



“Prayer: Short, Simple, Astounding”

Matthew 6:7-15

Big Idea: Prayer isn't about trying to impress God or to get His attention; prayer is about surrendering to and trusting in God with all of your attention.

LESSONS on prayer from the Lord's Prayer:

Long prayers to impress God and to inform God neither impress Him nor inform Him about anything that He doesn't already know (7-8).

Jesus continued on the theme of prayer to God versus prayer for the praise of people. He said that prayer that contained a bunch of repetitive murmuring or repeated phrases -- expecting some benefit and blessing from God because of the length of the prayer rather than the content of the prayer -- was meaningless to God. Jesus reminded them that the Father already knows what they need before they ask; therefore, long, repetitive prayers are useless in trying to get God to hear and to know what He already knows. What a freeing thought! God already knows what we need before we even ask Him, so the condition of our heart before the Lord is more important in prayer than the words of our prayers. If God already knows what we need before we ask Him, then we are free to be honest before Him, and we are free to simply express our faith and to trust in Him. The amount of prayer is not what's most important. The heart of the one praying is what matters most to God.

1. Mt. 6:8 points to the fact that God knows what we need before we even ask. How is this truth about God's knowledge freeing in your relationship with God? How should it impact your prayer? What does it free you to focus on in your prayer to God?
2. Mt. 6:7 emphasizes the uselessness of repetitive prayers that are offered with the hopes that God will bless the effort in prayer. What ways do you see this today in Christianity? Have you ever used repetitive prayers that you can say without even thinking about what you're saying? Why do people still do this even today?
3. How do we reconcile passages like 1 Th. 5:17, which says “pray without ceasing,” with a passage like Mt. 5:7-8? Is Jesus talking about the quantity or quality of prayer in Mt. 6:7-8. Why?

Effective prayers can be short and simple, and they should be more than only asking God for what you want or need (9-13).

Jesus provided a model prayer that should be used both to pray and as a model or framework for prayer. The Lord's Prayer isn't a magical prayer with special words of power, and trying to make the Lord's Prayer some magic formula would be committing the very mistake that Jesus warned His disciples not to make! However, the Lord's Prayer does reveal some characteristics of true prayer that God desires in our communication with Him. The model prayer breaks into five parts or elements. The five elements of the Lord's Prayer include the following:

- Mt. 6:9b is a prayer of praise, acknowledging God in His relationship to us and praising God in His glory that is apart from us.

- Mt. 6:10 is a prayer of surrender, praying for God's kingdom to reign — setting our hearts for His return — and requesting that God's Will be done in a completely unrestricted and unhindered way on the earth.
 - Mt. 6:11 is a petition for provision, praying for God to provide the basic needs for life.
 - Mt. 6:12 is a confession of sin and petition for forgiveness, praying for God's forgiveness in a way that reminds us of our responsibility to forgive others as God has forgiven us.
 - Mt. 6:13 is a petition for protection, praying for God's protection in keeping us from sin, temptation, and the destructive work of the enemy in the world.
1. Pulling your answers directly from God's Word in Mt. 6:9-13, answer the following questions:
 - a. What do these verses tell me about God?
 - b. What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
 - c. What do these verses reveal to me about Jesus?
 - d. Based on these verses, what does God want me to know?
 - e. Based on these verses, what does God want me to do?

In prayer, don't expect from God what you aren't willing to give to others (14-15).

Out of all of the elements of the model prayer that Jesus taught His disciples, the element related to forgiveness was the first element that Jesus re-examined for emphasis. Related to this element, the principle that Jesus taught His disciples was simple: Don't expect from God what you aren't willing to give to others. Just as God forgives us in an undeserved and unimaginably beautiful way, God expects us to forgive others in an undeserved and unimaginably beautiful way. In the Sermon on the Mount, the issue of a heart of forgiveness towards others is a major theme. From Mt. 5:23-26, to Mt. 5:38-48, to this passage in Mt. 6, to Mt. 7:1-6, to Mt. 7:12, Jesus continually emphasizes the importance of our relationship with others in terms of not holding bitterness, judgment, retaliation, unforgiveness, etc. in our hearts. Why? Because we have no excuse for not forgiving others if God has forgiven us, so don't ask God for what you aren't willing to give to others in your life.

1. In these verses, it almost sounds like Jesus is saying that we need to earn our forgiveness. From Scripture, how do we know that this is not what Jesus is saying. Take time to discuss and to look up passages that remind us that we can't earn our forgiveness by our efforts.
2. Why does Jesus emphasize our relationship with others, and specifically, the issue of a forgiving heart with others? Why is this so important in the lives of His disciples?
3. What does it look like in our lives when we have unrepentant sin as a believer. What do God's actions look like in our lives during those times?
4. Who do you need to forgive this week? Break-up into groups of two or three, and spend time praying for each other and committing before the Lord to offer forgiveness in the coming week to that person (those people) you identified.