

OPEN

This is our second week in our new Plugged into Prayer series. In week 1, we looked at the prayer Jesus gave us: The Lord's Prayer. This week, we look at the example of the Apostle Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1, where he writes, "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, *remembering you in my prayers*" (v.16).

By praying, God not only wants us to remember Him, and to remember to come to Him with our needs, but in prayer He also wants us to remember others. Our text for this week is, basically, one long, single sentence prayer of intercession. To 'intercede,' means to act on behalf of, or to intervene, for another. What can we learn from this packed prayer of Paul for our own prayers for others? As Paul prays for the believers in ancient Ephesus, we see him praying for an increase of 3 things in their life in Christ: 1) an experiential knowledge of God, 2) an understanding of hope, and 3) a belief in God's power. Paul's prayer is that, as believers, they would more fully know what they have in Christ, as there is nothing more important for a believer to apprehend. Do you remember others in prayer? What do you pray for?

REFLECT

- In verse 17, Paul says he 'keeps asking' God on behalf of those he prays for...what should we take away from this 'on-going' pattern of Paul for our prayers for people? Why?
- In this same verse, Paul addresses all 3 divine persons. How does that help us see a greater picture of God's character and work as we address all 3 when praying?
- Read slowly through this passage 2x and highlight one thing that gets your attention and why.

DISCUSS

- There are many passages in scripture – including from Paul himself – about praying for specific personal needs (ie, 2 Thess. 3:2). But in Ephesians 1, it's all about apprehending more the blessing of being in Christ, because that is all important for a believer.
 - In what ways has your understanding of God matured since you first put your faith in Christ? Share one thing...
- Paul also prays for believers to more deeply know the hope of being Christ...why do you think hope is so vital for believers?
- Paul calls this hope "the riches of his glorious inheritance." Those are 'rich' words...what kind of 'riches' is he talking about? Is it selfish to be fixated on anticipating an inheritance?
- How can / does hope motivate you to pray for others?
- When you read through this passage a second time, what caught your eye and why? Share with the group.

Last Thought:

In Ephesians, Paul talks much about our position in Christ being 'in the heavenly realms.' A. W. Tozer writes, "*As we pray in the Spirit, we will begin to see people and things from the heavenly perspective.*" Paul's intercession focuses on our position in Christ and us grabbing a hold of that unseen reality. How does that kind of heaven-focused perspective shape differently how we pray?

APPLY/PRAY

From our text for this week, pray together for the 3 things Paul prays for...pray for an increased:

- 1. Experiential knowledge of His presence.**
- 2. Understanding the ultimate hope we have in Him**
- 3. Belief in God's power to change our lives for His glory.**

Share with the group one person you will commit to praying for in your 'God-time' this week (first names only).

As a group, bring names forward to intercede for of those who are in need of God's touch in some way for pray for needs.