



Lesson Nine: Prayer

We are going through the second G, which stands for Grow. If we are going to grow, we need to take the first step of baptism. Making that public profession of faith identifies us as a follower of Jesus. And as we looked at in the last lesson, we have a responsibility to study, memorize, and put the Bible into practice in our lives. Another important part of our growth is talking to God in prayer.

Can you hear me now?

In the 1960's there was a tv show called Batman, starring Adam West as the Caped Crusader. The police commissioner was James Gordon. And in his office, he had a red phone. This phone was a direct line from Commissioner Gordon to Batman. So that whenever there was trouble, he could just call batman on the phone. The problem with this phone is that both Commissioner Gordon and Batman had to be in the right place at the right time to have a conversation.

My wife and I had the same problem while we were dating. I was in college in Pensacola, and my wife was back here in Iowa. The only way that we really had to develop our relationship was by talking on the phone. We would schedule times to talk on the phone. And way back then, you couldn't just dial long distance. We had to use a phone card that Lysandra would buy minutes for. So, to call Lysandra, I had to dial out from the college, dial the phone card, and dial her number. And if I pushed one wrong button, I had to start all over again.

Thank God for cell phones. I can call anyone at any time. And I don't even have to dial, I can tell Siri to dial for me. But as far as phones have come, they still haven't caught up with prayer. There are times when people can't or won't pick up. Have you ever had your phone ring and looked at the caller ID and just let it keep ringing? _____ I know that I have! But God is always available, and He wants to hear from us!

Teach us to pray!

In Luke 11:1, Jesus' disciples make a request to Jesus. "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." What did His disciples want Jesus to teach them? _____

Jesus then goes on to teach them how to pray, and Matthew 6:9-13 is the example that Jesus gave on how they should pray. It was not the specific words that are the focus of the prayer, but the parts of the prayer that Jesus prayed. Read through Jesus' prayer, and then we will break down each part.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Who Do I Pray To?

Have you ever sent a message to the wrong person? Depending on the content of the message, that can be a very stressful and embarrassing situation. Has anyone ever sent you a message that was intended for someone else? It happens to me on occasion, but it's never been anything interesting. My wife, on the other hand, has gotten a few messages intended for other people that they probably wish they had never sent. One time a lady sent Lysandra a racy message that was intended for her husband. I can only imagine how embarrassed that lady was. So it is important to know exactly who you are communicating with.

Jesus says in verse 9, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,..." Jesus addresses His prayers to God the Father, and He instructs us to do the same. Some people start out their prayers by saying, "Dear, Jesus" but Jesus taught us to pray to the Father and not to Him. Notice what Jesus said in John 16:23, "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Notice that once again, Jesus tells us to pray to the Father. It is from Jesus' words here that we often end our prayers with the words, "in Jesus name". We pray to God in Jesus' name.

What Do I Pray?

We begin prayer by recognizing and praising the greatness of the One that we are coming to. In Matthew 6:9, Jesus says, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." We should begin our prayer time by giving God the praise that He deserves. When we praise Him, we are recognizing and acknowledging the greatness of the God that we are praying to. What is one thing about God that you can praise Him for? _____

Our time of praise helps to get us ready for the next part of prayer, and that is lining ourselves up with what God wants to do in us and through us. We are often so self-focused in our prayers but look at what Jesus says in verse 10. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Before we ask for God for anything, we need to spend some time remembering that the point of prayer is about getting God's will done on earth, not our will. It may not be God's desire to answer our requests the way that we think that He should answer them, and that should be ok for us. We need to recognize that He knows what is best, and His plans are what matter most. Prayer is all about trying to see everything from God's perspective.

Only after we have aligned ourselves with God's will can we make the proper requests from Him. And that is when Jesus gave us the next portion of prayer in verse 11, "Give us this day our daily bread." God wants us to rely upon Him, so we are to seek Him every day for the things that we need that day. What is something that you need from God for today? _____

Asking God for things is to be a very small part of our prayer life. Another part of our prayer time should be the confessing of our sins, while seeking His forgiveness. Jesus states in verse 12, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Notice that we start by realizing the ways that we have sinned against God, and then we seek His forgiveness. We have no need for forgiveness unless we have done something wrong. When was the last time that you asked God to forgive you for doing something that you know that you shouldn't? _____

Another interesting thing that Jesus makes clear here, is that our forgiveness from God is based upon our forgiveness for others. Is there anything that you need to forgive someone for? _____

Jesus then teaches us that after we have found forgiveness, we need to ask God to help us not to do wrong. Verse 13 begins, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:..." God will provide the strength that we need to keep from sinning. The more that you pray and ask God to help you with a certain temptation, the less you will find yourself giving in to it.

He then tells us to close in prayer the same way that we begin it, by praising God for Who He is. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Conclusion

God wants to have a relationship with you! The Bible is the main way that God speaks to us, and prayer is the main way that we talk to Him. Your relationship with God will not be what it should be if you aren't spending time talking to Him every single day. What kind of prayer life do you have? Has your time in prayer been only focused on asking God for things? In which of these areas that we discussed today do you most need to concentrate on? _____