

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

Spiritual Growth and Christian Character

Lesson 4 — Spending Time with God Through Prayer

Introduction — We have entered into a father-child relationship with our creator. A relationship by definition requires that we spend time to develop and nurture it. Today we are going to talk about the discipline of prayer. We will look at what Jesus taught about prayer in Matthew 6:5-15. Jesus taught three errors concerning prayer and gave a model for how His disciples should pray.

⁵"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ⁷"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸"So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹"Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰'Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹'Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'

¹⁴"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵"But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Matt. 6:5-15 (NASB)

Error #1 — Praying with wrong motives

Prayer should not be to impress other people (c.f. Luke 18:9-14)

⁵"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Prayer should be to our Father (c.f. Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12)

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

⁶"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Error #2 — Disengaging our minds. Prayer should involve our intellect and emotions

Prayer should not be meaningless repetition - refers to idle, thoughtless chatter.

⁷"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

It is not honest, properly motivated repetition of needs or praise before God that is wrong, but the mindless, indifferent recital of spiritual-sounding incantations or magical formulas over and over. Not only must our hearts be right before God will hear our prayer, but also our minds. Thoughtless prayer is almost as offensive to God as heartless prayer. In most instances they go together.

MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7

Prayer should be pouring out our heart to our Father

⁸"So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Prayer has Four Parts

Adoration

⁹"Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Prayer is to our personal, loving Father (Father is used 8 times in 6:5-14) whom we have a relationship with.

What is the primary motivation in the Christian life? 1 Cor 10:31, Phil 1:11 The glory of God. Our purpose is to do, say, and think everything for His glory.

That is the meaning of praying **hallowed be Thy name**: to attribute to God the holiness that already is, and always has been, supremely and uniquely His. To hallow God's name is to revere, honor, glorify, and obey Him as singularly perfect. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7; Copyright © 1985 by The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago

Subjection — That I would be in-line with His moral will and would be content with His sovereign will.

¹⁰*'Your kingdom come.*

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Grace / Petitions (c.f. Heb 4:14-16)

¹¹*'Give us this day our daily bread. (Provision)*

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

¹² *‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Repentance)*

^{13a} *‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Strength through trials & obedience in temptations)*

Praise

^{13b} *‘For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’*

Error #3 — Harboring sin in our hearts (c.f. Psa 66:18)

¹⁴ *‘For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

¹⁵ *‘But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*

Since prayer is communion with God we must make sure that our relationship with Him is right. We cannot do this if we are harboring unforgiveness toward others.

Some Practical Ways to Pray

Adoration Confession Thanksgiving Supplication

Confession Adoration Thanksgiving Supplication

Pray through a Psalm

Make lists or keep prayer notebooks recording requests and answers to prayer

Some examples of prayer in Scripture and things to pray for that are according to God’s will (1 John 5:14-15)

Matt 5:44 pray for those who persecute you,

Matt 19:13 For children

Matt 26:41 Deliverance from temptation

Luke 21:36 But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Luke 22:32 That your faith may not fail

Luke 22:40 Pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Rom 1:10 Direction in Ministry

Rom 10:1 Salvation of individuals

2 Cor 1:11 For ministries

2 Cor 9:14 For all believers

2 Cor 13:7 That believers may do no wrong / do right

2 Cor 13:9 For spiritual maturity

Valley Bible Church Growth Studies

Eph 1:18 That we would know the greatness of our salvation

Eph 6:19 For boldness and words in evangelism

Phil 1:9 Love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment

Phil 1:19 For the trials of believers

Col 1:3 Continually for others

Col 1:9 That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Col 4:3 Doors of ministry opportunity

Col 4:12 That you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

2 Thess 1:11 That our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,

2 Thess 3:1 That the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified

1 Tim 2:1 That entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

Philemon 1:6 That the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.

Jam 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

3 John 1:2 I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

Homework

Read Matthew 15-20

This week try and look at your life and the lives of people you are involved with and pray for yourself and these people in light of the examples of prayers given above.