

The Mustard Seed

Congratulations

Sept. Birthdays

John Wallerich, 86 on September 1st
Edna Brenneman, 80 on September 15th
David Butterbaugh, 83 on September 21st
Wilbur Mast, 80 on September 28th

Sept. Anniversaries

John & Julie Gingerich, 57th on October 11th

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What Are Good Requests?

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“Please, Lord, let the man of God you sent come again to us and teach us what we should do for the boy who will be born.” This is the prayer of Manoah which is recorded in Judges 13. This prayer planted a thought in my head as I was listening to Judges during a morning walk. It is an amazing story. Manoah and his wife hadn’t been able to conceive children. Then a man of God came and told Manoah’s wife they were going to have a son and told her a bit about God’s plan for their son. She shared these things to her husband which prompted his prayer. It’s a prayer God responded to in a mind blowing way. The man of God came again in response to Manoah’s prayer. That’s where a thought popped into my mind that I’ve been wrestling with lately. What are the really good requests we should be asking of God? Is there one particular request that God desires most of all that we would have of Him?

Manoah’s prayer has a couple of components. One, he asked for the man of God to come again. He wanted a face to face conversation. Two, Manoah asked to be taught how to raise his son that was going to be born. All in all, really good requests. As a mother of three, I really find this prayer impressive.

Then there is the request that we, in Christian circle, often hold up as a really good request is Solomon asking God for wisdom. It is obvious in scripture that God was pleased with Solomon’s request. But, I wonder (and I may be crossing a line in this thought), I really wonder if Solomon would have been better off to have requested a deep and continually growing relationship with God. Would Solomon’s life have had a different storyline in the end if that had been his request?

Recently, I heard someone suggest that asking God to help you to ask the right questions is a really solid prayer to pray. I find myself agreeing with this more and more all the time. I have found in some of my relationships that when I land on the right question I find out all sorts of things I would never have known without having asked that question, things that make positive changes. For example when my daughter was in kindergarten I somehow stumbled upon the fact that she thought bringing a second set of clothes to change into at lunchtime was a good idea. Asking her what was in her backpack became a frequent question for a while. That is a pretty superficial thing, but consider what a difference it could make in your life if you were asking God the exact questions of Him that He desired for you to ask . . . and then taking the time to lean in and listen. It has life changing possibilities that we cannot fathom.

I’ve been reading the book *A Deeper Walk* by Marcus Warner. In it he shares about his ‘if’ prayer. This is a prayer of discernment. He uses it to discern whether or not something is coming from God or not. The purpose is to make sure he is not being led astray by something that is not of God. Here is his example of this type of prayer: “If this experience is from God who raised Jesus from the dead, then I thank Him for it and ask Him to help me use it for His glory. But if I have been deceived and this experience is a counterfeit from the devil, I renounce it and in the name of Jesus command that wicked spirit to leave.” What I really like about this request is that it acknowledges God for who He is and asks Him to remove anything that isn’t for His glory. It’s a request to help us to see God’s guidance with clarity. It helps to declare God’s right in our life to guide us and says His is the only guidance we are wanting to see.

In John 17, God, the Son, prays to God the Father asking for God to be glorified. The words glory and glorified is mentioned 7 times in that prayer. Seven is a number of completion in scripture and I find that interesting, but even if that isn't significant here, I have to believe that anything mentioned 7 times in that small of a space is important. If Jesus prayed for God to be glorified so emphatically, shouldn't we consider doing the same.

Another prayer I have been trying to land on frequently is to tell God that I want to know more about Him. I just want to know more about HIm. One thing I have found out about this prayer is that God wants us to know more about HImself. Scripture opens up and becomes deeper and more inviting. The more God shows Himself to me the more I desire to know even more. Each year I find myself agreeing more and more with the following quote from A.W. Tozer: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. ... Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. ..." A.W. Tozer (The Knowledge of the Holy)

As I have considered these potential requests of God, I find value in each one. There are more than likely different seasons in a person's life where one request may benefit someone more than at other times. I've come to believe the point is to keep coming to God with the open heart of cultivating deeper ways to be in God's presence. Once we start coming towards God less frequently or coming to HIm with a heart that is in the process of barricading itself from God we will see our faith dwindle instead of thrive. It is vital for us to continue to approach God. He is the source of life. . . abundant life. So I pray that we make the effort regularly to bring ourselves into God's presence asking of Him that which He places upon our hearts. Help us, O God, to see the growth that this action brings. Thank you, Lord, for desiring to see growth in us. As always, in pursuit