

FRIDAY: *The Centerpiece*

Read: Psalm 86:10-11 ¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.

Reflect:

Why will all the nations come and worship God giving Him the glory due His name (v9)? “*For*” He’s the one, true, God. It’s not a secret, anyone can read about it, sadly too many do not.

The psalmist (again) commands YHWH, but this time it isn’t for an act of deliverance (cf. Tuesday); it’s for knowing Him better. While doing so, the psalmist makes use of a substitution device known as *metonymy* – where a noun represents a larger whole. Here, “Your way” refers to knowledge of God’s Word (cf. Ps5:8; 37:4-5; 67:2).

The use of *metonymy* continues as “my heart” would imply the whole human being. When you stop to think about it, can a heart be physically divided – and remain viable? No. Perhaps we should take heed and do all we can to guard ourselves from being divided in our allegiances...

Respond:

How often do you speak of God and His “great” and “wondrous” deeds?

Read Galatians 5:16-17. What areas wage war on your soul? How do you combat them?

Do you have a growing desire to know God and His word? What about to put it into practice?

Pray: Thank God for the volunteers who teach our children during the discipleship time on Sunday mornings – personally thank them for their service. Tell God of your commitment to follow Him; ask for His help. Continue to pray for VBS, it’s coming soon!

SATURDAY: *Thankful*

Read: Psalm 86:12-13 ¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. ¹³ For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Reflect:

What does a thankful person look like? Once again, the use of *metonymy* by the psalmist implies that “whole heart” is not speaking of an internal organ – but our whole being. How do people know we’re thankful to God?

Yet before describing a thankful person, take note of the radical change in the span of a single verse. In v11 the psalmist asked for a “united heart.” Now, in v12, he says his “whole heart” (i.e., his whole being) will glorify God! Was the change instantaneous, or was he confident of the outcome?

Without God’s unfailing love we’d be doomed to destruction. He is ready, willing, and mighty to save. We merely have to persist in our commitment to serve Him. Yet I ask again, how do people know we’re thankful to God?

Respond:

How do people know you’re thankful for what God has done for you?

Do you have confidence God will answer your prayers? Is there any reason you can think of that He might not listen (cf. Ps66:18)?

Read the rest of the psalm. Note the psalmist was in real danger, and he’d yet to be delivered – but His confidence in YHWH remains unshaken!

Pray: Pray that you are ready to focus on God during our time of worship tomorrow. Pray for those continuing preparation for tomorrow (song, lessons, children’s church, preaching). Pray we are encountered with God tomorrow as our lives continue to change for His glory.

Total Trust

June 1 – June 7

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:36-38)

- Do we really believe God will send out laborers into His harvest?

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)

- Do we pray for our Christian brothers and sisters to be “rooted and grounded in love?” Do we think it’s impossible? (reread v20)

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:18-20)

- Do we believe God can embolden us in our present circumstances to share His love with others?

Do we pray? I think the answer to that is “yes” – many people pray. In fact, some polls indicate that nine out of ten people pray regularly; three out of four claim to pray daily. However...

- It is necessary to iterate and reiterate that prayer, as a mere habit, as a performance gone through by routine or in a professional way, is a dead and rotten thing. [E.M. Bounds. *Power Through Prayer*, pp44-45]

Ouch!

Why don’t we pray more? Could part of the reason be that we don’t really trust God? I mean really trust Him? I think that as a whole NLCC is very concerned about those who need to know Jesus. How do we go about praying for that? Do we heed the words of Jesus (Mt9:37-38)? Do we pray for open doors (Col4:2-6) and boldness (Acts4:29) and God’s word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1)?

- Praying is spiritual work, and human nature does not like taxing, spiritual work. [*Power Through Prayer*, p46]

I think we realize prayer is hard work, wrestling to subdue our own pride and selfish wants, resigning them to what God wants; making the time to pray; etc. I also think we pray regularly. Yet I wonder if we struggle with our trust in God...

Monday: Addressing God

Read: Psalm 86:1 ¹ Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Reflect:

It sounds kind of bold, doesn't it? The psalmist commands God to not only listen (incline your ear) but also answer the prayer! Who does the psalmist think he is? What basis does he have for making such audacious requests of God? Why is he so confident God will answer?

Notice that the prayer is addressed to The LORD (YHWH). This is the same God who rescued Israel from bondage in Egypt. Will He not still be concerned about His people?

The word for "poor" doesn't necessarily mean poverty-stricken. It can, but it often refers to those who suffer verbal and physical abuse at the hands of others (e.g., Job24:4; Ps37:14). We know YHWH cares for those who are "poor" (e.g., Exod22:25; Lev19:10; Deut15:11).

Respond:

Are you ever demanding of God like this psalmist starts out to be? Why? When? About what?

Do you recall times of God's faithfulness to you in the past which in turn assist you during times of prayer?

Are you concerned for those who are "poor" – whether they're economically disadvantaged, or persecuted for some reason? How do you express that concern?

Pray: Thank God for the start of another work week, pray your actions during it glorify Him. Pray for VBS, it starts next Monday. Thank God for the volunteers who are making NLCC's Children's Church a reality.

Tuesday: Pleas for Help

Read: Psalm 86:2-4 ² Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God. ³ Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. ⁴ Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Reflect:

Three more verses, four more commands directed toward God. The first is for God to literally keep, or preserve the psalmist's life; the word is sometimes translated as "watchman" (e.g., Isa21:11). Basically the psalmist is asking God to exercise great care over his life.

In verse three the psalmist asks for the Lord to be "gracious" – or to have mercy on him. This is followed up by another command for his soul to be "gladdened." It's a spontaneous act of jubilation that is so strong it finds expression in an external way.

Yet notice there is a basis to the psalmist's request. The word "for" is small, but important. Why show great care for his life? *For* he is godly (v2b), *for* he prays continually (v3b), *for* only to the Lord does he pray.

Respond:

The psalmist backs up each demand with a reason. What are reasons God should answer, or even listen to your requests?

Despite the reasons given by the psalmist, notice he knows his place; a servant to God (v2b). He also knows all responses will be a display of grace (v3).

If you were in the predicament the psalmist was in, what would be your "for" statements?

Pray: Pray for the Bible studies taking place tonight. Keep the Natural Church Development health assessment in your prayers, as a body we'll begin focusing on those results soon. Lift up to God the concerns that burden your soul – He desires to hear from you.

WEDNESDAY: Confidence

Read: Psalm 86:5-6 ⁵ For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. ⁶ Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.

Reflect:

Why does the psalmist even bother addressing God? Because He knows the character of the One to Whom he's speaking. The words "good" and "forgiving" are descriptive of God's "steadfast love." It's a rich theological word – *hesed* – basically the psalmist has confidence because He knows God's track record.

Notice the anthropomorphism in v6. An anthropomorphism describes God with human attributes – here He's given an ear. The word for "listen" is one of listening with great care; it even has a notion of obedience implied in it (e.g., 1Sam15:22; Ps55:2). Apparently the psalmist really wanted action.

Once again, grace enters the picture. Where would we be without it? God's grace abounds in Scripture – both the Old and New Testaments. Do we realize our requests of God are really further requests for His grace?

Respond:

How well do you "know God?" Would you rate your knowledge higher this year than it was last year? Why or why not?

What is your favorite "anthropomorphic statement" about God? [e.g., strong arms, seeing eyes...]

Can people look at your life and be confident of a graceful response based on your track record?

Pray: Thank God for His unfailing love for us. Pray for the marriages of NLCC to show unfailing love in their relationships. Thank God for His grace – pray we will be more like Him.

THURSDAY: More Confidence

Read: Psalm 86:7-9 ⁷ In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. ⁸ There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. ⁹ All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

Reflect:

There appears to be a past, present, and future aspect to these verses. Verse seven seems, once again, to draw on God's track record – the past. You may recall that the entire psalm started with a request for YHWH to "answer" (v1).

Verse eight covers the whole gamut of time – there never has been, isn't, and never will be anyone like our God! His works certainly are incomparable (Ps8; 19; 104). He is unique.

Verse nine looks to the future, and don't miss the building climax in it. Not only will nations come to God – they'll "glorify" His name. Ultimately, God's name will be given the "glory" (literally heavy or weighty) it's due. What a glorious scene it will be (cf. Rev7:9-12; 15:4).

Respond:

What prayers of yours has God answered recently? Do you have a way of noting them to 'track' His faithfulness?

While true, v8 is really an understatement – there is nothing even close to God. Do your life priorities reflect that?

What do you do to keep yourself aware of and concerned for those outside of NLCC's body? What about those outside of Emporia?

Pray: Thank God for the College Press Teacher training last Saturday – that event was an answered prayer. Thank God for those who lead us in the song-portion of our worship on Sunday; pray for them as they practice tonight. Pray for all God-fearing churches to experience His blessing.