year God has been calling us afresh to a deeper understanding of his love for us and the life his Spirit gives when we have confidence in his Father love. Over these next twelve weeks we believe that God wants to continue to call us to deepen our relationship with him through prayer.

As soon as prayer is mentioned guilt and feelings that we are not up to the mark can take hold! Descriptions such as that of the Quaker leader George Fox described by William Penn can be intimidating "*Above all he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his dress and behaviour, and the fewness and fullness of his words, have often struck even strangers with admiration,…the most awful, living and reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say was in his prayer."*

It is easy to feel a failure in prayer, and finding it difficult to know how, what or when to pray can seem to blight our Christian lives. However feeling that we have much to learn from Jesus about prayer puts us on a par with the first disciples. When they saw Jesus pray they pleaded " Lord teach us how to pray" Luke 11:1. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus has a lot of time for those who struggle and can't seem to get it right. Which is why Jesus prays: " I praise you Father that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children" v 25. The wise and learned were the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, those who think they have it sorted, those who would take offence at being likened to ''little children.'

We often use the term 'child' to describe adults in a derogatory manner - 'don't be so childish,' yet Jesus uses the term 'children' on several occasions in the gospels to describe those who would follow him. He deliberately does this in order to paint a picture of a people who will be regarded by the world as foolish and insignificant (see Paul in1Cor 1:27) and yet hold the keys to the kingdom of God. So to go deeper into prayer we need to go first and foremost as children – God's children. With humility – read Matt 18:1 -4. with honesty and with simplicity.

We may have doubts and fears but Jesus invites us to lay them firmly at his feet. He alone assures us of the fact of our Father God's love for us – read Matt 11:27. And so Jesus invites us to go deeper with him – read Matt 11:28 -30.

Witness: questions to discuss

1. How would you describe your prayer life? cold – luke warm – warm – hot!

2. Do you find it difficult to pray? Why?

3. How does it make you feel being compared to a little child?

4. In a post Christendom secular age the church is often described as 'foolish' insignificant and irrelevant. Is this a good or bad thing?

5. Read Matt 18:3. What do we need to 'change' if we are to grow deeper in prayer?

6. Shopping list or daily relationship? Characterise your life of prayer?