

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (For August 8, 2021) FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

Prayer is a beautiful and mysterious event. How is it that we believe God wants us to pray (and in fact encourages us to pray), and that He listens to, and cares about, what we have to say? If you've prayed for many years, take a step back and consider the magnitude of what you are doing, what is actually happening, when you pray. Unless God is as Christians believe prayer is either futile or questionable, and anything but certain. But if Jesus is, as we believe, God among us, living, speaking, healing, teaching, then there is NOTHING futile or questionable about prayer. Jesus cares for us, loves us, and invites us to pray, and in fact He teaches us to pray. His teaching on prayer comes with divine authority.

Prayer is meant to be simple, natural, a conversation between us and our heavenly Father. Prayer does not require extensive training, or a seminary degree. Prayer is for amateurs.

This morning we will hear about the dangers and pitfalls of prayer. People with good intentions, myself included, often get confused, misguided, and make prayer into something it was not intended to be. Jesus is so patient. He not only teaches us how to pray, He also warns us what to avoid when we pray. When a parent is a good parent they teach their children how to communicate with them and with the world. God is our good Father. He loves us so much that He even helps us learn the language, the rhythm, the heart of prayer.

Lord, Teach Us to Pray: And how not to pray

(SERMON PASSAGE: Matthew 6:1-15, Mark 12:38-40) only Matthew 6:5-15 included below)

⁵ And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. How, according to Jesus, do hypocrites pray?
2. What is the benefit of private (behind a locked door) prayer?
3. Read Luke 11:1-4. How are these two prayers different/same?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What does Jesus mean when He tells us to "pray to your Father who is in secret"? And, when He also teaches us to pray a public prayer, "Our Father"? (verses 9-14)
5. How important is it that we are taught to pray, "Our Father"? How does that affect our understanding of God?
6. Read verses 14-15. Does this mean that if we do not forgive others God will not forgive us? Discuss/Reflect on this.

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. Pray this prayer several times (verses 9-13). Since this prayer was given to us by God Himself (Jesus) what do you learn about God, and about His care for us, as you pray this prayer?
8. What part of this prayer is the hardest for you to pray?
9. What aspect of prayer is hardest for you (finding the time to pray, keeping your mind focused on prayer, knowing what to say, trusting that God actually hears your prayer and cares about you ..)? How might you address your prayer difficulties?
10. Who do you know that you need help forgiving?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to help you talk to Him as you would talk to a friend. Ask God to show you who to pray for and what to pray for. Ask God to help you see Him as your good heavenly Father. Pray that God gives you just what you need. Ask God to help you forgive those who have hurt you. God loves you and He WILL help you when you pray.