

Honest To God

The subject I want to share today from the scriptures, is one that so many people are defeated in. This is one area where someone will come to Christ and they will start to grow, and then they just seem to die spiritually. This is a subject that if you are winning in this area, it will affect every area of your life positively in your walk with Christ. If you are hurting in this area, it will affect every single area of your spiritual life negatively. It is probably an area where more people are defeated than any other area in their spiritual life. I want to speak on is the area of prayer.

I remember when I first came to Christ I knew I had to pray. I knew I was supposed to do that as a way of growing in Christ. I would go to a prayer meeting and there were always two things that were going through my mind at a prayer meeting. Maybe some of you identify with it, and maybe you will not. The first thing going through my mind in a prayer meeting was five more people then it is my turn, four more then it is my turn, three more then it is my turn. I never enjoyed it because I was almost at a panic stage as a new believer. The second thing going through my mind was, well, how I should pray. If I pray this way, like somebody else did, everybody says amen, praise God. I was always thinking how to pray to get a response from people instead of really being honest to God. The title of what I want to share today is called Prayer, Honest to God.

The passage that Paul spoke to me with is Philippians 4:6, the Word of God says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." Let me repeat that. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

What I want to do is share six simple points. I will not have a lot of explanation with it. As I go through these six points from this passage, you will say, where is he going? I do not get it. How does this even relate? At the end I am going to share several illustrations. As I go through these illustrations, the lights will come on. You will say, now I see what he means. I very seldom do this, but I am going to ask you to be patient with me during the first part and I will try to make up for it during the second part.

Honest to God first is the extent of our honesty. It says, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything..." Now the way most believers, Christians, live this verse is be anxious for a few things and in the important things let your request be made known unto God. I use to think that if I prayed about anything that was just a little small item, I was being selfish. God was so busy running the universe He only had time for the major things that affected the Great Commission or seeing people come to Christ, or the finances of the church.

Here it says be anxious for nothing, but in everything, everything, every little tiny area and first in being honest to God, it has to be in everything. Not just the important things, not just the earth shattering things that will explode the church and making Christ known, but every little area of my life, in everything.

Second, the attitude of our honesty to God. It says, “Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer.” I believe the way the context of the word prayer is used here it means of reverence, and true devotion. It means to be very reverent and true devotion, when we are honest before God. This is where I get a little concerned when I hear people in kind of a flippant way address God or use nicknames. You know, the man upstairs, the eye in the sky, the big brother, the first cosmonaut. Boy, I would be hesitant with that. He is Yahweh, God, the creator of the universe and I believe we approach him with reverence and true devotion.

Third, the nature of our honesty before God. It says, be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication. What does the word supplication mean? When I was in seminary most of the professors taught that it meant this, the humble cry for the fulfillment of a need keenly felt. Let me repeat that, the humble cry for the fulfillment of a need that is keenly felt. After I got out of seminary and started to study scripture, I concluded that is not a true definition of supplication. After I came to know how God works with us, this is how I would define supplication: the humble cry for the fulfillment of a need or a want that is keenly felt.

When it says to be anxious for nothing but in everything, it is not just needs, it is also wants. As a new Christian I used to feel guilty praying about a want in my life. People say, well there are so many needs in the world. How can you be so selfish and pray for your wants? Here it says, in everything not just needs but wants. It might not be true in your life, but in my life what often affects my relationship with God are not my needs, it is those wants. If I do not have the freedom to bring those wants before God, not just the needs, then I am not truly being honest and fulfilling what Paul is talking about in Philippians 4:6. It is not only our needs but our wants without feeling selfish.

The condition of our honesty before God. It says, be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. I think if there has been any area difficult for me to learn in prayer, it is praying with thanksgiving ahead of time. That takes a step of faith. Often I would pray and say with thanksgiving because I knew I was supposed to. It was not an expression of my heart. One thing I have asked over the years is, God give me the faith where ahead of time, when I pray to trust you so much that with a sincere heart, I can say thank you.

Instead of saying thank you with the attitude, well I did that because I know I am supposed to, I am not quite sure if I really will be thankful. The condition here is with thanksgiving. That is still part of my prayer today. God allow me to pray ahead of time thanking you for however you answer it.

Number five, the content of our honesty before God. It says, be anxious for nothing, but in everything with thanksgiving let your requests... the word request there, in the Greek, would be the word petition. It means when you take a petition for people to sign, you have to be very specific what you are asking them to sign for. Who is going to be dumb enough to sign a petition? You are very specific and then you sign the petition. Well it says here, in being honest with God, we should be very very specific.

I always was hesitant to do that for several reasons. One, if I was really specific, I was afraid that God would not answer my prayers and I would start to doubt my faith. If I prayed more generally, you know, pray for the sun to come up in the morning, the moon to come out at

night, or whatever, then I would have three hundred and sixty-five answered prayers every year and that would build my faith up. That is not what it says here. It says in being honest with God, in everything with thanksgiving to be very specific. Do a petition, list it out there. Then I was afraid of really being specific in prayer. I was afraid the Holy Spirit would whisper in my ear and say, "Why don't you do something about it?" I was always a little hesitant that God would want me to answer my own prayers, and a lot of times I didn't want to. That is why it was easier to pray for the lost, in Africa or somewhere else than to pray for my neighbor. If I prayed for my neighbor it seems like the Holy Spirit was saying, well why don't you talk to her? Why don't you talk to him? If I prayed for somebody in Africa, I did not have to get involved in my prayers. However, I was not really honest.

Number six, the results, of our honesty to God. When we pray, being anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving letting specific requests be known, what are the results? You know what was an amazing thing to me? There are no promised results. I mean almost everywhere in the Bible when you pray for something, it says, "Ask anything in my name and you shall have it." There is a promised answered prayer. This is one place there is no promise of answered prayer. I thought, that does not make sense. If I am not suppose to be anxious about anything and I am suppose to pray about everything with a very reverent devout attitude of prayer with thanksgiving. Not only my needs but my wants; very specifically, then it does not make any sense that God does not promise an answered prayer. I could not figure it out until I read the next verse. God promises something far better than answered prayer if we are honest in our prayer life.

He promises in verse 7, "And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Something far better than answered prayer. In this passage of Philippians 4:6 it does not promise an answer, it promises a result, the peace of God. Not peace with God – every true believer in Jesus Christ, when they place their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord has peace with God. Peace with God means all barriers removed through Christ in you and God. Every true believer has that. I am convinced the majority of true believers don't experience the peace of God, which comes through Philippians 4:6, being honest in our prayer.

How does all this relate? Let me tie these six points together and show how they can affect our lives and truly what set me free. Philippians 4:6, when I understood these six points and the results I became free to be able to express my very heart to God and then to experience His peace. In 1 John, in the New Testament, Chapter 1 it says, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another and our fellowship is with Him. If we walk in the light as He is in the light."

I think Philippians 4:6 is how to walk in the light. You say what? Let me show you how this applies. I picture it this way when I pray being honest with God. I think of my arm coming out of the darkness into the light. I think of coming out of things that I suppressed, I would not face up to. I would not be honest with about or anything. Bringing it out into the light, of God's love, of His love for me. What Christ did on the cross, the revelation of scriptures, who God is – everything else. It is getting it out into the light of God's love so He can act upon it.

I know in my life there are many things that I suppress, I do not want to face up to. I do not want to get out into the light. I think here where it says be anxious for nothing, but in **everything** with reverence and true devotion, let those specific requests be made known to God. It is saying get it out into the light. Get it out there where God's love, His judgment and all can look upon it and then through that He can produce the peace of God in our lives. We know God has been consulted. I will tell you this; there will be a phenomenal spiritual impact in your life.

I went to live in Argentina. While I was down there I played on one of the Argentine national teams made up mainly of missionaries who had played university basketball here in the states. We were quite good. We were playing for the championship. We were all a little nervous. We got there early, warmed up and we met with our coach. Like every game we prayed before hand. We figured that put God on our side. The problem is this time the other team prayed too, so we prayed longer. We figured that will work spiritually.

The pastor of the Union Church, the English-speaking church, is the one who prayed. This is how we prayed. We were all together huddled around, and he said, "Lord Jesus, I pray today that we will be a good testimony, and no one will be hurt. In Christ name, amen."

Everyone applauded. We walked out to the jump circle. As I walked out to the jump circle, I thought what a stupid prayer. What a dumb idiotic prayer. How dishonest. You say, what do you mean? Well you see, I knew the pastor who prayed. He was competitive. I know that he wanted Jesus to be glorified. I know he did not want anyone to get hurt on our team. Equal to that, he wanted to win. He wanted to crush them. On the way out, I said, "Pastor that was really a dishonest prayer." He said, "What?" I said, "Yes. That was really an idiotic prayer." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well pastor, what you want to do more than almost anything else here?" I mean he immediately said, "I want to wamp em." You cannot translate that word. It means I want to win so big they get embarrassed. I want to stomp them into the boards. Then I said, "Pastor, why didn't you pray to whomp em." He says, "What do you mean?"

I said, "I will explain it to you later." Well we won the game. Later in the locker room he said, "What did you mean by that comment that was the most dishonest prayer?" I said, Pastor, read Philippians 4:6, it says, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your specific request be made known unto God." I said, "What did you want to do equal to God being honored tonight, you wanted to win didn't you?" He said, "Well yeah." I said, "Why didn't you pray to win?" I said, "Why did you not get it out in the light? Why did you not say, God we want to whomp em. We want to crush em. We want to win tonight." I said, "Get it out into the light of God's love, what Christ did on the cross for us why he has called us to Argentina." I said, "Pastor, I will tell you this, getting it out into the light would have accomplished more of what you prayed for than the way you prayed." I said, "Getting out into the light of God's love what He for called us, all of a sudden winning would not be as important as He being honored and no one being hurt."

About twelve years later I was speaking at Wake Forest University. This pastor comes up to me very soberly says, "You know about ten or twelve years ago you taught me one of the greatest lessons." He started doing this with his arm, "Get it out into the light." You see what happened; he finally was honest in his walk with Christ when it came to basketball.

I have been on staff of Campus Crusade for Christ for almost thirty five years. One summer I was in charge of all the staff working at the headquarters for a big international staff training. One of the fellows, we had only been there maybe two weeks, and I had heard rumors that he was leaving. He was from Seattle, Washington and was going to leave the next day. He was telling everyone but me. And I was the man. If anyone should have been told, it was me. So I figured there must be something wrong there.

About ten thirty in the morning, I said, "George, let's have lunch together. Are you free?" He said, "Yes." So we got in the car and we drove downtown. I said, "George, I understand you are leaving tomorrow." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well my dad called and he got me a job with this construction company and I can make this much an hour." It was a lot of money.

I said, "What is it?" He said, "Well I can not only make enough money to go back to school but I have always dreamed of having a Mustang." That is a special type of sports car. He said, since I have been a little kid I dreamed of having a sports car. He started to tell me what color car, what size engine, Michelin tires, what types of rims, everything. I mean by the time he got through, I wanted one.

He was all excited. I said, "Well George, have you prayed about it?" You know when you say that to people it is so funny. They say, "Well what do you mean?" I said, "Have you really be honest to God and gotten it out in the light?" He said, "I do not know what you are talking about." I said, here, I was driving, read Philippians 4:6. He read it. I said, why don't you do this – why don't you really be honest with God. Get that car out into the light. Just say God I cannot live without that Mustang. I just need that Mustang so much. I want this size engine, this type of five speed transmission, I want this color, and these types of tires, just get it out into the light. God, I have got to have those kinds of rims and all.

Just get it out in the light of God's love. What Christ did for you on the cross, why He brought you down here for the summer, what He wants to do in our life. He said, "I should pray that way?" I said, "It says be anxious for nothing but in everything," which in the Greek means, in Mustangs, sports cars, get it out in the light. I said will you do that? He said "Okay."

The next day he was still there and the next day and the next day and the next day. I took him out for lunch again. This time I came on a little, I call righteous indignation, in other words, arrogant. I just said, "Hey George, I thought you were going to leave. Why did you not go home?" He says, "Well I did what you said." Played dumb and I said, "You did what?"

He started to wave his arms in between the seats. He said, "I got it out into the light. The more I told God I could not live without that Mustang, I must have that size engine. All of a sudden it was unbelievable. All of a sudden my mind was not thinking about the car. I was thinking about what Christ had done in my life, what He wanted to do with the university through a group of us in winning the campus to Christ. All of a sudden I wanted to stay here and learn all that God wanted to teach me." You see he never really saw God's will for his life until he was honest and he got it out of the darkness into the light.

I was at the University of Connecticut in the northeast of the United States. While I was there a head of a Christian organization came and asked if I would speak to one of their students, who had been very active and had kind of gone by the way side. I said sure. I got together with this fellow and he was the number one scorer in soccer. What others refer to as football, in America, we refer to it as soccer. He was the number one scorer and the team was number two in the nation. We sat down and started to talk. He said, he went on and on how he use to really be on fire for Christ and not anymore... I said, why. He says, "Well Josh, all I think about, all I dream about, I wake up in the morning, all that captivates me is to be the number one soccer player in the United States."

I want to score more goals than anyone else in the United States. I want to do more of this than anyone else in the United States. I want to be recognized. I want to see my picture in the newspapers. I want to be recognized when I walk into a restaurant." I tried to be excited with him so I just said, "Well Bobby, have you prayed about it?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Have you been honest to God about it?" He said, "What?" I said, "Get it out into the light." I explained Philippians 4:6. Just tell God how you cannot live without being the best soccer player in America. You cannot live without scoring more goals than anyone else. You want to be recognized in the restaurants and see your picture in the newspaper. He said, "Ok I will."

Three months later, I get the eleven page letter from him. He says, "Josh, I did what you told me. I got out there and said God I cannot live without being the best soccer player in America. I want to score more goals than anyone else. I want to be recognized in the restaurants, see my picture in newspapers. You know when I was really honest with God, I no longer wanted that. Now I want to be the best soccer player in the world. I want to score more goals than anyone in the world. I do not want to be recognized in restaurants, I want to eat at the White House. I do not want to see my picture in the newspaper; I want to see it on television." I am reading this letter and saying what happened. I learned something, this is what happened.

He said, "Josh, as I was really honest with God and got it out into the light, and instead of taking away the desire He intensified it. He changed my motivation. No longer did I want to be the best soccer player to glorify myself in the United States, I am going to be the best soccer player in the world to glorify the Lord Jesus. No longer did I want to score more goals than anyone else in America to glorify myself, I wanted to score more goals than anyone in the world to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." Do you know what I found? When we apply Philippians 4:6 and we are really honest, often instead of taking away the desire, God will intensify it. He changes our motivation. I believe one of the fastest ways to know God's will is to get it out into the light.

"Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God shall guard your hearts and minds."

I want to leave you with this, every time you think of this talk, think of your arm coming out of the darkness into the light. Just be honest and let God deal with your heart.