

Prayer Works – 2019 Spring Retreat Summary

After taking a week to process our Prayer Works retreat, I have come to realize just how hard it is for me to pray at times. We were blessed to have some quiet times and spaces to engage our Lord in prayer. However, upon returning home, I was quickly consumed by my hectic schedule. After returning, I sped off to a youth leader conference which took me right into a short family vacation followed by a weekend of house projects that needed to be addressed. Along the way, I may have spent a few minutes here or there on my knees but far less time than I should have. Prayer is hard, it takes work, but through God's faithfulness it does work. Most importantly it does His work for His glory.

Our desire for this year's retreat was to provide youth with an opportunity to put prayer into practice. We wanted to challenge ourselves to begin building regular prayer times in our daily lives. In order to provide some structure, we built our weekend around that ACTS prayer model. We considered prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication throughout Scripture. While we understand that prayer is never formulaic and that there is no right or wrong way to pray, we thought our youth should see prayer modeled in Scripture.

As we considered what it looked like to spend time approaching the Lord with adoration and praise we focused on Hannah's prayer in *1 Sam. 2:1-10*. Upon the birth of her son Samuel, Hannah's prayer is full of declarations of God's character, His works, and His blessings upon His people. As she describes these things it becomes evident that God is a God to be praised and worshipped. He's above all others and the only one worthy of all our praise. As we concluded this lesson we were blessed with a time of quiet personal reflection on the names of God throughout Scripture. All of God's names are a direct result of His promises, His character, and His actions. We should dwell on these often as we look to bring praise for His glory.

Our second session addressed our need to confess our sins in light of a holy God. As we considered this truth we looked at Nehemiah's prayer in *Neh. 1:1-2:9*. Nehemiah's first response when hearing of Israel's struggle is to go before the Lord in prayer. Rather than immediately asking God for help, Nehemiah weeps and confesses the sins of His people. His prayer of confession is corporate, personal, and specific. Despite the huge task before him, Nehemiah focuses on humbling himself before a holy God as he declares His inadequacy. However, he also reminds God of His promises to faithfully deliver His people when they repent. Our time concluded with an opportunity to pray aloud in small groups as a reminder that our prayer life should not only be private.

When we met for our third session we considered David's prayer of thanksgiving in *Psalms 9*. As David pours out His heart to the Lord he acknowledges all that the Lord has done. He declares God's goodness and faithfulness to provide for his needs, fulfill His promises, and give him rest. David's prayerful song draws our hearts toward a God who cares about His people. When we consider all that He's done for us through His great love, we need to acknowledge these things through prayers of thanksgiving and praise.

Our final session focused on God's desire to hear our requests. At times this may seem selfish but God wants our whole hearts. He wants our adoration, our confession, our thanksgiving, but also to hear our heart's desires. We considered Agur's prayer in *Prov. 30:7-9*. God cares so much about our requests that in a book of wisdom He records for all eternity the prayer of a man only spoken about in this one chapter. Agur has no real significance in Scripture other than being the author of Prov. 30. Our prayers are significant to God. He cares about our requests. Agur asks that God not give him too much or too little so that He does not forget or defame God. His request is ultimately a display of his desire to bring God glory, honor, and praise. Are our requests the same? Do we approach God in a way in which our requests are aligned with His heart?

Prayer is a process worth pursuing in life. It's likely that it will look different as the Lord brings you into and out of seasons of life. Prayer will draw you into the presence of a perfectly consistent Lord, one who wants to hear our adoration, our confession, our thanksgiving, and our requests. We praise God for challenging us, encouraging us, and equipping us during our time away. The faithfulness of God only should draw us to our knees.