**Small Group notes – Lent Series 2023**

Growing in Prayer with Jesus – The Prayer of Praise (Luke 10 v 21)

* Jesus was clearly happy to praise God amongst his friends - in fact it was the first thing he did after catching up with them and hearing about what they had been doing.

Take time to catch up together and then begin with a time of open prayer using the formula Jesus uses in Luke 10 v 21 when he adopts a standard Jewish formula of prayer – we see it again in John 10 v 41 from Dilys sermon on Sunday and it can be found in various places in the psalms.

I praise you Lord because….

I thank you Lord because….

* “The prayer of praise can be the spark that can ignite your prayer life” - As Dilys asked on Sunday have you tried using this formula in the past week? How did it go?
* Phillip Yancey in his book on Prayer asks the question:

“Why does prayer rank so high on surveys of theoretical importance and so low on surveys of actual satisfaction?”

Discuss whether this statement is true for you or not?

What words would you use to describe prayer from your experience?

* Jesus uses a standard Jewish formula of prayer. What formula’s, structures, models or habits of prayer have you found helpful in your prayer life?

* Discuss the difference between praise and thanksgiving.

Richard Foster describes the usual distinction between thanksgiving and praise as this: “in thanksgiving we give glory to God for what he has done for us in praise we give glory to God for who he is in himself”

Thanksgiving focusses on God’s hand and all that he gives us, does for us

and praise focusses on God’s heart and all that he is

Janet Hold McHenry – whose book we are using to help us in this series suggests that ‘praise is a mind shift from a focus on self to a reminder of gods character and perspective’

How easy do you find it to shift the focus off yourself. How do you do try to make that shift? Do you struggle to make that shift?

* David asked why, if praise can be good for us, do we find it so difficult? He suggested the following:
1. Thanking God for who he is, is dependent on knowing who God is & having a correct image of him. It can be difficult because we don’t have a correct image of him.
2. It can be difficult because it doesn’t come naturally
3. Praise can be difficult because we like to claim credit for ourselves for things that in reality are not ours to claim.
4. Praise can be difficult because we are inherently selfish
5. It can be difficult because we simply make prayer out to be more difficult than it need to be or maybe we feel that it is beyond us, I am not good enough, wise enough, we think need to set aside big chunks of dedicated time, we need to know the bible better, we need to be spiritual giants, we need to know the how to before we can get started

Can you relate to any of these? What other reasons are there?

* David suggested that we need to learn to stop regularly. And give God praise – to give God the credit. What stops us in the moment from doing that? What can we do to help us, remind us, encourage us to stop?
* There is a horizontal application here as well as a vertical application – we need to start by praising one other. How can we as a group of friends, as a small group, as a church family intentionally encourage and praise on another?
* Have a time of reflection and ask whether the Lord is saying anything about this idea of intentionally praising one another. Also take time out to pray for one another for any presenting needs.