Session Three: Some Prayer Basics

Opening Discussion

1. So far in this study, we've surveyed the Scriptures and found many different prayers. We also studied Jesus' own practice of prayer and read some of the prayers He prayed to His Father. Let's summarize the different kinds of prayers recorded in the Bible:

   - Prayers of Confession – in which we acknowledge our sin (such as Psalm 51).
   - Prayers of Petition – in which we seek God's help (such as Psalm 22).
   - Prayers of Intercession – in which we pray for others (such as Psalm 82).
   - Prayers of Thanksgiving – in which we express our gratitude (such as Psalm 118)
   - Prayers of Lament – in which we express our sorrows to God (such as Psalm 10).
   - Prayers of Praise – in which we extol God's wonderful deed & qualities (such as Psalm 136).

2. How does God answer prayer? Consider how Isaiah 65:24 might shape our understanding of how God answers prayer. See also 2 Corinthians 12:8-9.

Digging Deeper

3. Beyond our own needs and our own conversations with God, who should we be pray for? See 1 Timothy 2:1-2 & Matthew 5:44.

4. What about prayers ***for*** the dead, ***to*** the dead, or ***with*** the dead?

   - We don't pray … *for* the dead …

   Quote:
   As for the dead, since Scripture gives us no information on the subject, I regard it as no sin to pray with free devotion in this or some similar fashion: "Dear God, if this soul is in a condition accessible to mercy, be thou gracious to it." And when this has been done once or twice, let it suffice. For vigils and requiem masses and yearly celebrations of requiems are useless, and are merely the devil's annual fair.

   (Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament III, vol. 37 of Luther's Works, page 293)

- We don't pray … *to* the dead …

  Quote:
  Others before me have attacked the invocation of saints, and this pleases me. I believe, too, that Christ alone should be invoked as our Mediator, a truth which is scriptural and certain. Of the invocation of saints nothing is said in Scripture; therefore it is necessarily uncertain and not to be believed.

  (Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament III, ed. Robert H. Fischer, vol. 37 of Luther's Works, page 295)

- We <u>*can*</u> pray … *with* the dead … WHAT???

5. Martin Luther once said: *"A Christian without prayer is just as impossible as a living person without a pulse. The pulse is never motionless; it moves and beats constantly, whether one is asleep or something else keeps one from being aware of it."* What do you think Luther meant by this statement?

   What does the Bible say about how often we should pray?

   Psalm 65:8
   You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.

   Psalm 119:164
   Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous rules.

   Luke 18:1
   Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. (The parable of the persistent widow).

   1 Thessalonians 5:17-18
   Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

   Psalm 50:15
   Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.