

“A New Challenge” Part 4 - The Community Bonding Challenge. September 2024

Thames Valley churches of Christ

Introduction

'A New Challenge'. Are you facing new challenges? Is your group facing new challenges?

At this time in Thames Valley, we are making some changes in our leadership team, shepherding structure, staffing, small groups, and the board. None of those changes are earth-shattering, but they bring a new challenge: spiritual family bonding. When changes happen, they can weaken our fellowship connections.

Today, we will explore one key way God's people stay spiritually bonded as a family despite the change--praying for one another. Let's dive in.

Introduction

God encourages us to pray for authorities and ourselves, but we must not neglect to pray for one another:

Ephesians 6.18

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

Why does Paul urge Christians to pray for one another? In part because we need God's help, of course. But also because in doing so, we "Carry each other's burdens" (Galatians 6.2). We get to know one another more deeply as we share our needs. Praying for each other strengthens our spiritual bonds, and love grows between us. Let me share an example.

Post-It Prayers

On Sunday, we gave out post-it notes as part of the Watford Church of Christ service. The congregation wrote prayer requests on them, and we collected them and prayed through some of them. Almost 30 people wrote a total of nearly 40 requests.

That evening, I typed up the complete list. After I had finished, I felt overwhelmed and inspired. I felt overwhelmed because it brought home to me how many needs we have in our fellowship (and about half the church was away on holiday, so the true extent of the church needs was probably double what was handed in). I felt inspired because of the faith displayed in these requests. The congregation are looking to God for help because they know he is the only one who can make a difference:

Psalm 121.1-2

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Why not try something similar with your group? If you do so, you might like to consider the following suggestions.

Suggestions

Please do not feel pressured to adopt all the ideas; see them as ways to get you thinking about what will work for you.

- Pray through all the requests in one sitting at least once this week.
 - Pray for some of the requests every day.
 - Pray for at least one or two each day.
 - If you know the person who made the request, ask them if there is more detail to their request that would help you pray for them more meaningfully.
 - Print the list and take it with you so you can refer to it at any time.
 - A *one*-minute prayer for *one* request is meaningful.
 - If you know the person who made the request, imagine them present with you as you pray for what is on their heart.
 - Look up Scriptures that connect with the prayer requests and pray through the Scripture. For example, the first request on the list is for protection. A relevant Scripture could be:
 - Psalm 32.20
“Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’S unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.”
 - Meditating on the Psalm might create a more powerful prayer experience.
 - If people do not put their names on their request, no matter. God knows who they are, and when you pray, God will have no difficulty matching your request to their need. The same principle applies if you do not know the person who made the request.
-

Question

Do you ask people for their prayer requests and ask them to pray for you? Paul did:

“Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favourably received by the Lord’s people there....for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should....Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.” (Romans 15:31; Ephesians 6:20; Colossians 4:4)

Suggestion

Ask three people today what they would like you to pray about for them, and commit to praying for them every day for a week.

Conclusion

Next time, we will explore another area pertinent to the 'a new challenge' theme.

Your brother, Malcolm

Please add your comments on this week’s topic. We learn best when we learn in community.

Do you have a question about teaching the Bible? Is it theological, technical, or practical? Please send me your questions or suggestions. Here’s the email: malcolm@malcolmcox.org.

If you’d like a copy of my free eBook on spiritual disciplines, “How God Grows His People”, sign up at my website: <http://www.malcolmcox.org>.

Please pass the link on, subscribe, and leave a review.

Consider joining us at [AIM](https://aim.moodlecloud.com/) UK & Ireland for stimulating and faith-building teaching: <https://aim.moodlecloud.com/>.

Music used in this recording: "Carpe Diem" Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com). Licensed under Creative Commons: By Attribution 4.0 License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>