

Conversation Starter

FOR the week of February 17 to 23, 2008

This Week's Theme: Why Pray?

Reading #1: Colossians 4:2-4
Reading #2: 1 Thessalonians 5:17
Reading #3: Matthew 6:5-7
Reading #4: Acts 4:19-31
Reading #5: James 1:5-8
Reading #6: Philippians 4:6-7

In the apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians we find these words:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (Colossians 4:2-4)

In just a few sentences Paul refers to the subject of prayer several times. By doing so, he is saying this to his readers:

- prayer is important
- prayer is essential for followers of Jesus
- prayer needs to take place continually
- prayer needs to be the first thing we do when facing life's challenges rather than it being an afterthought or a last resort.

This is why Paul wrote: "*Devote yourselves to prayer...*" that is, dedicate yourself to it ... set apart time for it ... pursue prayer ... commit to praying ... apply your attention and your focus to prayer ... give yourself more fully and completely to prayer. Perhaps this is why Paul also wrote in one of his other letters: "*pray continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)* Even though prayer was important to Paul, it's still appropriate to ask: Why pray? These words of Jesus' in Matthew's gospel sums it up: *And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites... But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your [heavenly] Father... And when you pray, do not...be like [the pagans] for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (See Matthew 6:5-7)* So, then, why pray? Since it was important to Jesus, it needs to be important to us. As His followers we are to "pattern" our life after His and Jesus did spend a lot of time in prayer. When Jesus said to His disciples "*when you pray*", don't these words tell us that it is assumed His followers already pray? In other words, prayer for Jesus was not an option. Why pray? Because Jesus prayed. Why pray? Because the scriptures call us to prayer over and over again. Why pray? Because it's part of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. So now go and spend meaningful time in prayer, and often, so your Lenten season will be enriched.

1. If someone was to ask you why pray?, in addition to what has already been stated, what would you tell them?
2. What are some additional reasons to pray as noted in Readings #4 to #6 as noted above?
3. How has God worked in your life or the lives of others as a result of your prayers? Provide different examples than those mentioned last week.
4. How has God worked in your life as a result of someone else's prayers for you?
5. Have you seen any positive change(s) in a situation that has been recently upheld in prayer?
6. What does the apostle Paul mean by "pray continually"? How do we "pray continually"?
7. What is a prayer request that is currently "heavy" on your heart?