

## **Jesus, Teach Us to Pray** **Matthew 6:5-13**

### **Introduction:**

If we were honest, we all struggle to pray. We struggle to communicate with God on a regular basis, and often, we lack the discipline and persistence to continue in prayers (conversations) that we initiated. Prayer, although it is a spiritual work in our lives, isn't something that one is born to do, or only a select and gifted few are able to do. No, prayer is something that can be taught. That's why the discipleship process is so important. It is through that very process that the disciples learned about prayer. Interestingly enough, it wasn't something that Jesus taught directly, it was something that through the process of time and living life with Jesus that they inquired about.

They saw and heard Him pray numerous times, and it provoked them to ask for Him to teach them to do what He did (Luke 11:1). Learning about prayer is vital to the discipleship process. When asked, Jesus didn't rebuke them, rather He instructed them. Questions by those we disciple often are more effective than direct teaching because it demonstrates that they are curious and interested in something that we may be able to assist or educate them on. Teaching and discipleship takes time. Learning how to pray effectively and fervently takes time. Do you have the same desire to learn how to pray?

### **The Focus:**

- **Every believer must learn to pray. How are we to pray?**
  - **Secretly.**
  - **Sincerely.**
  - **Specifically.**

Jesus taught that prayer wasn't something we just watch from a distance. He taught that prayer was something worthy to be engaged in, but not for the recognition of anyone except the Father (vs. 5-6). Prayer isn't a show for a huge audience. Rather, our conversations are for an audience of One. Jesus taught that our personal prayer life should be done in a quiet, secluded place, free from any distractions (vs. 6). This is not to say that we don't pray with others, because there is a time for that (Acts 1:14; 20:36), but that we need time for us and God. We need alone time with Him. Communicating with God privately ensures that our focus and concentration will be on Him. Also, it allows you to get real and be honest with God without trying to conceal things from Him. Prayer between you and God enables you to be yourself, to be vulnerable with the One who truly loves you. Getting alone with God allows you to be transparent and show your emotions.

One of the greatest hindrances to a believer's desire to pray is sin. When we transgress God and His Word, we feel that coming to Him is somehow wrong and hypocritical, but rather, God desires that we come and talk with Him because of the wrong we've done. When sin enters into our lives, the best thing we can do is to stop and talk with God. God knows everything about who you are and what you struggle with. What God desires for us to be is honest with ourselves, understanding that when we've done wrong, when we sin, we must go to God in prayer. God wants us to be sincere (vs. 12). Sincerity comes from a heart that is genuine, not hypocritical. One of the pagan practices was to chant certain sayings to get a hold of and to appease the gods

they worshipped (vs. 7). They believed that if they used the right words and exercised the right formula repeatedly, they would get the desired results. God wants authenticity. He wants to hear our hearts. He doesn't want for us to recite a prayer, but rather, talk to Him freely about what we are thinking and feeling (Psalm 51:6). We aren't to recite or repeat prayers, but that doesn't contradict being persistent when asking God to do something in our life or another's life (2 Corinthians 12:8).

The next thing is that we pray specifically (vs. 9-13). What Jesus said in the prayer that He taught the disciples was never meant to be something said over and over again (vs. 7). This prayer is a model. As well, it was given to the twelve in the context of what Christ was preparing them for, His kingdom (vs. 10). The prayer Jesus provided them was very specific. God wants us to pray specific prayers, not just reciting a prayer or praying in broad generalities. You can take this model prayer and make it personal. What are your needs? Tell God. What do you want to see God do? Tell Him and ask Him. Prayer is what gets God involved in any situation. God has invited us to pray, but it must be our choice to communicate with Him.

### **Response to the Sermon:**

If we are going to apply what we learned, then there is only one response to the message – just do it! If we understand that prayer is important, then we must demonstrate its importance in our lives by finding a quiet place to commune with our Father, God. We must pray with sincerity. God wants us to be open and honest with Him. He sees all and knows all anyway. I believe God wants us to get real with ourselves, understanding that we must be dependent on Him. God wants us to be intentional with our prayers. He wants us to be specific with our petitions and requests. God wants to talk with us. Will you find a place and time to talk to your Father?

### **Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:**

In Luke 11:1-4, we see the same account from a different perspective. In verse 1, Luke states that only one of the twelve asked, on the behalf of the other disciples, for Jesus to teach them to pray. I think one reason why only a few truly engage in prayer is that we have seen it as suggestion, rather than as a command (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Because God's Word is important and unquestionably valuable in guiding and directing our lives and because it is tangible, we often spend more time reading the truth, amassing and absorbing the knowledge of God, without making it a matter of the heart through prayer that usually results in action.

1. Take some time and reflect on your prayer life. When and how do you pray? What do you spend your time in prayer for or about? Who are you praying for and how are you praying for them?
2. Looking at your daily routine and schedule, why have you not prayed as often as you should? What hinders you from praying like you should?

3. What are some things that you currently spend time doing that could be removed in order to spend more time with God? How could you move things around in your schedule to make sure you are taking time to get to know God by talking with Him?

### **Application Questions:**

Jesus taught much about prayer by modeling it. Jesus truly lived out His faith. Oftentimes, we have a head-knowledge of God or things contained in God's Word, but our lives don't reflect the truths we already know. A game that most of us remember is "Simon says". Usually, it was in a class setting, and the teacher was "Simon". When they would say "Simon says..." you would do what they said. But what irony we often make of Jesus' words. When we read what Jesus said, we memorize it, and sometimes, we uncover "deeper" truths or nuggets contained in the passage. Oh, and we can even explain the meaning of a word in the Greek. Something else that we do with Jesus' words is gather in a group or groups and discuss what it would look like if we did what Jesus said. What a day it will be when we stand before God, the omniscient One, and think He will be more impressed by our knowledge than our actions. We have to get real. We have to be honest with ourselves and truly evaluate where we are in our walk with Christ.

1. Where is your place of retreat where you can get alone to talk to God? Reading what Jesus said in Matthew 6:5-6, what are some things you observe and what is Jesus trying to communicate to the disciples regarding prayer? How does this apply to you?
2. What is one purpose in praying with others (Acts 1:14; 2:1)? Where and with whom are you currently praying regularly together? Why is this vital to any group?
3. According to verse 7, what is Jesus trying to communicate to His disciples (and us) regarding prayer? Why did Jesus instruct against "*vain repetitions*"? What was Jesus implying regarding what the Father desires to hear when we talk with Him? If you were explaining this concept to someone, how could you relate it to our relationships with others?
4. Is there a difference between repetition and persistence (Matthew 6:7; 2 Corinthians 12:8)? If so, what is it?

5. When Jesus instructed them on what to pray for (Matthew 6:9-13), did He say, “Just start talking” or did He provide a framework? How does this apply to your prayers?

**Prayer:**

- When you need an answer to a request or petition, pray persistently (2 Corinthians 12:8).
- God wants us to go to Him with everything that is going on in our lives (Philippians 4:6).
- Pray with a purpose (Matthew 6:9-13).