

Praying for one another

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you so much for coming to this seminar. I hope you were really encouraged, that you've been really encouraged throughout the day by what Wayne said in the morning and I think particularly by what came out in that last seminar.

It's funny how he said, is anything resonating? Am I pushing any buttons? I don't know whether he was thinking, we were sitting there thinking, no, not at all mate, not at all. But I hope it's been very both equipping for us as a church, encouraging for us as a church, but also quite maybe challenging and convicting as well about this whole area of prayer.

So let me just lay out what it's going to be like in this session here. We've got about roughly an hour or something like that. What we're going to do is I'm going to lay out a kind of vision for us for 10 minutes. We're going to then spend 20 minutes in groups looking at some verses from scripture together and then we're going to devote a good chunk of the end of our session.

20 or so minutes to praying together, particularly for each other, which is the title of this seminar. So that's roughly where we're going, just to give you an outline. So hopefully we'll keep it quite broken up, we'll keep it moving and there'll be opportunities as well for dialogue and we'll get things on the board.

Does that sound okay? Yeah? Excellent. Really funny, just before we start, this has been in my mind all week. We're trying to teach, I'm fascinated, so in the last session we'll hear what the kids have been learning all day, which I'm fascinated about.

[1 : 20] But we're trying to work on forgiveness, right? And for our hearts as much as theirs, but trying to work on forgiveness. So they're best of friends one minute, Chloe and Grace, and then they just fall out the next and it's drama and everything's going on.

Trying to use the naughty step, it's been used all the time, so we go on to sit in the naughty step. And then we're trying to get them together again and say, right, who needs to say sorry? So one of them says sorry, and the other one needs to say, I forgive you.

So they say, I forgive you. And both of you, all of us need to say sorry to God, because that's who we've first and foremost sinned against, before we sinned against one another. So I'm fascinated, when Wayne was saying earlier about when we pray, it's so often we pray to somebody who we can't see.

We've got that side of it. I'm fascinated, because I said to Chloe the other day, I said, Chloe, say sorry to God. So my head made complete sense what I meant by that. And I thought, goodness, what does she understand by saying sorry to God?

So all she did, she went, sorry God. And I thought, oh, that's really interesting. I wonder how you've processed that. Anyway, so I'm fascinated to learn what they've been learning about prayer, the children, when they come back in.

[2 : 28] So I hope today's been encouraging for you. Let me just pray and then we'll get into this together, okay? Heavenly Father, we love you. And we just want to declare at the start of this session that you are God in heaven and we are on earth.

Father, that we grow tired and we are feeble and we grow weary. But Father, thank you that you are the one who is so far above the things of the earth. Father, there is no shadow of change due to you.

And so, Lord, we fix our eyes on you today, the one who is the giver and sustainer of all things. So, Father, would you be with us now by your spirit? I pray that he would come. And as we look at your word, that he would encourage our hearts by it.

He would help us understand it. And, Father, that we would grasp something more of, not of our greatness, but of your greatness today. So, Father, come and be with us now, we ask. Father,

thank you that you hear us because we pray confidently in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. So, as we begin, let me just tell you, as I've been reflecting over the last few weeks in preparation for this, I don't know about you, but the battle that I find in my heart every single day as I come to think about, not just prayer, but as I come to think about our lives as a community together, as I think about meeting God's people during the week, interacting with each other during the week, coming to a Sunday service, all these things we do together.

[3 : 46] And I find so often in my heart, it's a real battle. Here's the battle that goes on in my heart. There's two ways that I find it hard.

There's two things that I so often go through in my head, two mindsets. Here's the first mindset. And the first mindset is I think about my interaction with believers. The first mindset is how can these people serve me?

So I think about my life. Will I go to a small group tonight? I hope I get something out of it, because if I don't, I'm not going to go. I think, will the music be good on Sunday? Because if it's not, I'm not really that fussed. Will the preacher be good? If it's not me. Is it something I want to go to?

Will the coffee be nice? Will people say hello to me? Will I be encouraged? Because if I'm not quite sure, I want to go. I find that a constant battle in my heart all the time. All the time.

Second mindset. How can I serve these people? So who can I build up today? Who can I love today? Who can I go out my way to tell them that I love?

[4 : 51] Who can I go out my way to encourage and build up? How can I use my gift to encourage and build up these people? So that's the battle that's in my heart every single day. Those two mindsets. Now here's three questions for you as we kick off.

Firstly, which one is it easier for us to think like? Rhetorical question, okay. Second one. As followers of Jesus, disciples of him, how does he call us to think?

Which mindset does he call us to have? And third question, this is not rhetoric. Which community would you rather be part of? What mindset do we want to characterize our community?

Answer? Second one. So as we begin this session, turn your Bibles to Philippians 2. Because I find the more I get into scripture, the more I start really digging into it and asking the Holy Spirit to come and help me understand what's going on here.

I find myself getting under the skin of some of these letters. And I find churches just like ours going through the same battle. So here is Paul writing to this church in Philippi.

[6 : 06] What it seems they are going well. Paul is encouraged by the partnership that they have in the gospel. So at a time when not many people were standing with Paul, they have stood with him.

They are going well, it seems. But Paul knows that these people have hearts just like his. Feeble, broken. So often deceived by the things of the world.

Messy. And what he does in this chapter is that he goes after their hearts. And he goes after their minds. In fact, it's really interesting. If you turn to chapter 4, you see that there's two prominent people in the church, Judea and Syntyche, who have fallen out and they're not getting on.

And Paul goes, so there's clearly stuff going on in the background of this church. But if this church is going to continue to grow, they need to have the mind of Christ. So this is what Paul does in chapter 2, is he almost grabs them by the ear corporately and he drags them to the foot of the cross.

And he puts them at the foot of the cross and he says, as you consider Christ, as you consider who he is and what he's done, how can you behave like you're behaving in your corporate lives together?

[7 : 19] Now, let me just read these verses and you'll see what I mean by this. This is chapter Philippians 2. Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, any comfort from his love, any common sharing in the spirit, of any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded.

Having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.

Not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others. In relationships with one another, do you see it?

Their corporate life together. Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. And these wonderful verses here, which many commentators reckon were an early church hymn.

And you can see exactly why. Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing. [8 : 26] By taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself. By becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow.

In heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So Paul drags them to the cross, says consider Christ, and have the same mindset as Christ. That's what he's saying. Have the same mindset as Christ. And we cannot fathom, I don't think, just how low Christ stooped.

To come into our human mess, and if he had lived in pomp as a king, that would almost have been humiliating enough for him. But to stoop so low that he would go to the cross to deal with our sin, being humiliated, you see?

[9 : 34] Beed into death on the cross, in service for his church, his people. That is to be your mindset, says Paul, with one another.

And one of the ways that we can practically put this into practice is by how we pray for one another. I think that's where we maybe come on to the topic for today, how we pray for one another.

So what we're going to do, just in the time that we have remaining, is we're going to look at some of the, there are tons of prayers in the Bible, but just because of time, we're just going to focus on Paul's prayers as we find them in the New Testament.

So I've scribbled some of them down. But Paul is anxious that people know that he is praying for them. And as you read it, you understand how Paul's got a real pastor's heart. He just loves people. He loves people. And so he wants them to understand more and more and more about who God is, who they are, and as we've been talking about earlier, how much they need him. So what we're going to do is we're going to split into groups and we're going to look at these verses together.

[10 : 33] Can I grab one of them? And I want you, in your groups, to pull out the heart of the prayer. Okay? The heart of Paul's prayer. There's four questions I've written on the sheet and you'll see what it means in a minute to help you maybe just do some digging work around it so you can get to that question, the heart of the prayer.

The four things I like to alliterate. Okay, there's four C's. Context. So who's writing the prayer? It's Paul. Okay, you've got that one. Who's he writing to? Maybe what's going on there?

What's the content of the prayer? So what's Paul praying for these Christians? What's the comfort in the prayer? So he gives them a real reassurance as he's praying for them.

He tells them stuff about who this God is, who they worship. And there's some real comfort in what Paul says. And then what's the call? So what does Paul want these Christians to do with this prayer? Another way of thinking about that is if you were in, if you were the recipients of this letter, how would you be encouraged to respond as you heard to how Paul is praying for you?

And as we'll see in all of this, Paul's heart for people comes out in his prayers. So what I want you to do is maybe split into groups. I didn't do it. I had kind of found me there. Maybe five people.

[11 : 44] And you can go to the back and go somewhere else, and then we'll pray after this. But five people. And then I want you to read those verses together in your groups. And then see if you can come up with answering those four things.

And try and have a go at answering the question, what is the heart of the prayer that Paul is praying for? And I think you'll find this a very edifying and encouraging experience as you go through this, as I've found it in my preparation. So does that sound okay?

And we'll be thinking about how we can be best praying for one another, and how we can bring this mind of Christ, about not serving us but serving others, into our prayer lives for one another, and then we'll actually pray for one another.

Is that sound okay? Okay.