



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Sermon on the Mount - Part 2 • Prayer Lies • Matthew 6:5-13 • 08/12/2018

Main Point

Until we believe what God says about prayer we won't be truly intimate with Him.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Describe your prayer life in one word. Why did you choose that word in particular?

Most Christians would agree that prayer is essential, yet very few of us are satisfied with our experiences in prayer. Why do you think that is?

What are some of the things you must believe to be true about the character of God in order to pray rightly?

Why might Satan want to attack our belief system when it comes to prayer?

Prayer is a gift from God. It is the divinely-orchestrated means by which we can commune with our loving Father. For that reason, the Bible is full of commands and instructions about prayer. Unfortunately, though, most of our prayer lives aren't entirely based on these truths; instead, most of us have bought into some lie about the nature of prayer. Until we confront those lies, we won't be able to be truly intimate with God in the way He desires.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

What are some of the most common lies we believe about prayer?

There are many lies concerning prayer we learn from Satan and the world around us. Three of the most common are "My prayers can't be really honest;" "My prayers don't really change anything;" and "My prayers don't really matter to God." Which of these is the most personal to you? Why?

How do you think God feels about these lies? Why?

What do these lies communicate, if we believe them, about God's character?

What might be some of the long-lasting effects to our spiritual lives if we believe that we can't really be honest in prayer? That our prayers don't change anything? That our prayers don't really matter to God?

Each of these lies is built on a subtle charge against the character of God. When we believe them, we are making a silent statement about what we believe. To combat these lies, we must base our prayers first and foremost on the character of God. When we remind ourselves of who He truly is, our prayer lives will fall in line with His character.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 6:5-8.

Put yourself in the place of the hypocrites Jesus described. What lies about prayer were they believing?

How did those lies affect the way they prayed?

Based on the way they prayed, how would you describe the god they believed in?

These hypocrites believed in a god who needed to be impressed. No one can be gut-level honest with that kind of god; they would instead fear what this god might think if they exposed themselves before him. Further, they weren't really praying for anything to change, but instead were focused on their own spiritual reputations. The effect was that they babbled on and on.

Does the fact that God knows what you need before you ask Him mean that our prayers don't really matter to God? Why or why not?

How does the fact that God already knows our needs actually fuel our prayers?

Why is it important to recognize the difference between our wants and our needs when we pray?

We can pray confidently and honestly because we know that God is both all-knowing and all-loving toward His children. We don't need to hold anything back from Him because He knows our hearts better than we do. When we pray, we can trust that ultimately He is going to act in our best interest because He loves us.

Do you think prayer usually changes us, or changes God? How can your answer influence the attitude you bring to prayer?

When we remind ourselves of God's unchangingly good and loving character, we can approach prayer with humility. Rather than using endless words that are meant to impress other people, we can simply and honestly talk to God, trusting that over time He will actually use our prayers to mold us into the image of Jesus.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 6:9-13.

| How might truly recognizing God as our Father dramatically counter the lies we've discussed today about prayer?

What differences do you see between the attitude of Jesus' model prayer and the way you usually pray?

What specific action or attitude regarding prayer is God asking you to change right now?

Pray

Pray as honestly and simply as you can to close your group. Ask the Lord to remind you of His character, and ask that His character would be your focus when you pray.

Commentary

| MATTHEW 6:5-9

6:5. Jesus expects us to pray. He often prayed early at the beginning of the day. At times, He prayed all night, especially before major decisions or significant events. Jesus cited three kinds of prayer to avoid. First, don't pray as those who loved to be seen praying in synagogues and on street corners. Jesus was cautioning against praying in public with the motive of receiving admiring glances and pats on the back for being so devout.

6:6. Jesus instructed us to find a private place for prayer where thoughts of people's responses won't distract us. Thus in secret we can focus on the Father. The greatest reward for praying may be simply having a personal conversation with God; He whom we cannot see sees us and hears us as well (v. 6). Jesus even provided a model prayer to show us how to pray. It begins with a focus on God and His purposes before moving to our personal requests.

6:7. A second mistake when praying is to babble like the idolaters. Jesus was not forbidding prayer for the same thing over and over (see 26:39-44). He even told parables about persistence in prayer (Matt. 7:7-11).

Jesus stressed that the Father listens to earnest hearts, not endless words, especially when the words are mechanical. The word translated “babble” appears only here in the Bible (Matt. 6:7). Because of the word’s sound, the basic meaning has been suggested as “to stammer”; that is, to repeat words. A derived meaning came to imply going on and on without thinking. This is reflected in various ways such as “use vain [or meaningless] repetitions,” “heap up empty phrases,” and the like. Prayer that is babble is prayer in form only; it has no substance. Jesus said idolaters prayed that way. Layering on words doesn’t impress God, nor do prayers offered with the mind in neutral and the heart in gear, focused elsewhere.

6:8. Third, we need not feel compelled to inform God of endless details about our needs. Jesus reminded us the Father knows the things we need before we ask Him. This is not to discourage us from making specific requests in prayer, for He invites us to do that (7:7-11). It does assure us that He will answer in ways that best meet our needs, further His kingdom, and enhance our usefulness.

6:9. By commanding His disciples to “pray like this” rather than simply “pray this,” Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited. “Your name be honored as holy” suggests that Jesus expected His disciples to live righteous lives that honor rather than profane God’s name (5:16; Lev. 22:31- 32). This is an important precondition for successful prayer.

God is the ideal Father—all-loving, all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, and always present with us. At the same time, He is in heaven, which tells us He is greater than we can comprehend; so we approach Him as our Father with due reverence. The first person plural pronoun “Our” implies that Jesus intended this prayer to be a model for corporate prayer, i.e., a prayer for when disciples gather as a group. This confirms that Matt. 6:5 was not intended to prohibit disciples from praying together publicly in the synagogue or other gatherings but instead prohibited prayers that were motivated by religious showmanship.