

# **PRAYER**

## **Lesson 4: We Seek God's Blessings for Ourselves and Others in Prayer**

*1. God encourages us to pray about any need we have*

*2. We take the needs of others to God in prayer*

Prayer: Lord Jesus, by your Holy Spirit, make us sensitive to what our true needs are and to the needs of others. Move us to call earnestly upon you in prayer. Amen.

Lesson Four

### **INTRODUCTION**

"I can do it myself!" If you have, or have had, a four-year-old in your house, those are familiar words. Moms and dads often watch with pride as their four-year-olds insist on dressing themselves, tying their own shoes, and pouring their own juice. Parents understand this as a vital part of the maturation process, and they don't even mind when the juice gets spilled once in a while, or when the shoes are tied with granny knots, or when the shirt gets put on inside out.

It's a different matter, however, when an adult goes through life insisting "I can do it myself!" Self-reliance and independence are important virtues, but not when they prevent us from seeking or accepting help when we need it.

The worst kind of self-reliance is the kind that refuses to ask for help from God. That's the mark of a spiritual four-year-old, and we need to be on our guard against it.

### **I. God Encourages Us to Pray About Any Need We Have**

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

1. When we try to "do it ourselves," we can't help but become anxious about unmet needs. What does Paul tell us to do?

2. How many needs should we take to the Lord in prayer?

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

3. What does it mean to covet?

James 4:1-3 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4. What do unfulfilled and unrestrained desires lead to?

5. What is the right way to deal with our desires?

6. What should we do, however, before we ask God to fulfill our desires?

### His Word in My Life

1.) Buddhism teaches that unfulfilled desire is the source of all human misery and that the way to happiness is to desire nothing. Evaluate this teaching in the light of Scripture.

2.) Evaluate: Sometimes people who complain about their needs being unmet, really don't want their problems solved.

## **II. We Take the Needs of Others to God in Prayer**

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— <sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1. For whom should we pray?

2. What blessings might we ask God to give to government authorities? Why?

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? <sup>10</sup> Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. <sup>11</sup> Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. <sup>12</sup> May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. <sup>13</sup> May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be

blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

3. Review the elements of prayer that we learned in the last lesson. Then locate those elements in the prayer Paul offered to God on behalf of the Thessalonians.

A =

C =

T =

S =

Matthew 5:44-45 "I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

4. Who else can and ought we to pray for? Why would we want to pray for them?

#### His Word in My Life

1.) Agree or disagree: It is very important that we know all the details about the lives of our fellow Christians so that we can pray about them intelligently.

2.) How can telling someone, "I'm praying for you," be perceived in a negative way?

#### **SUMMARY**

Taking our own needs to the Lord demonstrates our trust in the Lord's power and desire to help us. When our prayers include the needs of others, it demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is teaching us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

On the other hand, when we're beset by such sins as pride, self-centeredness, or ingratitude, these will inevitably rear their heads in our prayer lives too. The Lord wants us to guard ourselves from prayers driven by these sinful emotions.

### Life with God

- Day 1: In your prayer time, make today your Self Day. Make a list of your material and spiritual needs. Evaluate the items on your list, prioritize them, and pray about them.
- Day 2: Today is Family Day. Do the same for the needs of your family.
- Day 3: Workplace Day. Do the same for the people you work with.
- Day 4: Neighborhood Day. Do the same for the people who live near you.
- Day 5: Nation Day. Do the same for your country.
- Day 6: Synod Day. Do the same for the WELS, its pastors, teachers, administrators, and employees.
- Day 7: Congregation Day. Do the same for the people at your church. (Don't forget the pastor!)