

## What is God's highest priority for us?

Last week we talked about the importance of living by God's Word. But as we grow closer to God, we realize that He wants us to live according to His priority. In the very first chapter of the Bible, God says, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Why would God do this? One of the answers to this question is that God simply created men and women to relate to Himself. In other words, God's priority for us is that we would have intimacy with Him. This means that we must not only spend time in His Word, but also spend time conversing in prayer with Him. Jesus says "men should always pray and not give up." Prayer is the secret to relating with God, thus achieving God's highest priority for our lives.

## Living by Prayer

Read these Scriptures and answer the following questions:

### John 15:5-8

"I [Jesus] am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. [7] If you remain in me and my words remain in you, **ask whatever you wish**, and it will be given you. [8] This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- What privilege was given to the branches that remained in the vine? (15:7)
- When is it difficult to develop and maintain a personal relationship with Jesus?
- What steps can you take to develop a more intimate relationship with Christ?

### Matthew 6:5-15

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. [6] But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [7] And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

[9] "This, then, is how you should pray:

" 'Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,

[10] your kingdom come,  
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

[11] Give us today our daily bread.

[12] Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

[13] And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.'

[14] For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

- What label did Jesus give people who pray for show? Why? (6:5)
- To whom did Jesus tell us to pray? (6:9)
- How should this prayer impact our attitude toward:
  - God? (6:9)
  - God's kingdom and will? (6:10)
  - Life's necessities? (6:11)
  - Those who have wronged us? (6:12)
  - Temptation? (6:13)

- What common or overused phrases do you hear frequently repeated in people's prayers?
- What changes do you need to make in your prayer life?

### **Luke 18:1-14**

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. [2] He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. [3] And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

[4] "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, [5] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' "

[6] And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. [7] And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? [8] I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

- Why did the judge finally give in to the woman's request? (18:4-5)
- How will God's actions differ from those of the unjust judge? (18:7)
- Why do people stop praying?
- For what need or concern will you commit to praying persistently?

### **James 4:2-3**

You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. [3] When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

- Why don't people have what they want? (4:2)
- Why doesn't God give some people what they ask for? (4:3)
- What sins of action and attitude do you need to confess to God today?

## **Prayer Toolbox**

After having read some basic Scripture on what the Bible says prayer is, how do we go about praying? Last week, we discussed Bible reading. Ideally, Bible reading in prayer should be done together—like hand in glove. So many principles of getting ready to read God's Word apply as well. But here are a few steps to take in addition:

1. Choose a special time and place where you can be alone and uninterrupted.
2. Get alone and relax before God.
3. Use Jesus' model for prayer (from Matthew 6 above). Here's a basic outline:
  - Honor God (Our Father...\_
  - Submit to God's Will (Your Kingdom...)
  - Make specific requests from God (Give us...Forgive us...Protect us...)
4. Use a notebook and make a list of your specific requests for referral. One of the first lists you will make is your "Outreach List." This is a list of those you care about who need to know Jesus.

## **Action Plan**

The following actions will help me draw closer to God in prayer:

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