

Conversations with God – The Content Issue

Central Text: Deut. 4:7 what other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?

Topic: There are times when our prayer life suffers because we do not know what to pray.

Theme: It is the Holy Spirit who will teach us what to pray, including praying what those who went before us prayed. (Rom. 8:26 in the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.)

In this lesson the goal is to examine the content of prayer – the content of our conversations with God. This is related to how to pray: when to pray, where to pray, position in prayer, length of prayer, attitude while praying and basic topics of prayer (praise, confession, requests, thanksgiving, worship and adoration). The question for us is what praise, confession, requests; thanksgiving and adoration “look like” in practice.

O.K. How's your prayer life, that is, please share with one another about the content of your prayers. This kind of sharing will help others to discover ways they can improve their own conversations with God. Be more specific than saying something like: I praise God; I confess my sins to God, etc.

- Whom do you appreciate as a person of prayer and why is that?
- What do you think of the prayers of people like Joni Eareckson Tada, Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Ruth Graham Lotz, D. James Kennedy, Chuck Swindoll, Pat Robinson, our own pastors or Sunday School teachers?
- What is your experience with printed prayers (like those in the back of some hymnals or circulating on the internet)? What use have you made of books containing prayers (like “The Prayer’s of Susanna Wesley)?
- Please share **any** of your favorite prayers and why they mean so much to you.
- Other than Jesus, what impresses you about the prayers of certain Bible characters?

Reading or listening to those who pray well is a great way to learn more about praying. I am not so much referring to their specific words, though their choice of words can broaden our prayer vocabulary – as long as you are comfortable with them. Consider the thought that goes into the prayers of those who pray well. Consider the passion(s) of those who pray well and how that is part of their praying. Listen for the honesty which marks such prayers and the lack of saying things to make an impression. Few of us may feel gifted in prayer, but the Spirit will enable each of us with the ability to be honestly express our hearts feelings and passions. The prayers of others may be one tool He uses to help us.

Of course, there are the examples many praying people — and their prayers — in the Scriptures. Certainly the list would be very long. But consider the following, one at a time (add your own if you like). Take your time, even (especially) if it means more than one session to go over them. After you read the texts of each, try to get inside the head and heart of the one praying — what are they feeling? How intense is their prayer? How does their prayer show faith in God? Are they trying to impress God with words and phrases? How did God respond to their prayers? Try to determine whether the prayer contains praise, confession, requests, thanksgiving, worship and/or adoration. (We will look at some of these in depth as the series continues)

Abraham's chief servant. (probably Eliezer of Damascus) — Gen. 24:12-16

Moses – surely Moses was THE OT person of prayer and the foreshadow of Jesus Christ our Intercessor as Israel's intercessor - Ex 8:1-14;

○ In the Desert of Sin Ex. 17:1-4;

○ After being on Sinai with God: Ex. 32:9ff (esp. v 11); Deut 9:7ff (esp. vs. 9a, 18-20)

○ At the foot of Sinai - Ex 19:16-19; Pleading with God about entering the promised land Deut. 3:23ff;

Miriam — after crossing Red Sea - Ex. 15: 20-21

Hannah — for a child while barren - 1 Samuel 1:1-16

Gideon — when the Angel of the Lord (= talking to God) first spoke to Gideon — Judges 6:13-18

Job — in the midst of his despair and so called “comforters” - Job 16:6ff

David — for his dying child – 2 Sam. 2:15-18f

Isaiah — when he was granted the privilege of seeing The Lord - Is. 6:1-8

Mary — upon being told she was to give birth to God's Messiah — Luke 1:38; 1:46-55

A man in the crowd with a demon possessed son — after searching for Jesus — Mark 9:17-24

Peter — when he sought to walk on the water with Jesus — Matthew 14:28-30, 31

A Gentile woman from Canaan — seeking healing from her demon possessed child — Matt. 15:22, 25-28

Stephen — at his rigged trial and horrific stoning — Acts 6:12, 15 (the setting) and 7:55-59

Paul — in His letter to the Ephesians — Eph. 3:14-21

Prayer requests: please write them down on the other side if you need more space