

Pray Like This • Matthew 6:5-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Leroy Learns To Pray*

1. Little Leroy went to his mother demanding a new bicycle.
2. His mother decided that he needed take a good look at himself and the disrespectful way he had been acting.
3. She said, “Well Leroy, it isn't Christmas and we don't have the money to just go out and buy you anything you want. So why don't you write to Jesus and pray for one instead.”
4. Her hope was that taking his request to God would help him learn something about himself.
5. He threw a fit at her response and stormed off to his room.
6. Finally he sat down and wrote a letter to Jesus.
 - a. Dear Jesus: I've been a good boy this year and would appreciate a new bicycle.
 - b. Your friend, Leroy
7. Now - Leroy knew Jesus knew he had been acting like a brat. So he ripped up the letter and decided to give it another try.
 - a. Dear Jesus: I've been an OK boy this year and I want a new bicycle.
 - b. Yours truly, Leroy
8. Well - Leroy knew this wasn't honest either so he tore it up and tried again.
 - a. Dear Jesus: I've thought about being a good boy this year - can I have a bicycle?
 - b. Leroy
9. Still uneasy, Leroy looked deep down in his heart, which is what his mother really wanted all along.
10. He knew he'd been terrible and was deserving of nothing.
11. He crumpled up the letter, threw it in the trash can and went running outside in frustration.
12. He wandered down the street, depressed because of the way he treated his parents and thinking about how he could change.
13. He finally found himself in front of a Catholic Church.
 - a. going inside Leroy looked around at all the decorations, not really knowing what he should really do.
 - b. as he turned to leave, he saw a small statue in the foyer.
 - c. he grabbed it and ran out of the church.
 - d. running home, he hid it under his bed and wrote this letter:
14. Jesus: I got your mama. If you ever want to see her again, give me a bike. You know who.

B. *Learning To Pray*

1. Our ministry focus this year is prayer.
2. To that end, the first Sunday of each month, besides celebrating the Lord's

- Table, will be dedicated to the subject of prayer in our study.
3. So this morning, let's turn to Matthew 6 – to examine what's known as the Lord's prayer.
 4. [PRAY]

II. TEXT

A. *Set The Scene*

1. The setting for what Jesus says here is early in His public ministry.
2. He's been traveling through the villages and towns of Galilee healing large numbers of people of all kinds of afflictions.
3. Word has spread quickly of His amazing power and people are coming from great distances so they can experience His healing touch.
4. Jesus takes this crucial moment, when His fame is great, to let the people know that God's power is not confined to just performing dramatic acts of healing the physical body –
5. God's power is in His Word as well – which can bring healing to the soul.
6. So He gathers His disciples about Him and begins to teach them.
 - a. this is what the Sermon on the Mount is -
 - b. it's Jesus taking the religious ideas of the day and turning them on their head!
 - c. the Word of God, given through Moses and the OT prophets had become encrusted with the traditions of men.
 - d. what God intended to be a living reality and relationship with Him –
 - e. had been reduced to a set of religious rituals that if worked properly would result in God's favor.
7. The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus breaking through & stripping off the thick layer of vain religiosity that had been grown up around the people's understanding of who God is and how they could approach Him.
8. Look at what He says here about prayer . . .

B. *Vs. 5-6 – Don't Be A Hypocrite!*

5“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

1. Jesus begins – “When you pray,” not “If you pray.”
2. He expects prayer to be a part of the life of faith.
3. In fact, most people pray, at least occasionally – even those who wouldn't consider themselves Christians or religious.
4. Everyone find him/herself in those situations where they've exhausted their resources and are in over their heads, and so they will inevitably shoot up a quick cry for help.
5. I'm sure you've heard the story of the agnostic who'd gone over a cliff while hiking.

- a. falling through air he reached out and grabbed hold of a lone root and was dangling there
 - b. he called out for help but no one answered
 - c. so he closed his eyes and prayed, “God, if you’re up there, please help me.”
 - d. a deep, clear voice said, “Let go of the root and I’ll catch you.”
 - e. the man thought about it and then said, “Is there anybody else up there?”
6. An old adage says – “There are no atheists in a foxhole.”
 - a. when their life is on the line and death is imminent,
 - b. people usually re-evaluate their beliefs about God and call out to Him for help.
 7. If that’s true of unbelievers, how much more is prayer a part of the life of those who do believe?
 8. So Jesus says, “When you pray.” He expects prayer to be a part of the life of faith.
 9. J. C. Ryle wrote,

Prayer is to faith what breath is to the body.

How a person can live and not breathe is past my comprehension,

And how a person can believe and not pray is past my comprehension too.

10. Jesus said, “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.”
 - a. just as today, there were those in Jesus’s day who were less concerned with genuine holiness than they were with appearing holy.
 - b. their whole aim, was not to commune with God, but to make others think they were God’s intimates; that they enjoyed a special relationship with the Lord others didn’t.
 - c. they made a big show of their piety, their godliness.
 - d. in vs. 1-4, Jesus said these fakers did good deeds of charity but advertised them so people would comment on their generosity.
 - e. here he says they pray, but do so in such a way that they are NOT REALLY ADDRESSING GOD – their aim is to be heard by man!
 - f. they were image men –concerned only with their reputation on earth
 - g. giving, praying, fasting – all these were empty rituals for them;
 - h. tools used to elevate themselves in the eyes of others.
 - i. there was not one ounce of genuine faith in them.
11. Here’s a gun, if I point it at you, you’re likely to feel a bit uncomfortable.
 - a. just by holding this and waving it around, I can create some tension, stress, anxiety.
 - b. what if I tell you that it’s just a toy?
 - c. you see, at first, you saw it and thought, “Oh my! A gun – that’s a powerful thing.”
 - d. what power is there in a toy gun? None! It’s make-believe!
12. This is what the praying of the hypocrite is – it may look like the real thing to man, but it’s a fake, a toy that accomplishes nothing in terms of real effect.
13. IT HAS NO POWER!
14. The hypocrites of Jesus’s day would pray out loud in the streets.
 - a. they’d just “happen” to be standing on some busy corner when the hour for

- prayer came
- b. then they would stop, strike a pose, lift their eyes and hands to heaven and begin long, eloquent prayers in a voice loud enough to be heard by those around them.
15. When it came time for prayers in the synagogue, the Jewish equivalent of the local church, the hypocrites would always take advantage of the time to once again, stand and give speeches disguised as prayers.
 16. But Jesus nails their motive – their goal was not to be seen or heard by God – they wanted to be seen and heard by other men.
 17. Since that was their desire – that was their reward. He says – “Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”
 18. This is not the way to pray; rather, Jesus says, “When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”
 - a. it’s easy to read this and miss the point about what Jesus says here.
 - b. some have concluded these words forbid all public prayer –
 - c. that the only way and place to pray is in a quiet, solitary place; the prayer closet.
 19. This can’t be what Jesus means since in other places He commends corporate, public prayer.
 - a. He prayed with the disciples and encouraged them to pray together.
 - b. in the book of Acts we find the disciples praying together constantly.
 - c. in Acts 2 we’re told that corporate prayer was a central part of the life of the church.
 20. Jesus is not forbidding united, public prayer; His point is the heart and motivation of prayer.
 - a. our motive has to be communion with God
 - b. not our image or reputation among men.
 21. If praying in public presents a challenge to this motive, then don’t pray that way!
 22. Instead, find a quiet, solitary place and pray there.
 23. The single issue, the crucial factor in prayer is our motive – WHY ARE WE PRAYING?
 24. Jesus makes it clear – our motive ought to be to commune & fellowship with God.
 25. This is why He takes it as a given that we WILL pray – because the essence of our faith is to be in a relationship with God – and any healthy relationship means communion and communication.
 26. That’s all prayer is – communication between God and a man/woman.
 27. If it’s anything other than that – then it isn’t prayer!
 28. The hypocrite uses fake-prayer to be thought of as pious. He gets what he wants by those who are easily fooled.
 29. The one who truly prays is rewarded with what he/she wants – the sweet fruit of fellowship with God.
 30. So, the setting and posture of prayer is not the crucial issue – the motive and heart of prayer is far more important.
 31. Three men who worked together were talking about the proper posture for

prayer.

- a. one man said that on your knees with head bowed and hands folded was the proper posture – to show reverence for the Almighty!
 - b. the second man said that because man has been created in the image of God and been given authority, on his feet, with head lifted, eyes open to the heavens and hands outstretched was the proper position.
 - c. the third man listened then said, “The best praying I ever did was upside down, stuck in a well.”
32. After unmasking the error of fake praying, Jesus dealt with useless forms of prayer.

C. Vs. 7-8 – Don't Be A Heathen!

7And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8**“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

1. By “the heathen,” Jesus meant those who worshipped and served other gods.
2. These idols were very different from the God of the Bible so when people prayed to them, they had to use various methods to curry their favor and gain their attention.
3. One of the most common was to chant a formula and repeat the same string of words over and over again.
 - a. this was suppose to impress the deity and show earnestness on the part of the one praying.
 - b. each repetition of the prayer was like adding another stone to one side of a balance.
 - c. eventually it would be heavy enough to swing the scales of the god's favor in their direction.
4. That kind of prayer puts all the focus on who? On the one praying!
 - a. it's all up to me; my tenacity, my eloquence, my sincerity!
 - b. the focus of such praying is on myself!
5. Jesus says – “Don't pray that way or with that kind of view of God.”
 - a. God isn't like the idols the heathen serve.
 - b. He isn't impressed with many words.
 - c. and you aren't going to talk Him into something!
6. No – God knows what you need long before you do!
7. In fact, God knows what you are going to say in prayer before you even think about praying!
8. Now – if that's the case, then why pray?
9. Ah! Here friends, is where we get to the real heart of the matter.
10. We pray because God is Our Father & we are His children!
11. And that's what a father and his children do – they share their lives with each other.
12. I have 3 children who all live at home.
 - a. because they live under my roof, I can be counted on to take care of them.
 - 1) food, clothes, protection
 - 2) as their father, this is part of my fundamental duty and I do so without

- them asking.
- b. even though they count on me to take care of these things, there are other desires they have that they'll occasionally bring to me and ask for, or seek assistance with.
 - c. to the best of my ability and according to my wisdom on the rightness of their request, I seek to do what they ask.
 - d. sometimes they ask for things I know aren't wise, and that's when I try to reason with them on why I can't grant their request.
 - e. I wish I could say they always recognize the vast amount of excellent wisdom I possess but that isn't the case.
 - f. sometimes they get upset with me for not seeing things their way and just doing what they want.
 - g. but after a while, they usually come around and realize I said, "No" because of my love and care for them.
13. How tragic it would be if my 3 children just lived under my roof but never spoke to me.
- a. they know they can depend on my provision, but what if they left it at that and went about their lives ignoring me the rest of the time?
 - b. I love it when they sit down and say, "Can we just chat?"
 - c. when my daughter comes to me on Friday night and says, "Dad, can I just hang out with you tomorrow?"
 - d. when my son says, "Dad, can we go backpacking this Summer? I want to spend a week with you."
 - e. when my other son says, "Dad, can you help me install my new stereo?"
 - f. I dig that!
 - g. nothing is better than when my children say, "Let's go grab coffees and just sit and talk."
14. Now – do they do that? Actually, No! I wish they did!
15. And that friends is exactly the Point – that's what prayer is!
16. It's us, God's kids, saying, "Daddy, you know my needs and even my desires. Take care of all of them. Now that that's out of the way, let's just hang out. I want to spend time with You."
17. "It isn't so much stuff I want FROM You – I WANT YOU!!!!!"
18. God gives us Himself in prayer.
19. "All of You is more than enough for – all of me, for every thirst and every need. You satisfy me with Your love, and all I have in You is more than enough."

D. Vs. 9-13 - Pray Like This!

9In this manner, therefore, pray:

1. Jesus didn't say, "Pray this prayer; memorize and offer up these words as a rote formula."
2. That's the very kind of thing He was correcting in this passage.
3. He said, "Pray in this manner – pray like this."
4. We need to see this as a model of the attitude we need in prayer rather than some kind of formula for prayer.

5. We could easily spend an entire week on each line of this prayer and no doubt that would be highly profitable for us.
 - a. but there's also something to be learned by covering it quickly as we'll see this morning.
 - b. after all, Jesus didn't elaborate here, did He?
 - c. this prayer is brief – and there's an important lesson in that for us as we'll see.

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. [May Your name be honored as holy!]

6. This is worship – the kind of worship that blesses the heart of God because it is an expression of both intimate familiarity and reverent honor.
 - a. HOLY! – FATHER!
 - b. the prince or princess who's father is the King enjoys a unique relationship of intimacy with him because he is his/her father.
 - c. but at the same time, the son & daughter realize the special role their father plays as king and are careful to show due respect to him.
 - d. faith in Christ has resulted in our being made the children of God –
 - e. since He is King of Creation, then we are royalty who enjoy a special place of favor in coming to Him as our Heavenly Father.

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

7. This is intercession.
 - a. intercession means to intervene on behalf of another.
 - b. what Jesus means here is that we're to make the center and focus of our lives Who God is and what He is doing.
 - c. when we pray, we're not aimed at making our will done in heaven – we're concerned with discovering God's will, and then being agents of that will on Earth.
 - d. friend, never go in to prayer with the idea that you're there to change God's mind or convince Him to do something He's not inclined to do.
 - e. prayer is not divine arm-twisting.
 - f. prayer is open fellowship with God that comes with a heart yielded to and dependent on God.
 - g. faith tells us God is All-wise, All-powerful, All-loving & perfect!
 - h. if He's perfect – can He change? No!
 - i. what we want to do in prayer is be bent to Him – discovering His will, and then being the agents through which His will is manifest on earth.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

8. This is petition – personal requests.
 - a. even though God knows our needs before we ask, and has already promised to meet them,
 - b. it is still a good thing for us to stop and think about our needs and then offer them up to the Lord!
 - c. it's not that God needs to be reminded – it's good for us to find freedom from the anxiety of meeting our daily needs.
 - d. my 10 year old daughter could worry about whether or not we're going to

- have dinner tonight – I don't think she does, but she could.
- e. to relieve her fears, all she has to do is come and say, "Daddy, are we having dinner tonight?" and I will assure her we are. Her fears are instantly banished.
 - f. when we make request of God for the things we need, it isn't because God needs to be reminded.
 - g. it's for us – so we can be free of anxiety and worry about what we'll eat, what we will wear, where we will live.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

9. This is a request for cleansing.
 - a. every and any relationship is prone to tension because of offenses.
 - b. because God is holy and we struggle with sin, there will be times when we offend God.
 - c. because the essence and heart of prayer is fellowship with God, we need to ask Him to cleanse us, forgive us, to discharge the sins and offences we've piled up and that have hindered our fellowship with Him.
 - d. with my wife, I may say some unkind or thoughtless thing that hurts her.
 - e. if I ignore that hurt and refuse to admit my error, it becomes a wedge that'll hinder our fellowship & intimacy.
 - f. all she wants me to do is to come sincerely to her, admit I was an idiot and ask her to forgive me.
 - g. when & if I do, she's glad to let it go – but it NEEDS to be confessed; she needs to see my sincerity.
 - h. what happens if I ignore it, or pretend I don't know why she's put off with me, or say it's her problem, or justify and rationalize my offense?
 - i. our communion, our fellowship and intimacy will stop right at that point.
10. Friend, if your relationship with God is dry, stagnant, and distant – it may be that you've failed to come honestly before the Lord in confession and repentance of your sin.
11. Another block leading to spiritual dryness and seeming distance from the Lord is unforgiveness – as Jesus said, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
 - a. this was an oft-repeated lesson Jesus taught the disciples –
 - b. that the measure of our being forgiven by God is proportional to our willingness to let go of and forgive the offenses leveled at us by others
 - c. it's all a matter of perspective;
 - 1) we must come to see our sin as monstrous
 - 2) and the sins of others against us as petty.

13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

12. This is a request for protection.
 - a. again, God has already pledged Himself to protect us –
 - b. he is the Good Shepherd who unwaveringly tends His flock.
 - c. but as His sheep, we need to keep in mind that protection lies in staying IN & With the flock!
 - d. as with the prayer for our daily bread, this prayer is aimed at making us

- mindful of the fact that we live in a fallen world filled with all kinds of dangerous traps.
- e. we need to keep our eyes open and our ears peeled for those things that will lead us far afield if we aren't careful.
 - f. so really, this is a prayer for spiritual discernment.
 - g. who doesn't need more of that today?

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

13. The prayer ends as it had begin - with more worship & praise.
- a. these are the bookends to prayer and fellowship with God.
 - b. as we enter His presence we fix our spiritual sights on the Lord of Glory
 - c. then we go forth carrying the banner of His praise.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Dependence

1. Quickly think back over what we just looked at.
2. What's the common theme, the single thread that ties it all together?
3. It's utter and complete dependence on God!
4. It's His will we want; His provision, His forgiveness, His protection.
5. We start and end in worship & praise because it reminds us that it's right, good, and safe to depend on Him.

B. Him!

1. That friends, is the heart of prayer – it's the way for us to renew our dependence on God.
2. It's the way for us to fulfill that for which we were created – to fellowship with Him!
3. Prayer is not about getting stuff from God – it's about getting Him and giving ourselves to Him!