Session Six: Teach Me to Pray (Part III)

Opening Discussion

1. Read Matthew 6:5. What would you say are the basics of prayer?

Some Prayer Basics

2. In the Small Catechism, three basics are taught concerning prayer. Look up the following passages and consider what they might say about our attitude or approach to prayer.

   a) *John 14:13-14*

   b) James 1:6-7
   - See also Acts 12:15-18. God still accomplishes His will despite our doubt.

   c) *John 15:7*

3. Concerning our discussion on James 1:6-7 and need to pray with confidence, what mistake do Christians sometimes make about the relationship between faith and prayer?

4. Consider that the Lord's Prayer is broken into seven different petitions:
   1. Hallowed be Thy Name
   2. Thy Kingdom Come
   3. They Will be done
   4. Give us this day our daily bread
   5. Forgive us… as we forgive…
   6. Lead us not into temptation
   7. Deliver us from evil.

   Notice that these petitions are 6 to 1 in favor of spiritual, unconditional blessings over physical things. What does this say about what God deems important and what does it say about our tendency?

5. What are some other key obstacles to answered prayer?
   a) Psalm 66:18

   b) Philippians 1:6
   - Why do you think God would have us give thanks "in every circumstance"?

   c) James 4:3

HOW DO I PRAY?

*M*artin Luther was once getting his hair cut (500 years ago!) and the barber asked, *"Luther, I have a hard time praying. I just don't know what to say. Could you help me."* So, Luther went home that day and wrote a little pamphlet entitled "A Simple Way to Pray." Luther's advice provides a simple, four-step procedure for how to pray. First, he begins with "Instruction." Luther teaches us to remind ourselves of what the Bible or the Catechism teaches us about God and His promises. The second step is "Thankfulness." We give God thanks for the certainty of His Word and His faithfulness. Third is "Confession." We repent of how we have failed to trust and live out the assurance and promise of His Word in our words and actions. Fourth, and finally, we "Petition" or ask God for what we need.

Let's practice...

A prayer for safe travel.

Dear _____,

INSTRUCTION

THANKSGIVING

CONFESSION

PETITION

A prayer for a friend that is having a hard time.

Dear _____,

INSTRUCTION

THANKSGIVING

CONFESSION

PETITION

Notes:

It's always good to listen to good prayers or find some good examples of prayers such as the very first page and pages 305 – 318 in the hymnal. Remember that prayer doesn't have to be perfect. Much of the time, we might find it difficult to put our thoughts and worries into words. Perhaps on those occasions, we can use the prayer Jesus taught us as a great outline for our prayers. We can just pray each line of the Lord's Prayer one at a time, and then pause and fill in our own thoughts. For example: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven…' then we can add, "Lord, I know what I want isn't always what you want. Help me to trust your good and gracious will." However we pray, just know that more we do it , the more natural it will feel. Perhaps this is why the Bible is constantly urging us to pray!