

Topics in Practical Theology – Lesson 8 – Prayer

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

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Review:

1. Overview and Spirit-filled life: A walk in the Spirit is a moment by moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; to yield our will to God's word; and to allow the word to richly dwell in us.
2. Spiritual Warfare: The believer is in a war – a war for our minds. We are being attacked by the devil, his world system, and the flesh. Yet, God has given us everything we need to be victorious in the battle: the word and the indwelling Holy Spirit.
3. Worship: Worship is a continual action of ascribing worth to God as we meditate on His majesty, placing the worship of Him before everything, and worshiping Him with our entire being with correct understanding from and in a manner consistent with His word.
4. God's Will and Decision Making: The decision making process is 1) obedience to God's word in moral decisions, 2) freedom to make spiritually expedient non-moral decisions with the responsibility to use wisdom, and 3) humble submission to God's sovereign.
5. Spiritual Gifts: Every believer has been given at least one spiritual gift. These gifts are different from talents. Spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of building the body of Christ as they are used to serve other believers within the body.
6. Body Life: The people at VBC are members of my family. I have responsibilities toward my physical family; I also have responsibilities toward my church family.
7. The Poor: Believers are personally obligated be prepared to help those who come across their path in need. However, we are limited by the obligation to not perpetuate an irresponsible lifestyle.

Prayer

Prayer is the act of pouring out our heart to our creator in repentance, praise, thankfulness, and supplication. It is communicating with God.

¹O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. ²Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. ³Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You. ⁴So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. ⁵My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. ⁶When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, ⁷For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. ⁸My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me. Psa 63:1-8

We should pray because:

- A. It is His will for us (1 Thess 5:16-18)
- B. It provides believers with one mind (i.e. unity)(Acts 1:14)
- C. Because God cares for us (1 Pet 5:7; Matt 7:7-11)
- D. Because He will bless us with:
 - 1. Peace (Phil 4:6-7)
 - 2. Joy (John 16:24)
 - 3. Encouragement (Luke 18:1, Eph 3:20)
 - 4. Fruit (John 15:7-8)
 - 5. Strength (Phil 4:13)
 - 6. Mercy and grace in time of need (Heb 4:14-16)

The central passage for today's topic is Matt 6:5-15. We are going to look at the "Lord's prayer" or "disciple's prayer" or "model prayer" as we look to discover (or remind ourselves of) some significant aspects of prayer.

Context: The sermon on the mount was preached by Jesus during His "Great Galilean Ministry" approximately one and a half years into His earthly ministry.

The "Sermon on the Mount" explains what it is like to be a kingdom person and what a kingdom person is like. Gordon Kemble's Bible Survey Class Notes on Matthew

Some have said that the Sermon on the Mount sets a standard that is impossible to apply. They point to Matthew 5:48, which says, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." They say that standard obviously can't be applied today and can only be applied to life in the coming millennial kingdom.

But Jesus never said the Sermon on the Mount was intended to apply to the millennial age and He didn't preach to people living in the Millennium. Also, Matthew 5:10-11 says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.... Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Believers won't be persecuted in the millennial age because the Lord will rule with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15). Finally, Matthew 5:44 would be meaningless in the Millennium: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Every principle in the Sermon on the Mount is found elsewhere in the New Testament. For that reason as well as the reasons given above, Christ's message must be for us now. He expects His people to apply His standard of living right now. Only that kind of obedience will result in true happiness. *The Beatitudes* Happy are the Humble by John MacArthur Tape GC 2198

By this time in the Lord's ministry He had demonstrated a commitment to prayer for the disciples. Now He will detail three errors concerning prayer and provide a model for His disciples.

¹⁶But Jesus Himself would {often} slip away to the wilderness and pray. Luke 5:16

¹²It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12

Read Matt 6:5-15

What do the phrases “when you pray” (v5, 6, 7) imply?
when – used of things one assumes will really occur.

I. Error #1 – Praying with wrong motives

A. Prayer should not be for the proud purpose of being seen (c.f. Luke 18:9-14)

⁵“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Hypocrite – an actor, stage player, pretender

B. Prayer should be to God – Not to be seen / privately with God (c.f. Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12)

⁶“But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

inner room: tameion – storage chamber, storeroom; a chamber esp. an inner chamber; a secret room; i.e. privately in contrast to publically for the purpose of being seen.

your Father: indicating a personal relationship

sees... secret: omniscient

II. Error #2 – Disengaging our minds / Prayer should involve our intellect and emotions

A. Prayer should not be meaningless repetition: refers to idle, thoughtless chatter.

⁷“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

Meaningless repetition: battalogeō – to repeat the same things over and over, to use many idle words, to babble.

Jesus here is not condemning persistence, He is condemning the mindless recitation of spiritual sounding phrases or formulas.

B. Prayer should be pouring out our heart to our Father about our heart burdens

⁸“So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

III. Error #3 – Harboring sin in our hearts (Psa 66:18)

¹⁴“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵“But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Since prayer is communion with God we must make sure that our relationship with Him is right. We cannot do this if we are harboring unforgiveness toward others.

IV. Prayer has Four Parts – This has to do with personal prayer because the passage context deals with personal righteousness.

“in this way” – not a formula for liturgy, but an example of the types of things to pray for.

A. Adoration

⁹“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Prayer should begin with a reverence for God. Praying in this manner is praying to our Father – to our personal, loving Father (8 times as Father in 6:5-14) whom we have a relationship with. Also, He is perfectly holy.

Examples:

Ex 15:1-3; 1 Sam 2:1-2; 1 Kings 8:23-24

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, ⁵we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. Dan 9:4-5

B. Subjection – That I would be in-line with His will.

¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

Matt 26:37-44; Mark 14:35-39; Luke 22:42-45

How do we know God's will?

C. Requests (c.f. Heb 4:14-16)

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. **(Provision)**
Prayer for physical necessities

¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **(Repentance)**
Debts = spiritual debts (sins) (see Luke 11:4)

^{13a}And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. **(Strength thru trials & obedience in temptations)**

Temptation: could mean temp or test. Since God doesn't tempt (James 1:13)

Do not allow us to be led into temptation. WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT VOL. 1: MATTHEW & MARK by ARCHIBALD THOMAS ROBERTSON

D. Praise

^{13b}*For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*'

So we have 3 errors in prayer: 1) to pray to be heard and not to God; 2) to disengage our mind and use meaningless repetition; and 3) to pray while harboring sin in our hearts. And we have a model that has 4 parts: 1) Adoration of God; 2) Subjection to His sovereign and moral will; 3) Requests; and 4) Praise.