

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups June 10th 2007
Deeper into prayer – with Jesus
....praying for yourself John 17: 1 - 5



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Self consecration: In v.1, Jesus has set a pattern in praying for ourselves similar to his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. In both prayers we find Jesus praying under intense pressure. In these deeply personal prayers, Jesus is offering himself in an act of supreme self-consecration.

Praying from a place of intimacy: Jesus first word in both prayers is significant. In the Garden of Gethsemane he cries *Abba, father* and in our reading *Father*. It's a word that signifies extreme intimacy - *my own dear father* – it's the tiny child's word of address to its male parent. When praying for ourselves we are called to be on the most intimate of terms with our father. Jesus' prayer reminds us of our infinite value to the Father.

Praying for His Glory – called to live for his honour: *Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.* Jesus' one concern is the glory of the Father. It is for his honour and his honour alone that we are called to live out our Christian lives. It's in this imperative that we are called to pray for ourselves to become more like him in thought, word and deed. (Cf. 'The Message' 2 Cor.3:18) *Because Our destiny is heaven; and our assignment is to display him.* Too often we say 'I can never be like that'. But the truth is that; *Once you are in the kingdom every occupation is a ministry*, and each one of us is called to pray constantly that He will make us more and more like Himself. We all fail but repeated prayers of consecration are necessary to any life in the will of God. He calls us to keep pressing forward. (Cf. 'The Message' Ps 119:18)

Praying within limitations: (Cf. verse 4) There was a limitation to Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus spent his life ministering in a very small area of the world and there would have been many people in Palestine to whom he never ministered either in word or deed. Yet his ministry was perfect and he completed all that he was given to do – no more and no less. We are not called to reach the whole world or to minister to every need. The Father wants each one of us to come to a place of rest so that we are content to do only that which he requires of each one of us.

Praying with all our heart: It is as we pray for ourselves, not in any selfish way but with a heart and mind that longs to hear him speaking, that we will begin to hear him more clearly day by day.

Praying the Jabez prayer for ourselves: (2 Chron. 4:9) Jesus prayer to the Father may seem too daunting for us but there is a prayer that we can pray for ourselves. It has four petitions; the first is "*Oh, that you would bless me indeed*". To bless in the biblical sense means to ask for or to impart supernatural favour. When we ask for God's blessing, we're not asking for more of what we could get for ourselves. We're crying out for the unlimited goodness that only God has the power to know about or give to us. The second petition is '*enlarge my territory*'. This is where we ask God to enlarge our lives so that we can make a greater impact for him. The third part of Jabez' petition is '*Oh that your hand would be with me.*' Here we are calling on God to release his power to accomplish his will and to bring him Glory. The final part of Jabez prayer is *Oh that you would keep me from evil.* Jesus taught his disciples the same thing when he taught them to pray *deliver us from evil.* Because our lives transcend the ordinary it's important to ask for his protection. We are called to pray for ourselves, so that we too may bring him *glory on earth by completing the work he has given us to do.*



Witness: questions to discuss

1. What comes to mind when you consider what it means to pray for yourself? What do you think you should pray for?
2. If we pray for ourselves like Jesus prayed, what do you think will be the consequences?
3. Discuss in the group whether praying for 'supernatural favour from God' feels like a selfish or arrogant request.
4. How do we react when Christians pray for help or deliverance but still suffer?
5. Has anyone in the group come across the Prayer of Jabez before? What difference could praying this prayer regularly have for you?