Discipleship

Learning to Follow Jesus

Week Seven
Discipleship
Learning to Follow Jesus

Read Ephesians 1:15-16

This passage gives us a look into the prayer life of the apostle Paul. I hope it is clear that a life of discipleship includes a life of prayer. There are numerous accounts of Jesus’ prayer life as true of all of the people who were used by The Lord throughout scripture. Here we see the example from Paul.

Do No Cease

Prayer is continuous and consistent. There are times when we are able to stop and focus during a time of extended prayer. A great habit is to start each day with a time of study and prayer. I hope that you are finding this course to be a good reminder to start each morning by studying the Word and spending time in prayer. Fasting is another great habit when you take the time spent eating and pray instead. While this should be a part of our discipleship, there is also a need to learn to stay in an attitude of constant and continuous prayer. This is to “pray without ceasing.” It doesn’t take away the need to “stop and pray” but should add another dimension of always communing with the Lord. This is a great way to stay connected in order to be guided by the Holy Spirit and to build a strong relationship. Prayer is communication and strong relationships require strong communication.

Give Thanks

This week we are going to focus on building our prayer life. A great place to start is the prayer of thanksgiving. In this passage, Paul says “(I) give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” It is evident that Paul was thankful for the people in Ephesus and thankful for the report of their faith and love. I am sure that there are a number of people in your life for whom you are thankful. I want to encourage you to take the time today to make mention of those people in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord. As you make mention of the person, remember to tell the Lord “why” you are thankful for the person. Paul was thankful for their faith and love for all the saints. Why are you thankful? I expect that you will find this habit will completely change your attitude as you start your day with gratitude.
Read Ephesian 1:15-17

Today we are going to look at another section of Paul’s prayer for the saints at Ephesus. After giving thanks, Paul asks the Lord to “give (them) the spirit of wisdom and revelation.” This is another important insight into Paul’s prayer life. After the prayer of thanksgiving, Paul begins to make petition. The prayer of petition is when we make a request.

No Worries

Paul wrote several books in the Bible including a letter to the saints at Philippi where he said, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” This aligns with his pattern of prayer. You should mix your thanksgiving and your petitions as you make your requests known to God. Paul was asking the Lord to give the saints at Ephesus a great understanding and spiritual insight, but he started his prayer by thanking The Lord for these saints and their faith and love. The pattern is thanksgiving and petition.

These two elements are to replace all of our worries. It is a conscious decision to focus on the positive rather than the negative. If we are not disciplined in this area, we will have a tendency to dwell on worst case scenarios in every situation. Instead, we should start with thanksgiving which is a reminder of all of the blessings God has already given us. Then we are in a position of faith to ask Him for the things we need presently.

Think of it in these terms, we look back to see all that God has done before we look forward with the expectation of what The Lord is going to do. Thanksgiving and petition replace our anxiety and fear.

Today

Add requests to your thanksgiving. Before you ask for something, take the time to remember a blessing The Lord has already given you and thank Him for it. Then make your request known with the understanding that The Lord is faithful. He desires to provide for your needs and to bless you just like He did before.
Discipleship

Learning to Follow Jesus

Read Ephesians 1:15-18

We looked at the pattern of Paul’s prayer so far this week. Today we are going to look at the request that Paul made for the saints at Ephesus. Paul asked The Lord to give these people the “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” This is an important phrase and it is good for us to take a little time to better understand the request Paul is making.

Spirit of Stupor

Sometimes it is good to look at a contrast in order to better understand an issue. This is when you look at something that is the complete opposite of what you are studying to understand. Throughout scripture we see references to the “spirit of stupor” which is also defined as having eyes but not being able to see, having ears but not being able to see and having a heart but not being able to understand. This was the “curse” on Israel when they were rebellious and refused to follow The Lord.

It is like being spiritually asleep or even spiritually dead. People who possess a spirit of stupor are easily deceived and often defeated. It is like a blind person who is constantly coming into contact with obstacles because they cannot see. Or think about a deaf person who is completely left out of conversations because they cannot hear. These are the effects of the spirit of stupor and this is the complete opposite of the petition Paul is making.

Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding

I hope the contrast helps you better understand the blessing of a spirit of wisdom and understanding. This is when your spirit comes alive and is awakened to the voice of the Spirit and His direction. You have eyes that are opened spiritually to see the hand of the Lord in your everyday events. You have ears that are spiritually opened so that you can hear the voice of the Spirit. You have a heart that understands the way of The Lord so that you are able to please Him in everything you do. You don’t need a set of rules. You understand.

This is a powerful prayer. It is a prayer we should pray for ourselves and the prayer we should pray for those who are in our lives. You should petition Heaven for your family and friends. You should petition Heaven for this generation. “Lord, open their eyes so that they can see You. Open their ears that they can hear you. Give them a heart to understand.”

Add this petition to your thanksgiving today and part of your pattern of prayer.
Week Seven - Day Four

Discipleship

Learning to Follow Jesus

Read Ephesians 1:15-19

We are continuing to look at Paul’s prayer for the saints at Ephesus today by adding two more verses to our reading. In verse 18 and 19 we see the impact of the “spirit of wisdom and revelation” as “the eyes of your understanding” are “being enlightened.” Remember that this is when you have eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to understand. So what is it that you see?

The Hope of His Calling

Don’t miss the fact that when Jesus called you that He called you for a reason. He called you to follow Him, which means that we are going somewhere. Following Jesus is an active pursuit that requires spiritual insight so that we don’t get lost. You could say we are going to Heaven, but I think that misses the point. We are on an adventure now! Yes, the calling includes the promise of Heaven, but more importantly it includes the promise of His Presence here and now. He promised to be with us and to be in us and to work through us. The hope of His calling includes amazing exploits of His love and power on the Earth through you today. We see in that in the next two phrases: “riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” and “the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.”

The hope of His calling includes both the inheritance of Heaven, but also the greatness of His power working toward us. Power today and glory eternally. This is the revelation that Paul is praying that the saints will receive. This is the revelation that every disciple of Jesus needs to receive. This revelation will keep us from stumbling and falling. It is the difference between stupor and enlightenment.

As you begin to put together this prayer, you will begin to see a powerful pattern of prayer. It starts with thanksgiving and then moves to petitions and ends with understanding. This is one of the most important things to know about prayer. Prayer is not trying to convince God to do something for us. Prayer is allowing God to show us what He has already done for us in Christ Jesus. As our eyes see, ears hear, and our heart begins to understand, we will be in a better place to give thanksgiving and to ask for what we really need.

Take time to follow the pattern of prayer by starting with thanksgiving, but then make your petition a request for a spirit of wisdom and understanding with revelation of all God has done and all He desires to do in and through you.
Week Seven - Day Five

Discipleship

Learning to Follow Jesus

Ephesians 1:20-23

Far Above

Our understanding of the greatness of the power of God comes from understanding how that power worked in Jesus. It was the power of God that raised Jesus from the grave and seated Him at the right hand of God in heavenly places. This “place” is described as “far above” all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named in every age.

In this passage, Paul is connecting the principle of power and authority. Power is the ability to do something. Authority is the “right to do it.” Paul describes the throne of God as “far above” every other throne, meaning that the authority of God is above all other authority. There is really no comparison between the authority of God and every other authority. That gives God the “right to reign” or authority.

God also has the power to reign. God demonstrated that power when He raised Jesus from the dead. Scripture typically uses the image of the “right hand” when describing power. That is why Paul confirms that Jesus is seated at the “right hand” of God in heavenly places.

Position in Christ

The spirit of wisdom and understanding gives us the ability to see our “position in Christ” which is a subject we will continue to see as we move forward in this study. But we should not lose sight of the fact that understanding our position “in Christ” requires us to first understand Jesus position in the heavenly realm. That is why this passage is so important as part of our foundation of faith. Jesus is highly exalted and is far above all other authority. All of creation has been placed “under His feet.” The passage goes on to say that He is the head and we are His body. This relationship helps us understand our responsibility to partner with Jesus in the “governance” of this world. As we saw today, we have an inheritance, but we also have the responsibility of His calling “to make disciples of all nations.” All of this is connected to a spirit of wisdom and revelation that understands the power of God that positioned Jesus above all authority and the power of God that works in us to demonstrate that authority on the Earth as the Body of Christ.

As we finish our week, take the time to continue to pray using this pattern of thanksgiving and petition as you ask for an increasing understanding of the hope to the calling in Jesus.