

## ***Reflections on Prayer***

The disciples witnessed Jesus' miracles and heard his amazing conversations with people. They saw Jesus withdraw to pray, spending hours with God. Jesus' prayer life was central to the transforming power of his person and His ministry. Experiencing this heavenly power gave the disciples the desire for a relationship with God, our heavenly father. They therefore asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

Jesus, being the most wonderful counselor and teacher, gave the disciples definitive answers. He used both positive and negative examples to clarify his teaching, (Matthew 6:1-8) and provided an excellent template for our prayers. (Matthew 6:9-15) The negative examples reveal two undesirable ways to pray. Jesus warned his followers not to repeat phrases as incantations or repeated phrases in an attempt to redirect reality, perhaps what we could describe as "using the power of positive thinking." We should nevertheless go on steadfastly bringing our petitions to God. "*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it, with thanksgiving.*" (Colossians 4:2) Jesus also told his disciples not to pray loudly in public as a vehicle for hypocrisy, rather than submitting praise and petitions to God in private. How excellent and true is His teaching; and how humbled we are when our public devotion does not match up to our private prayer lives.

As summer approaches and possibly some down-time for us, may we profitably use the time for meditation, reflection and prayer. May we follow the example of the disciples and pray for the desire to spend time with God. May we have our relationship with the Lord refreshed as we seek to redirect our lives in the light of his word. As was recorded in the Psalms, David continually cried out to God:

*"Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!"* and

*"Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you, I lift up my soul."* (Psalm 143:1 & 8)

We can expect that our devotional lives will deepen as we strengthen our intimate relationship with God. Spending quiet times with God means reading His word and devotional material, thinking, listening to God's voice in our conscience, and asking how our lives may be different to the lives of non-believers. Afresh we may seek his will giving us principles for living our lives as well as answers for our particular circumstances. God is faithful, and "*rewards those who seek Him.*" (Hebrews 11:6). God even knows what we need before we ask Him. (Matthew 6:8)

With an increased awareness of the person of God, who has bought us with a price, who is slow to anger, and mercifully patient with us, we will consciously utter our prayers, being attentive to their content, and actively bring our concerns to God. May God change us

by the renewal of our minds so that we become more like Him and less like the world around us. (Romans 2:12) The words of the hymn (LBW 506) help us pray:

"Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

Forgive our fev'rish ways

Re-clothe us in our rightful mind;

In purer lives thy service find,

In deeper rev'rence, praise."

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