

THE POWER OF PRAYER

HOW TO PRAY. WAYS TO PRAY. WHY WE PRAY.

PRAYER 01/03: **HOW TO PRAY**

How do we pray like Jesus? The Lord's Prayer offers the solution, but it's crucial to truly grapple with the principles behind the passage, as it's likely one of the most memorized sections in Scripture. The power of this prayer is not the words themselves. Rather, it's the heart behind them. Observing three key sections, let's dissect the Lord's Prayer as a model for our daily conversations with God.

Preparing for Your Talk:

- Tell a story that shows a distorted view of prayer.
- Tell a story that shows how the words of the Lord's Prayer can lose their meaning when said without intentionality.
- Print the small Group discussion guide (or text it to leaders).

Sources & Suggested Study Materials

- NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible by Zondervan.
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary by Frank E. Gaebelein, John H. Sailhamer, and Walter C. Kaiser Jr.



BIG IDEA:

Prayer changes things, and that "thing" is usually you.



SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVE:

We will examine the three sections of the Lord's Prayer (Rejoice, Reflect, Request), then encourage our students to engage in prayer this way this week.



SCRIPTURE USED:

Matthew 6:9-13
John 14:13-14

ILLUSTRATION

- ILLUSTRATION: Tell a story that shows a distorted view of prayer.
 - As a kid, I took everything a few steps too far. One morning in Sunday School, we studied a verse that made me scratch my head. It said, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13-14).
 - My kid brain interpreted this to mean that prayer gave me superpowers. I thought, “If I am going to do the same things Jesus did, then I better get to work!” I became committed to this concept, so I decided I was going to walk like Jesus. Time to walk on water.
 - There I was, standing by my mom’s pool, ready to take my first step into the history books. I was a little nervous it wouldn’t work, so I put water wings around my ankles.
 - I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, prayed a prayer, and went for it.
 - I dipped my toe in the water and felt weightless. I stepped into the water, and I could feel something happening. Was I really walking on water? Adrenaline pumped through my arteries as I stepped my full weight onto the surface of the water. My entire body plunged into the pool, but my feet swung up over my head. I made a miscalculation.
 - Those little water wings were trying to drown me! I flailed around for a few minutes before finally gaining my composure and awkwardly bobbing around the pool with floaties around my feet. It’s a miracle I didn’t pass out.
- Wait...I prayed. Why didn’t I miraculously walk on water?

TENSION

- The above question proves a distorted perspective of prayer. If we’re not careful, we can think about it in the context of getting what we want or even controlling our situation.
 - But God isn’t a vending machine or a blue genie.
 - He’s the almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful God of the universe.
 - Our prayers should reveal that same reverence.

- Let's explore Matthew 6 to learn how Jesus set up a life-changing model for prayer during his ministry.

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew 6:9-13

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

CONTEXTUALIZING THIS PASSAGE

- During the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus is making two assumptions.



- Before you reply to texts, talk to God.
- Before you sit at your computer, talk to God.
- Before you meet up with your friends, talk to God.
- Let God be the first and last person you speak to.
- This will radically transform all your relationships with God and other people.

- So how do we do it? How do we pray like Jesus? The Lord’s Prayer offers the solution, but it’s crucial to truly grapple with the principles behind the passage, as it’s likely one of the most memorized sections in Scripture.

- ILLUSTRATION: Discuss how the Lord's Prayer can easily lose its meaning.
- To prove that point, I used to volunteer with a football team that recited the Lord's Prayer before every game.
 - After a while, it almost became like a chant or a mantra. Sure, we said the words, but did we actually mean them?
 - The power of this prayer is not the words themselves. Rather, it's the heart behind them. Observing three key sections, let's dissect the Lord's Prayer as a model for our daily conversations with God

Rejoice

- When Jesus teaches us how to pray, the first line says, “Hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9).
 - A crucial ingredient of effective prayer is rejoicing. In the very first line, Jesus celebrates God’s character, goodness, and holiness.
- We often approach prayer like a wish list, but it’s actually worship.
 - What does this look like when praying?
 - Thank God for all the wonderful things you’ve seen.
 - Thank God for the problems you’ve overcome.
 - Celebrate all the blessings around you.
 - Position your prayers off yourself and onto God.
 - Praise Him for who He is and how glorious His works are.
 - Praise is powerful because it repositions your perspective.
 - It takes your focus off yourself and places it on God.
 - This brings us to our section in the Lord’s prayer point.

Reflect

- Jesus then urges us to reflect on what God’s been doing and where He’s taking us. He achieves this using the language of “kingdom.”
 - He explains, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
- Take some intentional time to reflect on all God has brought you through and what He’s taking you through now.
 - Yes, He certainly knows all about it. Like talking to a counselor or writing a journal, processing your experiences gives you a renewed attitude and gratitude.
 - Share your concerns with God.
 - Explain your dreams to God.
 - Talk through your decisions.
 - When you take the intentional time for reflection and introspection, you will begin to see things more clearly.

- This is where prayer gets extra personal. As you reflect on your thoughts, God will step in and direct your steps.
 - Whatever you're working through, invite God into the process. Then you can move on to the next step.

Request

- We often think of prayer in the context of prayer requests.
 - We ask God to give us a better life, help those we love, and download all the information we should have studied for.
 - If we're not careful, we can begin to approach God like a slot machine and prayer like a quarter.
 - It's so much bigger than just asking God to do stuff for us.
 - Prayer requests are good, but they're only a sliver of a satisfying prayer life.
- In the last part of the Lord's Prayer, Christ asks for provision, deliverance, and forgiveness.
 - These are all requests.
 - When teaching his friends how to pray, Jesus takes them from rejoicing to reflecting and then into requesting.
 - We often skip the first two and head right into requesting. It's a natural temptation. Why?
 - Because life can be confusing and uncertain. Thus, we want God to intervene.
 - However, prayer is so much bigger than changing circumstances. God wants to change you.
 - If you're breathing, rejoice over your health.
 - If you have seen success, reflect on all God is doing within your life.
 - If you're thriving, pray for God to stretch your spiritual life.
 - If you're struggling, pray for God to heal your brokenness.
- Landing: Prayer is a direct line to the power of God. There is no greater blessing than going before your cosmic God in direct communication.
 - Prayer is like food for your soul. It's not just important; it's essential.
 - Prayer is powerful. It changes things. It changes lives.

- Invite God to consistently mold you, shape you, and grow you.
 - Prayer changes things, and that “thing” is usually you.

BREAK FOR SMALL GROUPS

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: Tell the group about a time when you did something unwise as a kid. What was the outcome?

Q3: Why do you think so many people have a hard time developing a daily habit of prayer?

Q4: What are some things that prevent people from praying?

Q5: What are some common misconceptions of prayer that you have heard or experienced?

Q5: Most people go straight to "request" when they pray. Why can this be problematic?

Application: Follow Jesus's framework and pray every day this week. Take notes of how it makes you feel, where you struggle, and what you experience.

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Psalm 103:1-14

Psalm 21

Psalm 110

Psalm 22

Psalm 20

Psalm 72

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.