TOPIC: PRAYER PROTOCOL (WHEN WE PRAY…)

It is extremely important that we pray in a manner that permits God to respond to us in a positive manner.

KEY POINTS

- Prayer is the word we use to describe our communication with God. We allow God to speak to us through His Word and His Spirit, and we respond to Him with our words and our spirit.
- Daily, we find the time…take the time…**make** the time to develop a relationship of love and intimacy with God with the objective of becoming more like Him.
- Certainly we need to spend a lot of time alone with God (as modelled for us by Jesus) if we truly want to know Him. (See Matthew 14:23, 26:36; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16, 6:12.)
- Jesus totally exemplified the instruction to "pray without ceasing" prior to it even being written (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- If we are going to pray and seek communication with God, we need to follow the proper protocol and to pray in a manner that allows Him to respond positively.
- "Protocol" simply speaks to the proper way in which things ought to be done, and we certainly need to know the proper way to approach our Almighty God and Heavenly Father.
- To help us, Jesus taught His disciples how to pray and how not to pray (Matthew 6:5-8). Then Jesus taught them a beautiful prayer that some folks pray every day:
- In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen (Matthew 6:9-13).
- Doing so will have the following result: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15).
- Theologian E. Stanley Jones said the following: "Prayer is surrender—surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will…. Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God."
- Part of our prayer protocol is total submission to the will of God as John Bunyan (the writer of *Pilgrim's Progress*) reminds us.
- Jesus also spoke to the disciples about fasting in the way that pleases God (see Isaiah 58:5-11). Our prayer protocol includes denying our flesh and exhibiting a spirit of self-sacrifice to God through times of fasting (Matthew 6:16-18).
- In scripture we have many examples of people gathering together in small or large groups for united prayer.
- Praying together in agreement and in "one accord" is a powerful force for good and for seeing God's will accomplished in the Earth. It is also a powerful force against the evil elements at work in our world!
- As New Testament Christians filled with the 'Spirit of the living God', our prayers take on an incredible new dimension. We now have the privilege of 'praying in the Holy Spirit'!
- The Holy Spirit of God actually prays for us and through us in perfect harmony with the divine will of God. His own Spirit prays and intercedes on our behalf.

KEY SCRIPTURES:
Matthew 6:5-18; Isaiah 56:7;
1 Corinthians 14:13-17

- He prays through us in silent groaning, and also, at times, with 'unknown tongues' (Romans 8:26-27). We ourselves are privileged to join in by praying in our own native language (see Jude 20; 1 Corinthians 14:14-20).
- In the setting of corporate prayer, yet again there are protocols to observe.
- We can certainly pray and praise God with a strong voice (in our native language), which may serve to edify our brethren. The spirit of intercession may rest upon a particular person and help them to lead the congregation to a deeper place in prayer.
- If we are praying and praising in tongues, it should be done at a volume that does not stand out from the crowd. Such prayer is directed only to God and does not benefit our brethren. Therefore, since loud public prayer in other tongues is not edifying to the rest of the congregation, we must refrain from doing so and pray in a decent and orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:15-17, 40).
- Prayer protocol allows us to bring our requests and needs before God, but also requires a time of thanksgiving! We do not come selfishly, only concerned with what we can get from God. We also need to thank Him for His goodness to us (Philippians 4:6-7).
- We speak to God as we would speak to our parent, spouse, employer or friend. We do not need to scream and yell at God in prayer. We simply commune with Him as our loving heavenly Father, knowing that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16b).

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1) Do you have a set time each day to meet the Lord in prayer? How successful are you on making it to this "meeting" on time?
2) When you are running late what usually gets cut/ shortened—your prayer time or other activities?
3) "Our prayer protocol includes denying our flesh." Do you set aside time to fast and pray? What are the benefits of fasting, supported by scripture?
4) Think about your usual times of prayer. Do you think you spend enough time in giving thanks? Why or why not?
5) Review scriptural protocol for praying publicly in other tongues. Are you comfortable with this aspect of prayer protocol? Do you practice it?
6) Discuss the usefulness of screaming out in prayer.
7) What scriptural instructions will you follow and/or develop in your personal prayers?

Prayer Time

"Lord, I lift my spirit to Your Spirit in holy, sweet communion." Let my prayers and my praise to You always be in earnestness and sincerity. In Jesus' Name.

Life Group Icebreaker: On a daily basis, what are the things that you purposely carve out time for?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

(Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS