

Gathering Question – How Specific do you think you are in your prayers? Rate yourself. Explain your answer to the group.

Very specific

Sometimes specific

Always vague

Praying Authentically

Prayer is not a spectator's sport! It is not something that we are to engage in to give off signals of spirituality. Jesus says, when you pray, to go into a secret place and shut your door. It is a private matter between you and the Father and is a place where you can pour your deepest pain, desires, disappointments, and grief.

Psalm 62:8 tells us to "Pour out your hearts to him." Why do we find that so hard to do? Maybe it is because we are not convinced that prayer really makes a difference. You need only look at times when someone pleaded with God for something to find out that our requests do make a difference. When Israel sent out the spies while they were in the wilderness and the spies came back with a faithless report, God wanted to destroy the entire nation he had brought out of captivity. But Moses prayed and God relented and allowed the people to live (see Numbers 14, especially 10-25).

When Jesus spoke about prayer he spoke in terms of moving mountains if requests are made in faith (Mark 11:22-26). Jesus also tells us that we should always pray and never give up (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8).

God does care and he does see our needs. He wants to respond to us and to take care of us. We need to be specific. We might tell him, "This is the way I feel today. I've been thinking this recently, what do you think? I'm really worried about this. I am so depressed over this. Thanks, Father, I am really happy about the way this all worked out. I know you must have intervened." Talk to God sincerely and pour out your requests before the throne of God.

A good way to learn how to pray specifically is to write out your prayers and then read them to the Father. Whatever you do, find a way to be specific, sincere and private in your prayer life. The end result, according to Paul is "peace that passes understanding." (Philippians 4:8).

Read: Nehemiah 1:5-11; Mark 11:22-26; Philippians 4:4 – end of the chapter; Luke 18:1-8

Reflect:

1. How did Nehemiah express the closeness of his relationship with God in this passage?
2. Look back closely at Nehemiah's prayer, what types of prayer do you see in it?
3. How do you deal with Jesus' promise, "whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours?"
4. What connection is there between prayer and peace?

