

Bring this page with you to Community Group this week.

Individual Prayer Guide

Take time this week to read through Ephesians 1-3. Meditate on the amazing truths of God's grace. Soak in them, revel in them. Remind yourself who you are and whose you are. For example, think about the fact that God has raised you up with Christ in the heavenly places. That you are "in Jesus Christ" in such a way that no matter what happens to you in this world, no matter the sickness and suffering you go through, you are safe and secure, loved by Jesus, and protected by Him who is sovereign over all. Now, after meditating on these great truths, pray Paul's prayers (Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21) for other Christians, for your brothers and sisters at Redeemer. Pray that God give them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation so that they would know him better. Pray that they would grasp the hope to which they have been called, God's inheritance in them, and the incomparable power of God for them; pray that they would grasp the height, width, depth and length of the Love of Jesus for them, etc.

Community Group Discussion and Prayer

What strikes you about Paul's prayers in Ephesians?

How should they shape your praying for the saints?

Practicing Prayer in your Community Group

Take 20 (or so) minutes to pray. Pray for the following things:

That God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in their knowledge of Him.

That God would enlighten the eyes of their heart so that they would know the hope to which they have been called, the riches of God's inheritance in the saints, God's incomparable power for his people, and the love of Christ for them.

What was hard/what was good about this time of "praying for the saints"?

GIVING

Redeemer Offerings for 2017

November total: \$5,650

Actual YTD: \$225,408

Target YTD: \$292,500

Net Difference: -\$67,093

2017 Target Budget: \$338,000

2017 Target reflects the Session's hope for giving in 2017 based on current giving & needs. Thank you for giving so cheerfully & faithfully.

Paul praying: praying for the saints

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:16). Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, prayed continually for the Gentile converts to Jesus who he refers to as the "saints". And we can learn to pray for other Christians from the content of Paul's prayers. Let us consider, for example, three lessons we learn from Paul's prayers for the Christians in Ephesus that are found in chapter one of his letter.

First, we learn where we pray for as Christians

By this I don't mean our physical location. For Paul prayed continually. Wherever he was, in his work of tentmaking, on his travels, and even in prison, Paul prayed. I'm referring to spiritual geography, not physical. When Paul shares his prayer for the saints, it follows his great statement on the grace of God and every spiritual blessing we have by that grace (Ephesians 1:3-14). At the end of the great, glorious sentence that surveys God's election of the saints in Christ, their redemption, the forgiveness of their sins through Christ, the revelation of His will to them, and their sealing by the Spirit of Christ, he says "For this reason" and launches into his prayer. Paul's prayers for them, in other word, take into account the amazing grace of God displayed in their past salvation, their present spiritual blessings, and their future inheritance.

Then, as he closes his prayer by referring to the power of God at work in believers, the very same power that raised Christ from the dead, he tells of the regenerating power of God that made those who were spiritually dead come alive in Jesus Christ. Those who were once dead in their sins, made them alive, and seated them with Jesus).

This is the vantage point, "where" you pray from and when you pray for other Christians they too are with you there, between these great spiritual realities of grace.

Second, we learn what we are to pray for other Christians

What does Paul pray for? That they (the Christians in Ephesus) would know the great spiritual realities, the God of Grace, the grace of God, that surrounds them and towers over them. Paul prays in light of these great mountain peaks of grace, that the saints would know God, the God of grace, that they would be given the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to know God better. In other words, He prays that they would see the great God who has loved them before creation, who has sent the Son to redeem them and the Spirit to seal them.

The most important thing we can pray for other Christians is that they would know God, or more accurately, that God would give them the grace to know Him in a deeper, more personal, transforming way. Paul goes on to pray specifically that the eyes of their heart (what a powerful phrase) would be opened so that they would know (1) the hope to which they have been called, (2) the riches of God's inheritance in the saints, (3) the incomparable power for them who believe, like the power that raised Jesus from the dead. So in other words, Paul is praying that the Christian's eyes would be open to the great Mountain Peaks of God and God's grace that surrounds them, that they would wake up to them, see them, be blown away by them daily, hourly, etc.

This is how we should pray for each other. Paul's prayer gives us content for what we should pray. We can memorize his prayer, and when we wake up in the morning begin to pray its words for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We can pray like this:

"Father of glory, give _____ the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they would know you better. Open the eyes of his/her heart so that he/she would know the hope to which you have called them, the riches of your glorious inheritance in the saints, and your incomparably great power for those who believe." There is one more lesson we can learn.

Third, in watching Paul pray, we learn who inspires our prayer as Christians. We see it Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 and also later in Ephesians 3:14-21 that it is the LORD Jesus Christ who inspires his praying. We see this happening "live", even in his act of writing his prayer, his heart is moved and electrified by Jesus. Paul prays that the saints will have their eyes opened to the power of God at work in them he then points out that this is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. And as soon as he starts talking about Jesus, he can't stop.

He loses the train of thought of his pray in the glory of Jesus, the One who was raised from the dead and who has been enthroned and who is the head of the church. "that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Now all of this is true, but Paul could have left off by saying simply that Christians are the same recipients of God's power as Christ was in his resurrection from the grave. But he can't. The person, work, name, authority, glory of Jesus inspires him and fills his prayer with Christ.

The same thing happens in Ephesians 3. There Paul prays that the saints would know the love of Jesus and he, being overwhelmed with that love, speaks of the height, width, depth, and length of the Love of Jesus that surpasses understanding. In other words, he just can't fathom Jesus' love nor can we, and he is caught up in it and lost in it and amazed by it. This is Christian prayer! Prayer that is located amidst the great peaks of the grace of God, prayer that asks that the saints would be awoken to God's grace and seeing it grasp it, and grasping it be transformed by it. It is prayer that easily gets sidetracked – or better – inspired by the beauty, glory, love and grace of Jesus.