



3-28-10



# Reflections

As Jesus began His instruction on prayer for His disciples, He began by saying: **when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.** (Matthew 6:6 NKJ)

Those three introductory words are powerful in what they imply about His expectation regarding prayer and it is that they will indeed pray. Clearly He expects His disciples to pray and, on this occasion, He gave them a model to direct their prayers to the Father with praise and with acknowledgement of who He is and their need for Him to forgive them, to meet their needs and to help them live as those who are His children.

In my role as pastor, I sometimes find myself discouraged. I wonder if I'm being what He wants me to be, if I'm effectively sharing His gospel and if the church is growing in their walk with Him? When I see the empty pews, when I hear the hurts of our people, and when I consider our young ones living in a society that is corrupt on so many levels, I get discouraged, and often feel overwhelmed with the work to be accomplished. That is when the Lord gently reminds me that it is His work that we are to be doing and that our assignment is to be faithful to Him and His calling on our lives. He then reminds me that I need to bow before Him in prayer. First, I must pray for my own sinful issues, then, and only then, can I pray effectively for the people we are called to serve.

We have called the year 2010 a year of prayer for our church and its mission. We have embarked on a building project that we intend to use in ministry in new areas of service as we learn to reach out to our neighborhood and our city. As I remind myself of these 2010 commitments, I must also evaluate my own prayer life against the words of Jesus when He taught His men how to pray.

**And when you pray**... these words indict me and challenge me to spend more time in prayer and to consider the quality of my prayer life. Am I praying only when I'm not feeling victorious? Am I praying only for myself? Am I guilty of neglecting His Word and failing to acknowledge Him in my daily walk? Am I harboring

unconfessed sin that hinders me in my faith? Why do I sometimes feel so discouraged? When I consider the times in which we live and when I see the Christian world showing little distinction from the world and its pursuits; I get discouraged. When I realize that there are many facing a Godless eternity that we are not reaching; I get discouraged. When I consider how few have accepted Jesus as their Savior and been baptized into His body; I get discouraged. When I see so many of our young people leave the churches in which they were raised and see them blending into a lost world; I get discouraged. When I see so many of our beloved people suffering physically; I get discouraged. When I see so many relationships fall apart; I get discouraged. How does one cope under such a burden?

Here we must look to the Scripture for our answers. Space does not permit covering each concern individually, but let's focus on the big picture as we wrestle with our sources of discouragement. Jesus reminds us that we can rest in God's care and provision for us as He says... *"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"* <sup>31</sup> *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"* <sup>32</sup> *"For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."* <sup>33</sup> *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* <sup>34</sup> *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."* (Matthew 6:30-34 NKJ)

What shall we do then? When we are discouraged; let's pray. When we are sick; let's pray. When we are hurting; let's pray. When we are in need; let's pray. Let's help to bear one another's burdens. The writer of Hebrews commands.. *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.* <sup>24</sup> *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,* <sup>25</sup> *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:23-25 NKJ) Let's purpose to pray more, to pray for each other more, to encourage each other more and to serve the Lord faithfully.

**Pastor Doug**