

Do Things Go Better With Prayer?

Prayer:

How Most People Think It Works

- ❶ Tell God that you need help.
1 Samuel 4:1-3
- ❷ Tell God what to do.
1 Samuel 4:3
- ❸ Believe that God will answer.
1 Samuel 4:4-5

Prayer:

The All Too Common Result

- ▶ Frustration, bitterness, and resentment toward God.
1 Samuel 4:7-22, Proverbs 19:2-3

Prayer:

What The Bible Actually Says

- ▶ God's guidance is based on our obedience.
1 Samuel 2:30, 2 Chronicles 7:14-15, Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 58, 59:1-3, James 5:16,
1 John 3:22, Jeremiah 29:13, Deuteronomy 1:43-46, Proverbs 28:9, Micah 3:4
- ▶ God would rather be feared, than used.
1 Samuel 4:5-11, Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Ecclesiastes 12:13, 1 Peter 2:16-17,
Proverbs 9:10, Psalm 111:10

God wants us to seek Him, not control Him,
to submit to Him, not Him to us.
- ▶ Instead of getting religious, get right with God.
1 Samuel 7:2-4, James 4:7-10, Proverbs 8:17, Psalm 34:17-18, Mark 12:28-31,
John 15:1-17, John 21:1-19

Growth Group Homework

For the week of February 28, 2010

QUICK REVIEW - Looking back over your sermon notes, was there a particular point or passage of Scripture that challenged, confused or caught your attention?

MY STORY

1. How would you describe prayer in your household growing up?
2. When it comes to prayer in your own life do you? ...
 - Prefer to pray silently instead of out loud
 - Find your mind wandering when trying to pray
 - Rarely think about praying
 - Look forward to prayer time as a group
 - Feel awkward about praying out loud
 - Don't really know how to pray out loud
 - Other

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The Pharisees in the New Testament were a significant group known for their highly religious prayers, yet their hearts were far from God. As you read the passages below, what did they do that looked pleasing to God on the outside, but actually fell far short in reality?

Matthew 23:1-4

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: [2] "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. [3] So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. [4] They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. [NIV]

Matthew 23:23-24

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. [24] You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. [NIV]

Matthew 23:25-26

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. [NIV]

Matthew 23:27-28

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. [28] In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. [NIV]

What motivations or issues caused them to miss what God was really calling them to do?

2. One of the problems the Pharisees ran into was that their prayers and passion for seeking God became self-serving. They wanted to control God in their prayers – their zeal had gone bad. The Apostle Paul, who was once a Pharisee himself, still encouraged the early church to be zealous about their walk with God. He wrote, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." (Romans 12:11) What do the following passages encourage us to be zealous or passionate about?

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
[2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
[3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers. [NIV]

John 13:1-17

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

[2] The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. [3] Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; [4] so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. [5] After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[6] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

[7] Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

[8] "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

[9] "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

[10] Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

[11] For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

[12] When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. [13] "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. [14] Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. [15] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. [16] I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. [17] Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. [NIV]

Philippians 2:1-11

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [2] then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. [3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [4] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[5] Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

[6] Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

[7] but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

[8] And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death--
even death on a cross!

[9] Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
[10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

[11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. [NIV]

How could zeal in each of these categories go bad?

3. This weekend we heard that "God would rather be with those who fear Him, than with those who just want to use Him." How do the following verses help you gain a greater understanding of what it means to have a healthy fear of God?

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline. [NIV]

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,

[2] turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
[3] and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
[4] and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
[5] then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God. [NIV]

Proverbs 3:7-8

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.
[8] This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones. [NIV]

Proverbs 8:13-14

To fear the Lord is to hate evil;
I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech.
[14] Counsel and sound judgment are mine;
I have understanding and power. [NIV]
Do you have any thoughts on how you evaluate your fear of God?

Do the verses above add, change or confirm how you evaluate yourself?

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back at this week's teaching and study, is there something you specifically want to remember?

As we begin this new part of our series on prayer, is there anything specific you hope we cover on the topic of prayer?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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