

Prayer

The Text: Matthew 6:5-15; James 5:13-16

The Take Home: Prayer is about getting our concerns & desires to match up with God's heart, rather than the opposite.

The Challenge: Give our students the practical "how to pray" and "what to pray for". Give them some direction as to how they can be praying throughout the course of a week, as well as an idea of what they can be talking to God about.

OPENING QUESTIONS & THOUGHTS

- *How often do you pray?*
- *What does prayer look like in your house? How does your family pray?*
- *Have you ever been taught how to pray? How would you teach someone to pray?*
- *Did you know there are different ways to pray? Any idea what those might be?*
- *Ever had a prayer answered? Like, a big request that happened?*
- *Let's be honest, when do you pray? What do those prayers usually consist of? Praises, requests, declarations?*

It seems strange but during his time on earth, Jesus actually paused to drop a lesson on his followers on how to pray. Now this wasn't some repeat after me ritualistic type of prayer, but more of a model where he was teaching them some vital ingredients to a prayer life.

Maybe it's helpful to think about prayer like food. When it comes to getting nutrition for yourself there are 2 ways you can do it. You can eat all of your necessary calories to start your day and then just run off that fuel all day long. The other way is to feed yourself throughout the day. This might be somewhat scheduled and this might also be eating when you get hungry.

When we think about food, that second way seems more natural. If someone were to tell us to eat our meals throughout the day it would seem like a no brainer. It's seems foolish to sit down for biscuits and gravy, bacon and toast and then immediately dive into a double cheeseburger and fries and then chase that down with a healthy serving of spaghetti and meatballs and garlic bread. Each of these items is delicious but you'd never try to cram it all down at one time.

So think about prayer for a minute. There are ways we pray or rather parts of a prayer. We have adoration, we have praise, we have confession, we have requests just to name a few. There are times when we might grab each of those in a prayer but there are also times when might need just one. There are times when we pray about a

challenge, there are times we thank God for blessings we have received and there are even times when we just listen.

GETTING TO THE TEXT:

Read Matthew 5:6-15.

This passage contains the Lord's Prayer, possibly the most famous prayer in the Bible. Can anybody recite it from memory?

1. Do you notice that the first handful of declarations are all about God? They put God on the throne from the start. "Our Father, who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

This prayer starts by acknowledging God for who he is. It reminds us that He is higher than we are. It reminds us that it is about His kingdom and His will being done, not our own. And that really is the key we want you to take away from this lesson on prayer. That it is about getting our concerns & desires to match up with God's heart, rather than the opposite. And that starts by reminding ourselves that He is in charge.

2. Next we see some statements of faith in God. "Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

This prayer reminds us to seek God for our daily survival. It is from him that our daily bread is given. We also seek him for forgiveness of our mistakes. And finally we seek him to give us victory over our temptations. By praying these things we are admitting that on our own we cannot provide for our own needs, make up for our mistakes or overcome Satan's temptations. Not exactly impressive is it?!

Read James 5:13-16.

A few weeks ago we heard Mark Christian preach on this passage and he put it in 3 sections that are helpful for us to remember today.

1. Cry out when you are challenged by your emotions. Good and bad. (James 5:13)
2. Pray about physical needs. When you feel weak or unable to stand up to the challenge. (James 5:14-15)
3. Pray about your sin. (James 5:16)

When you look at these 2 passages we see some similar things.

First, we pray to increase our faith. We pray to seek God so that our dreams and desires are just like his. When we do this, when we put our faith in God and seek His direction, we are promised that what we ask for, we will receive. Do you see the

connection? We don't pray to get what we want. We pray to seek what He wants and then when we ask for that, we are promised we will get it.

Second, we pray to recognize that our daily hope, our forgiveness, our strength come from Him. We present this to him both as confession of our need, as praise for His deliverance and as a declaration that He alone is able. All of these things demonstrate our faith in Him and remind us that we are only able to move with confidence because of Him.

Want your faith to make a difference? Pray! It's something we can all do. We may not have much we can give financially or physically to the kingdom but we can always pray. Whether we are praying to confirm our faith or praying asking for faith it is a vital step in our journey.

RESPONSE:

Will you cry out for God to move?

- Prayer for the persecuted church
- How do we pray weekly? 3-4 ideas and examples
 - Don't ask for anything-try going all day without asking for anything in your prayers but simply make declarations to God.
 - State something you are grateful for—praises
 - Can you say something right now that you are thankful for? Pray about that right now, that's a praise and we can pray prayers of "thank you" to God for the good He does in our lives.
 - Pray for each of these 3 areas we see in James
 - Pray about our emotions
 - Praise Him for the good
 - Ask him for strength in the challenges
 - Pray for physical needs
 - Thank Him for providing
 - Psalm 66:18
 - Confess to Him times that you doubt he will provide
 - Pray about our sin
 - Pray for strength to stand under temptation
 - Acknowledge moments of failure
 - Isaiah 59:2
 - Praise Him for victories, for forgiveness and for a future hope in spite of our shortcomings
 - Pray scripture back to Him

- **Thank him for his promises in scripture**
 - **Matthew 7:31-33**
 - **Matthew 7:7-8**