
Prayer: Thanksgiving and Supplication

Ephesians 3:14-21

“How do I pray now?”

John had tried to be a good dad. . .so what happened? His teenage son was clearly hanging around with the wrong crowd. It was worse than language, cigarettes and beer. John feared for his son's life. It's not that John Jr. hadn't seen a clear alternative. John and his wife had been missionaries. Since returning from the field, they'd led exemplary lives in the community, and all their friends were positive role models. So, it was surprising that John Jr. would stray so far from the mark. No one seemed to know why—least of all, John!

Finally, it all came to a head. While John was gone on a business trip, his son came home “stoned” and threatened his mother with a knife. The police came, disarmed the boy and took him away. Not knowing what to do, John left his son in the county jail for a few days to “cool off and think about it.” And then he tried to pray....

Reflection

In Philippians 4:6,7, Paul exhorts us not to worry about anything, but to pray about everything. Anxiety is self-centered, counter-productive worry. As legitimate as it seems, however, it is unbelief.

- Have you ever experienced anything like John did in the story? How did you feel?
- Did it change your impression of God? Should it? What is still true of God's character?
- What should John pray for?

Accountability and Application

You're praying “Santa Claus” prayers! You think anything you ask for will be delivered. Why? You've lived as you should. Why should you struggle?

Isn't that the way we treat God? We spend very little time with him, just praising him for who he is and thanking him for what he has done for us.

Paul didn't pray that way, and neither should we. Adoration, confession and thanksgiving are as much a part of prayer as supplication. In fact, they are the best preparation for our petitions, because they prepare our hearts.

Prayer: Oh Lord God! Thank you for who you are. Thank you for your love that you so lavishly shed upon all of us at the cross. Help me to be a channel of that love to others.

Ephesians 3:14-21 (English Standard Version)

Prayer for Spiritual Strength

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.