

TIP TOEING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF

Lesson Five: Fuss Less, Pray More!

I. Introduction: Why don't we pray anymore?

- A. We have an inaccurate view of God
 - 1. Our God is too small
 - 2. Our God is not holy
 - 3. Our God is not personal
 - 4. Our God is not responsive
- B. We have an inaccurate view of ourselves
 - 1. We are too self-sufficient to ask
 - 2. We are too sophisticated to ask
 - 3. We are too independent. We do not want to be beholden to anyone
- C. We have a warped sense of Science and Technology
 - 1. We leave very little room in modern thinking for an ancient, supernatural God.
- D. We have an inaccurate understanding of how God operates
 - 1. What can you tell God if He knows everything already?
 - 2. Western Logic says: Nothing Jesus says: Everything!
- E. We really do not understand what prayer is and is not
 - 1. Prayer is not a means to get from God what we want. "Prayer is a means God uses to give us what He wants." ("The God Who Hears" by W. Bingham Hunter)

II. A careful look at Philippians 4:6

- A. "Everything": Note the contrast...don't be anxious for ANYTHING, but in EVERY SITUATION, regarding EVERYTHING, pray!
- B. "Prayer": This term is a more sacred word than "petition." It is an attitude of mind that is worshipful. It means more than the simple word "to pray." It means to pray with a certain attitude. Consider the contrast of the two men praying in Luke 18:9-13.
- C. "Petition": This term is generally spoken of any prayer (Luke 2:37, Acts 1:14, Eph. 6:18). In this passage, it is the term for specific prayers that are an expression of need. It is the idea of making known a particular need for yourself, (Luke 1:13) or others (James 5:16).
- D. "Thanksgiving": This is the word from which we get the concept of "eucharist". It is the expression of gratitude towards God. It is the acknowledgement that whatever God sends is for His glory and our good. It is the conscious remembrance of previous blessings. Only the thankful hear is a joy filled heart.
- E. "Requests": These are things asked for...generally from an inferior to a superior. It is used when the Jews ask for Barabbas's release in Luke 23:24. It is used as particular requests in prayer (See the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13).

III. Consider some Biblical examples:

- A. Prayers of Gratitude when things are going great!
 - 1. Moses: After the Red Sea experience (Exodus 15:1-18)
 - 2. Hannah: After her son is born (I Sam. 2:1-10)
- B. Prayers of deep concern when things are not going well
 - 1. Jeremiah: As he is being wrongly accused (Jeremiah 20)
 - 2. Jonah: In the midst of his rebellion (Jonah 2)
 - 3. Isaiah and Daniel: Confessing their own sin and the sin of others (Isaiah 6 and Daniel 9)
 - 4. Habakkuk: When there are no blessings at hand (Habakkuk 3:17-18)
- C. Prayers interceding for others
 - 1. Notice Solomon's heart in I Kings 8:22-53

2. Paul prayed continuously for others (Rom. 1:9-11, I Thess. 3:10-13)

D. Asking for others to pray for you

Consider the example set by Paul:

Rom. 15:30-31 “strive together with me in your prayers to God for me...”

Col. 4:2-4 “Continue in prayer, and be watchful and thankful and pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message...”

2 Thess. 3:1 “Finally brethren, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course...”

IV. Some practical thoughts:

A. It is all about ATTITUDE.

We pray because we are told to (I Thess. 5:17). We pray because it brings God glory! (John 14:13). We pray in Jesus’ name to indicate that our requests are only on the merits of His finished work (Eph. 3:12).

B. There are ALL KINDS of prayers:

1. Prayers of Thanksgiving: Look at Acts 17:24-28

2. Prayers of Forgiveness: Consider Col. 3:13

3. Prayers of Repentance: Look at Deut. 8: 2-5

4. Prayers with specific requests for others:

To know God’s will: Col. 1:9-12

To grow spiritually: Eph. 3:14-21

The wisdom to know Him better: Eph. 1:15-23

Fuss Less...Pray More!

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Christians pray so little? How does our view of God affect our prayer life?

2. Why do you think Paul contrasts an anxious heart with a life of prayer?
3. Why is attitude so important as it relates to prayer? Do you struggle with a Biblical attitude towards prayer? How much of your prayer life is filled with thanksgiving?
4. Discuss how much of our usual prayers are focused on thanksgiving, forgiveness, repentance and spiritual requests for others? Are most of your prayers filled with requests for things? What should change?