

Voice of Thanksgiving
Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer
Inner Court Ministries

For the week of August 17, 2003

A Call to Prayer

“If Jacob’s desire had been given him in time for him to get a good night’s sleep he might never have become the prince of prayers we know today. If Hannah’s prayer for a son had been answered at the time she set for herself, the nation might never have known the mighty man of God it found in Samuel. Hannah wanted only a son, but God wanted more. He wanted a prophet, and a saviour, and a ruler for His people. Someone said that ‘God had to get a woman before He could get a man.’ This woman He got in Hannah precisely by those weeks and months and years there came a woman with a vision like God’s, with tempered soul and gentle spirit and a seasoned will, prepared to be the kind of a mother for the kind of a man God knew the nation needed.” W. E. Binderwolf

This Week in Prayer

- Pray for Israel.
- Pray for the pastors and their families that we met at the first annual ***Brotherhood Beyond Boundaries*** conference, pray for the work of these men in Belarus, and Lithuania.
- Pray for ministries and works coming fall of 2003. Throughout the fall there are many activities with a wide range of locations and applications. From a school in Brazil to completion of the transfer of the German Verein to Inner Court Ministries, from the growing relationships with Belarusian pastors to the growth of local churches and fellowships, our members are working within the Kingdom of God. Our prayers are need for provision to meet the needs of these ministries, workers to come along side and join the work, and wisdom and understanding to guide the progress. The meeting of these and other needs within our ministries begins with prayer. Your prayers for these ministries will guide, direct, and bring though to completion each work.

Praying Always For You

Pray for one another, this week emphasize prayer for help. The challenges of Christian living are difficult in this day and age. The challenges of ministry just add to this difficulty. Each of us needs God’s help for daily living and for ministry. Pray for God’s help. Spread all over the world many of you do not know all or even some of the members of this team, but God hears prayers for the members of this team and He knows who we are.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Philip. 4:23 (NKJV)

Imperative Importance of the Work of Prayer

Near and Far

Men and women struggled with God. A major aspect of this struggle is dealing with God who is far away. The ancient Greek concept held God so far away and unapproachable they developed “near gods” to fill the gap. The gods of mythology were “near gods” as close as Mount Olympus. With human attributes and failings these gods were more approachable. Mythological stories explained the unexplainable of nature and vagrancies of human nature and these gods filled in for a relationship with God. This separation filled by “near gods” is found in the shadowy past of most cultures.

The Jews changed this forever. Beginning with Abraham, the Jews experience encounters with God, near encounters. This is not an easy transition for Jew nor is it easy for non-Jews. The non-Jew takes offense that these people could make radical claims of being near to God. The Jew struggled with being near to God. Remember their reaction when Moses and God scheduled a meeting with God and the people.

*Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes,
the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking;
and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.
Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear;
but let not God speak with us, lest we die."
And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you,
and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."
So the people stood afar off,
but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.*

Exodus 20:18-21 (NKJV)

Moses represented them because they could not bring themselves to draw near to God. Jewish history is filled with individuals who have near encounters with God. It is also the record of people who, most times, are far from God. The period of the “Kings” is a battle between near and far. When the people draw near to God, they are blessed and win battles. When God is far off, they sin and loose battles. The prophets have many messages for the Jewish people (and for us); a major theme running throughout is, draw near to God.

With the advent of Jesus the battle between near and far is radically changed, changed forever. Jesus begins to teach about God with both message and lifestyle of nearness to God. His message was, God the Father. A father is not a concept of someone far away. A father is very near. One reason for the Jewish people getting so mad at Jesus was His bring God so near. Just as they had rebelled against this nearness to God in the time of Moses so they rejected this with Jesus.

Jesus walked on the earth as a man. He has taken the form of a man (a body) and as He walked throughout the region He walked with closeness to God that was unconceivable to the people of that time. God was always near to Him, they walked together and talk with one another. Even in the hubbub of wailing and mourning at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus was so near to God that He could say, Father I thank you....

*Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.
And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said,
"Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.
And I know that You always hear Me,
but because of the people who are standing by I said this,
that they may believe that You sent Me."
Now when He had said these things,
He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"*
John 11:41-43 (NKJV)

Nearness to God is key to success. For example, nearness to God over comes sin. The little boy who is not allowed to start fires would never even think of doing this sin when he is near his mother or father. But when far away, in the far corner of the back yard, far from his mother's care, he might build a fire. The greatest deterrent to sin is closeness to God. When Jesus walks with me or I with Him, I do not sin. It is when He seems to be far off that I sin. Just like the little boy of the fire story, it is all a matter of near or far. Our flesh is like the Jews of Moses time; it does not want to be near to God. It rebels against the restrictions of being near Him. (It does not understand that there is greater freedom in the "restrictions" of being near God, than there is in the "freedom" of being far away.) Also our enemy, the Devil, works day and night to help us stay far from God. The letters in the delightful book, *"The Screwtape Letters"* by C. S. Lewis, are filled with advise on how the man of the story can be kept far from God.

Separation from God is preparation for sin. Doubt, fear, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, and unbelief are but a few of the tools for staying far from God. Jesus came to bridge the gap of separation, dying on the cross, loaded with all our sins, He paid the price for nearness to God. Now there is no excuses for separation, our loving Father is like the father of the prodigal son, every day looking for us with open arms, receiving us back to nearness with Him. The question of the day, every day, is will we come to our senses and return to His waiting arms, to be near with Him, or will we languish in the muck and mire of the pig slop of life, far from God.

*And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate,
and no one gave him anything.
But when he came to himself, he said,
'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare,
and I perish with hunger!
I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him,
"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,"*
Luke 15:16-18 (NKJV)

In prayer the key question is also near and far. It is easy to allow prayer to become prayer from afar. We speak the words, but they fall to the ground unheard, unanswered, because they are said from afar. In the realm of sin, separation from God is preparation for sin; in the realm of prayer, separation from God is preparation for empty ritual, not prayer. Prayer from afar is merely shouting into the wind. Effective prayer is whispered from near in the ear of our Father.

Just as mentioned before, doubt, fear, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, and unbelief are but a few of the tools keeping people far from God. They are also the tools keeping people from prayer. Some

people may still spew out words, but effective prayer demands a nearness to our Father that is not possible when separated by sin. The first battle in prayer is to be near our Father.

***let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,
having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience
and our bodies washed with pure water.***

Hebrews 10:22 (NKJV)

***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners;
and purify your hearts, you double-minded.***

James 4:8 (NKJV)

Today God is calling, with open arms He is calling to you. Will you draw near or stand far off? If you will pray, you must draw near, letting nothing separate you from Him. Today let us choose to come to our senses, wash and draw near.

Joining This Company

All Christians who will pray are welcome. ***Voice of Thanksgiving*** is sent by email or letter to all who will commit to prayer as member of this company. It is a guide to challenge us and direct our prayers. The fee for joining is your commitment to pray.

Please join us in praying for the nations. Send an email with the word JOIN in the subject so I know you would like to receive ***Voice of Thanksgiving***. Tell your friends and prayer partners about ***Voice of Thanksgiving***. The call is to gather a company of believers who will pray. Together we will reach nations for Jesus Christ.

To join this company send an email to david@innercourt.com
include the word JOIN in the subject line

To receive ***Voice of Thanksgiving*** by regular mail:
Voice of Thanksgiving
Inner Court Ministries
P.O. Box 2125-80502
Longmont, CO 80502

If you have questions or comments
Send them to David Williamson:
david@innercourt.com

To have your address removed from our list
Send an email to david@innercourt.com
Include the word REMOVE in the subject line