

Lesson 4

Praying for Others

Philippians 1:9-11

Every Christian woman prays for those whom she loves and cares about. Yet it's easy to fall into a pattern of praying for the *temporal* things in the lives of those we cherish. It doesn't take much thought to ask God to bless others financially or to resolve their health concerns. Almost without effort we can find ourselves praying in a routine sort of way for our children's friends or for fellow believers looking for a place to live, selecting a college, or seeking a job. Then there are the habitual prayers for the little daily things in life—for parking places, for bargains, for our children to nap well, for safety for one more day.

But God's faithful servant Paul shows us a more significant way to pray for those we know and love. As you ponder Philippians 1:9-11 and the

content of Paul's prayer for his beloved Philippian friends, remember the situation in his own life at the time. Paul is a prisoner awaiting his sentence. However, rather than brood over his personal problems, Paul experiences God's peace as he thinks about others. That brings us to the content of his prayers on behalf of those in Philippi. It's hardly what we would call a "baby prayer," a prayer for health, wealth, and happiness. No, Paul prays an "adult prayer" for his beloved friends—the prayer of a man who knows what truly matters in a life and a soul.

Read...and relish...and remember this exceptional prayer for the things of true substance for those Paul loved. Listen as he lifts their lives before God Almighty.

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

¹⁰ that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

¹¹ being filled with the fruits of right-

eousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Out of God's Word...

1. What is Paul's first request on behalf of the Philippians (verse 9)?

And what two qualities does he desire for them in this area (verse 9)?

2. In what two ways will the approval of things that are excellent affect us here and now (verse 10)?

3. State the source of the fruits of righteousness (verse 11).

Note also the end result of these fruits (verse 11).

4. Fill in these blanks: Paul prays...

THAT the Philippians' _____
would _____ with more
_____ and _____

SO THAT they would approve things

SO THAT they would be _____
and _____

SO THAT they would bring
_____ and _____ to God.

5. In just a few words, what is the content of Paul's prayer for his friends?

...and into you heart

Paul's words not only apply to our prayers for others, but also to the prayers we say for ourselves.

- *Regarding others*—Based on Paul's prayer for the Philippians, what adjustments can you make in the content of your prayers on behalf of those you know and love?
- *Regarding yourself*—What aspect of Paul's prayer for excellence in spiritual things could you concentrate on for greater growth in your own life as a Christian?

- *Regarding others and yourself*—Don't forget to pray for knowledge and discernment! Love is not merely emotion. What will *you* do to grow in knowledge and discernment?

- *Regarding prayer*—It's worthy to consider the nature and content of our prayers for others and for ourselves. But, if you and I are not women of prayer, the lofty substance of Paul's prayer here in Philippians 1:9-11 will never be uttered on behalf of the lives of God's people. Please take to heart this thought about the importance of prayer compared to the many other "things" we tend to do with our time.

If we are willing to spend hours on end to learn to play the piano, operate a computer, or fly an airplane, it is sheer nonsense for us to imagine that we can learn the high art of getting guidance through communion with the Lord without being willing to set aside time for it. It is no accident that the Bible speaks of prayer as a form of

waiting on God.⁴

—Paul Rees

When will you pray, dear one? Note a time here...and then *pray!*

Heart Response

And this I pray, dear friend and sister in Christ, for you and me:

I pray that we would learn the discipline of lifting our thoughts and our prayers, our aims and our lives, heavenward, upward, far above and beyond that which is routine and mundane.

I pray that we would grow to become women of prayer—with regular, daily, unhurried, secret lingerings in prayer.

I pray that others might be encouraged by knowing that we pray for them, and by knowing *what* we pray for them.

I pray that we would pray as Paul prayed, using these three sweet-but-packed verses as our guide to praying for others.

I pray that our lives would bring great glory and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and God, our Father; that our lives would be filled with the fruits of righteousness, fruit—abundant fruit spilling forth to bless others and to reflect well upon our Savior.

I pray that we will remember the thoughts and truths of Paul's prayer.

Amen.