

PRAYER LESSON 142

God Honoring Talk

What is prayer? This seems like an unusual question in light of the fact that most people pray, and seem to know what they are doing. So what is prayer? Some would say it is simply talking to God. In fact, they would be correct, prayer is talking to God, however, it is much more than just talking. A better definition of prayer would be “talk that honors God.”

In the Bible, in the first chapter of the book of Nehemiah, we read Nehemiah’s prayer. I’m not going to read it all here, but it would help to read it sometime in light of this message. Nehemiah is a man who, along with many other Jews, is being held captive in Babylon. He longs to go home to Jerusalem and rebuild that city, but he needs the king’s permission to go and he is a bit afraid of the king. So, he prays to God.

From Nehemiah’s prayer we can learn something about the characteristics of prayer. Nehemiah begins by talking about God, he says, “**O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God.**” He begins with praise, and our God honoring talk should also begin with praising God.

Next Nehemiah confesses his sins and the sins of the people of Israel. He says, “**I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.**” God honoring talk should be marked by a desire to be right before God and this is achieved through confession.

Next, Nehemiah bases his confidence in God, in God’s faithfulness expressed in his word. He says, “**Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'**” By placing God’s promises before him, Nehemiah is showing his firm confidence in God’s word. God honoring talk includes references to God’s promises in his word.

Nehemiah next shows his delight in intimacy with God. He says, “**O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name.**” God honoring talk includes the honoring of the name of God.

Finally, Nehemiah makes his request. **Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.**” This man was Artaxerxes, the ultimate ruler of the great empire of Persia. He had the power of life and death over everyone, yet Nehemiah knew that his God was more powerful, so he makes his request.

Our God honoring talk should include all of these elements, praise, confession, references to God’s faithfulness in his word, honoring God’s name and finally our requests.