PRISON PRAYERS



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Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Series Summary

There was a man by the name of Paul in the Bible who knew how to pray and how to pray in such a way that he knew his prayers connected with God gave us some model prayers while he was in a Roman prison. We are going to study three of those prayers and as we do it is going to amaze you not what he prayed for, but what he didn't pray for.

Know God

Prison Prayers | Week 1 | Ephesians 1:17-23

INTRODUCTION	NOTES
In today's key text, Paul is writing from a Roman prison, and he tells the Ephesians how he is praying for them. He also tells them how they can pray for themselves. It's this type of prayer we know is a prayer that will connect with God. This is a prayer that God will hear, and God will answer. Interestingly, the prayer is all about one simple thing – knowing God. There are four things we should pray for on a daily basis, and when we pray these four things, we will be praying a life-changing type of prayer.	
KEY POINTS	
1. Pray That We Know The Lord Intimately Most of us begin all of our prayers asking God to bless us something or give us something. Paul does not pray for God to give the Ephesians what they want, but He prays what we all need and that is to know God better.	
The main purpose of prayer is not for God to give you what you ask from Him. It is to grow you in how well you know Him. The old saying really is true, "It is not what you know, it is who you know that counts."	
Knowing God is the bullseye of the Christian life - not knowing of God, not knowing about God, but knowing God. We are not talking about a philosophical, intellectual, or even emotional knowledge of God. We are talking about a personal, experiential knowledge of God. And when you know God this way, your entire life will change.	
2. Pray That We Know The Lord Confidently	
Yes, we are to know God intimately, but we are also to know God confidently. God has taken care of our past by salvation. God is taking care of our present in sanctification. God will take care of our future in glorification.	
We put our hope in Him for the past, as we look to him for	
salvation. We put our hope to Him in the present, as we live for Him in sanctification. We put our hope in Him for the future,	
knowing we will be like Him in glorification. And the word "hope"	
in the Bible is not defined as wishful thinking. It's defined as a "confident expectation." So when we hope in God, we can know Him confidently.	

Know God

Prison Prayers | Week 1 | Ephesians 1:17-23

3. Pray That We Know The Lord Joyfully	NOTES
When you think of the word "inheritance" you automatically think	NOTES
of what we are going to inherit because we are a part of God's family - what is waiting for us once we get to heaven. Today's	
Scripture passage is not about our inheritance as great as it is, but it is talking about God's inheritance, which is us!	
We are His prized possession. If you have a heart for God, deep down you can't wait to be with Him. Our Heavenly Father loves us	
so much He can't wait for us to be with Him. He wants us to know just how valuable we are to Him, how much of a treasure we are in His eyes, and how precious we are to His heart. When you realize	
this, you can know the Lord joyfully.	
4. Pray We Know The Lord Fully It is one thing to believe that God is all-powerful. It is another	
thing to know that power, to experience that power, to believe that power lives in us, and to believe that there is no power compared	
to that power. Knowing God fully means knowing His power and living in His power. There is so much hope and comfort to be	
found in knowing the all-powerful God.	

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

 How do you normally star 	rt your prayers	?
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2.	What surprised you about the biblical definition of hope mentioned in
	today's message? Do you have hope like a confident expectation? If not, why
	do you think that is?

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3.	How does it make you feel to know that the Lord sees you as His most prized possession?

Growing Up In Your Going Up

Prison Prayers | Week 2 | Philippians 1:9-11

INTRODUCTION	NOTES
In this series, we are learning that Paul prayed about things most of us never even think about. I know his prayers got to heaven because they began in heaven. And one of these things Paul prayed about was the fact that God wants us to be growing up in our going up. In today's key verses, the prayer that Paul prayed (if prayed and answered) will radically change any life, any church, and any denomination. The way Paul prayed for the Christians in Philippians is the way that we should all be praying for our church, our spouse, our children, our families, and ourselves.	
KEY POINTS	
1. Pray That Your Love Will Grow We all know that God is love and that God tells us we are to love each other. We are to love our friends, our enemies, our spouses, our children, our family and we are to love Him most of all. But Paul prays that our love will "abound more and more." In other words, it should grow. It is one thing to possess love; it is another thing to progress in love.	
Our love should grow wider. We should love more people. It should grow deeper. We should love people more. Real love – the love that we need to pray for is not just love that flows, but rather love that overflows. Have you ever poured Coke into a glass of ice too quickly? Before you know it, the fizz has exploded to the top of the glass and overflowed. That is the picture that Paul uses here. Love never stays stagnant. It should never decrease, rather it should always increase.	
2. Pray That Your Light Will Glow In verse 10, Paul compares our lives to a light. That is why he talked about letting our light shine before others. He is telling us not just to pray about our love, but to pray about our light - the way we live. It begins with praying to, "be able to discern what is best." The word "discern" literally means "test." It was a technical term that was used for determining a counterfeit or determining the real from the fake.	

Growing Up In Your Going Up

Prison Prayers | Week 2 | Philippians 1:9-11

The biggest challenge you face in making decisions is not trying to discern between what is good and what is bad. That is easy. The challenge is discerning between what is better and what is best. So many times, people settle for what is better instead of waiting for what is best. But if we're going to let our light glow, we need to practice the kind of discernment that helps us distinguish between the two.

3. Pray That Your Lord Will Show

The purpose of your praying should not be the gifts you can get from God, but the glory you can give to God. And we show God glory by producing fruit. Paul talks about this "the fruit of righteousness" in today's key passage. The thing about agriculture is that it is the root that determines the fruit. Well, what is the root of righteousness? It is not what – it is who, and that is Jesus.

You will never have any righteousness before God until you are right with God. You will never be right with God until you surrender your life to Jesus Christ as Lord because you are not the star of the show. He is the star of the show, and the spotlight is always to be on Him.

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Growing Up In Your Going Up

Prison Prayers | Week 2 | Philippians 1:9-11

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1.	What is one	practical	way	you can	show more	love to	those	around	you:)
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2.	When was a time you settled for what was good instead of waiting for what
	was best? What did you learn from that instance?

3. What are some examples of fruits of righteousness in your life right now?					

Carpe Diem Praying

Prison Prayers | Week 3 | Colossians 1:9-14

NOTES INTRODUCTION The prayer we are going to study today is found in a book called Colossians. This prayer is particularly unique because, in the first two prayers that we examined, Paul was praying for churches he had actually founded or visited and for Christians that he personally knew. In today's prayer, Paul is writing to a church he has never visited. He has never met one Christian in this city. Yet, without knowing a single name or a single need he prayed a perfect prayer for not just this church and not just these people, but for any church and any people. I call it a "Carpe Diem" prayer. If you are familiar with that phrase, you know it means "seize the day." I don't know of any prayer that we could pray daily that could do more in us, for us, with us, and through us than this prayer. We all want to pray the types of prayer that we are one hundred percent convinced that God not only hears, but God would agree with and God would answer. This prayer fits the bill. **KEY POINTS** 1. Pray To Be Guided By The Will Of God We are to begin every day by asking God to fill us with the knowledge of his will. Because, if you are living in the will of God, every other part of your Christian life will fall into place. Unfortunately, that seems to be a pretty difficult thing for us to be diligent in living out. Our biggest problem is not in finding the will of God; it is doing it. The purpose of prayer is not to get your will done in heaven; it is to get his will done on earth. The purpose of prayer is not to tell God what you want Him to do. It is to ask God what He wants you to do. Therefore, the very first thing we ought to pray is to be guided by the will of God. 2. Pray To Be Guarded By The Wisdom Of God Paul doesn't just ask that we would be filled with knowledge but filled with the knowledge that comes through wisdom and understanding. Knowledge without wisdom is deficient. It can be dangerous. It is one thing to understand the world around you. It is another thing to understand the world above you. We are living in a world today that is floating in an ocean of knowledge and dying in a desert of wisdom. We are learning firsthand if you have the knowledge to detonate a nuclear bomb but don't have the wisdom not to use it, you can destroy the world.

Carpe Diem Praying

Prison Prayers | Week 3 | Colossians 1:9-14

When you pray, you should pray not only to be guided by the will of God but guarded by the wisdom of God to have the wisdom in any situation to know you must do whatever God would have you to do.	NOTES
3. Pray To Be Gratifying In Our Walk With God In the New Testament, the Christian life is constantly described as a walk. The Christian life is always a manner of next steps. You never stand still in the Christian life. You are always progressing, always moving, always going, taking one step after another.	
There is only one place you should ever put your foot. There is only one step you should ever take and that is so it will take you wherever you are pleasing God in every way. Every step you take in your life, every place that you go, everything that you watch, everything that you hear, and every word that you say, when you know it should all be pleasing to the Lord, it makes every step doubly important and should give us even more concern and care about every step we take.	
4. Pray To Be Growing In Our Work For God If we know the will of God, through the wisdom of God, as we walk with God, that should lead to our growing in our work for God. Paul refers to this as "bearing fruit." That tells us something that he alluded to before. You don't manufacture fruit; you bear fruit.	
Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." We are not the tree. We are the branch. Our job is to let Jesus bear His fruit through us. The way we do that is by growing in the knowledge of God.	
But what does knowing God have to do with being fruitful? Well, you can't love God until you know God. You can't love God more until you love God better. The better you know God, the more you love God, and the more you love God, the better you will serve God. As you serve God, you are bearing fruit.	
5. Pray To Be Grounded In Our Witness For God You cannot come within a mile of living the Christian life in your own strength and your own power. The good news is what God enlists us to do, He empowers us to do. God will give us all the power we need to do whatever He wants us to do, as long as He wants us to do it.	

Carpe Diem Praying

Prison Prayers | Week 3 | Colossians 1:9-14

God's power never gets overloaded. It never shuts down. It is an inexhaustible supply. When we acknowledge this truth, we can be grounded in our witness for God.

6. Pray To Be Grateful In Our Worship Of God

The problems and difficult people we deal with should never have an effect on two things: our joyfulness and our gratefulness. You should always be joyful because of who Jesus is in you, and you should always be thankful for what Jesus has done for you.

Whether we are being persecuted for what we believe, insulted for standing up for what we believe in, or rejected because of the one we believe in, we should pray that we will never react with bitterness. We should respond with joyfulness that we have been counted worthy to suffer for Christ and thankfulness that the one that we stand for stands with us.

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Carpe Diem Praying

Prison Prayers | Week 3 | Colossians 1:9-14

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1.	Do you find yourself more frequently praying for God's will to happen in
	your life or for your own will to happen?

2.	How would you define the difference by	between l	knowle	dge and	wisd	om i	n
	your own words?						

3.	How can you choose to prioritize joyfulness and gratitude in the midst of difficult times?