

Preparation for Sunday, March 11, 2012

I Call on You, Lord

MONDAY

Introduction

A major part of worship is prayer. We often see prayer as a monologue, but it is a dialogue. It is us speaking to God and listening for God to speak to us. Oftentimes, it is easy to believe that our prayers never pass “the ceiling.”

1. *How is your view of prayer different from that of a Tibetan Buddhist?*
2. *Do your actions and practices match up with what you say you believe about prayer?*
3. *Can you describe a time in your life when you received a specific answer to a specific prayer?*
4. *What gives us confidence as believers that our prayers do more than “flap in the breeze?”*

People often wonder if God really hears our prayers. We feel like the guy in the cell phone commercial, wondering, “Can you hear me now?” Do we even have the signal? In today’s lesson, we will look at one of David’s prayers, which he recorded in Psalm 86. As we study this Psalm together, we’ll learn the importance and power of prayer.

Hear Me - Read Psalm 86:1-7 and answer the following questions

1. *If you had to summarize these verses into one phrase, what could the description be?*
2. *What are the words that describe God?*
3. *What are the words that describe the psalmist??*
4. *What are the differences between these two lists?*
5. *If you have young children, think about when they ask you to do something or get something for them. Is their appeal based on what they deserve, or on who you are as a parent?*
6. *Which does prayer depend on more: God’s character or our merit?*

In reality, David’s faithfulness is displayed in the very fact that he is praying. If he tried to handle this situation on his own, he would have been faithless. The fact that he comes to God with his problems reveals his faith. And his plea for God to hear him was not based whether he believed he “deserved” to be heard. It was based on the character of God.

After David makes attempts for God to hear him, he then requests God to teach him.

TUESDAY

Teach Me - Read Psalm 86:8-13 and answer the following questions

David knew that there was no other god like our God, but he wanted even more instruction into his person and his works. He desired an undivided mind to fear and honor God with.

1. *David stood amazed by God. In what situation do you find yourself to be most in awe by God?*
2. *What great works and wonders (verse 10) can we remember God doing in our midst?*
3. *What does a David ask God to give him in verse 11? (An undivided mind) What does an undivided mind*

look like?

4. *What are the main things that can distract us from God?*
5. *Let's get specific: is there anything that is dividing your mind this morning?*
6. *When we ask God to teach us His way, what is required of us? (studying God's Word, listening biblically sound preaching, surrounding ourselves with godly, wise believers.)*
7. *What is the second part of verse 11? Can we really ask God to teach us His way without committing to live by His truth? Why or why not?*
8. *In what ways does a growing believer honor God's name with his or her life?*
9. *What does it mean that God has delivered your life from "the depths of Sheol?" (Believers have eternal security. They will not have to face eternal separation from God in hell.)*

Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Mission exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not mission, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, mission will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

As God teaches David to have an undivided mind, David asks again for God to help him in his troubles. To ensure help, he remembers God's attributes that provides him comfort.

WEDNESDAY

Help Me - Read Psalm 86:15-16 and answer the following questions

The description of God being slow to anger is used six other times in Scripture. Most of the time, it is paired with "rich in faithful love." Look up the other Scripture references below to see what other attributes are given to God in the different passages.

Exodus 34:6—"and truth"

Numbers 14:18—"forgiving wrongdoing and rebellion"

Nehemiah 9:17—"You did not abandon them"

Psalm 103:8—no other attribute named

Joel 2:13—"relents from sending disaster"

Nahum 1:3—"great in power"

1. *What does it mean that God is compassionate? How is being gracious different from being compassionate??*
2. *What does it mean that God is slow to anger?*
3. *How has God demonstrated His richness in faithful love to you?*
4. *What does it mean that God is full of truth?*
5. *Would you describe your own parents as "slow to anger?" If not, what was their "anger speed?"*
6. *If someone asked your children, how slow would they say you get to the point of anger? Would the answer be different if your co-workers, supervisor, or golfing buddies were asked the same question?*
7. *Which of these other adjectives of God are difficult to emulate as a parent?*
8. *What does David expect God to do when he asks for him to "turn" to him?*
9. *Does the Psalmist ask God to make him stronger, or does he ask for God's strength? What's the difference?*

We have the amazing privilege to talk with God through prayer. Not only do we speak, but we also listen.

1. *Which is harder for you in prayer - the talking or the listening?*
2. *Why do you think that is so?*

Because this is a lesson about prayer, this would be an appropriate week in which to give an extended time and focus to prayer. What to pray for? Here are a few suggestions: Pray for your Church; pray for your Pastor; pray for family members; pray for your President; pray for a person you know doesn't know Jesus.

THURSDAY - FRIDAY

Additional Reading

I have included in this week's preparation two additional articles. They are:

1. Prayer - A Word Study; and
2. The Church's Model Prayer