

Growth Group Homework

For the week of March 10, 2013

This week is the final meeting of our Winter Quarter. (*Note: the Jordan groups are on a different schedule.*) We'll take a two-week break and then the nine-week Spring Quarter will begin the first week of April and run through June 1.

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. This weekend we heard how Abraham's servant saw God answer his prayers in a big way. Unfortunately, not all our prayers get answered so completely. How do you normally react when God tells you "no" or "not yet"?

2. We've all found ourselves at some point falling into the trap of not showing gratitude for all God has done for us. Which of the following gratitude roadblocks could most likely become a barrier for you?

- Not realizing all I have been given
- Taking for granted what I know I have
- Chip on my shoulder / Holding a grudge
- Not being where I want to be in life
- Not getting what I ask for
- I deserve what I have/I worked hard for what I have
- God still hasn't answered my prayers
- No one thanked me
- Unwilling to take the time to say thank you
- Other _____

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Not only are our prayers not always answered in the way we want, but not everyone in the Bible got what they were praying for either. Read 2 Samuel 12:15-23 and Matthew 26:36-44 about two people praying desperately about critical issues, and then answer the following questions.

What surprises you about David's and/or Jesus' behavior?

How is the balance between asking for what we want and deferring to God's will revealed in these stories?

Can you think of any ways these stories can be an encouragement to your prayer life?

How do you think faith and obedience relate to prayer?

2. We heard this weekend about the importance of saying thanks. All too often in life, we lack an attitude of gratitude, and as a result don't say thanks enough. What can you learn about saying thanks from the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19?

Think of a recent difficult situation or trial in your life. How could you have specifically expressed thankfulness to God as a part of your prayers?

3. Mike talked about the need to value character over image. However, we live in a society that seems to value image, position, influence, and wealth over character. How do the following verses reinforce the importance of our character over our image?

1 Samuel 16:7

Proverbs 4:23

Luke 6:43-44

TAKING IT HOME

Often, our lack of gratitude is a result of not taking enough time to consider all that God has done for us. To remedy that, take 60 seconds to write as fast as you can all the things you're thankful for in the following three categories:

Relationships

Who God is

Material Possessions / Resources

Communion Option

Communion is an important way we remember all that God has done for us through the sacrifice of his Son on the cross. As we remember Jesus' sacrifice, Communion also becomes a great time to express our gratitude for all that he's done for us. This week you may conclude Growth Group by taking Communion together. To prepare for this, take a moment to read Psalm 103:8-14 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, reflecting on the significance of Christ's forgiveness of our sins.

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2 Samuel 12:15-23 and Matthew 26:36-44 about two people praying desperately about critical issues, and then answer the following questions.

2 Samuel 12:15-23

15 After Nathan had gone home, the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. 16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. 17 The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

18 On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

19 David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked.

"Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

20 Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

21 His attendants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!"

22 He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.' 23 But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." [NIV]

Matthew 26:36-44

Gethsemane

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. 44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. [NIV]

What surprises you about David's and/or Jesus' behavior?

How is the balance between asking for what we want and deferring to God's will revealed in these stories?

Can you think of any ways these stories can be an encouragement to your prayer life?

How do you think faith and obedience relate to prayer?

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Luke 17:11-19

Jesus Heals Ten Men With Leprosy

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy[a] met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." [NIV]

Think of a recent difficult situation or trial in your life. How could you have specifically expressed thankfulness to God as a part of your prayers?

3. Mike talked about the need to value character over image. However, we live in a society that seems to value image, position, influence, and wealth over character. How do the following verses reinforce the importance of our character over our image?

1 Samuel 16:7

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." [NIV]

Proverbs 4:23

23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it. [NIV]

Luke 6:43-44

A Tree and Its Fruit

43 "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. [NIV]

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