

Teach Us to Pray: *Becoming a People of Prayer*

Matthew 6:5-8

Prayer as Essential

- Too often in our lives, prayer is either absent, scarce, or our last resort
- Yet, prayer is essential to our relationship with God
 - It is our direct communication with Him
- Despite our need for constant communication with the Lord, prayer can be difficult for us
- Jesus' first disciples also struggled with prayer
 - They fell asleep repeatedly when He asked them to watch and pray with Him during His hardest times (Matt 26:36ff)
 - But, they also asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1)
 - What followed is Jesus' teaching on prayer summarized in what we call the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4)
- Before Jesus teaches us how we should pray, He addresses the attitudes and pitfalls to avoid in prayer

Who's Our Audience? (Matt 6:5-6)

- Jesus tells us to remember who our audience is
- He calls out those who pray publicly for the purpose of gaining the attention & admiration of other people
 - Since those who do this want the praise of men, Jesus says they have already received their reward
- This is not a rebuke against public prayer or praying with others
 - Public prayer is described & ascribed throughout both the Old & New Testament
 - Especially in the Psalms
 - And Jesus calls us to pray *with one another* (Matt 18:19)
- Instead, Jesus calls us to get alone and speak to God privately
 - This about staying focused on God
 - This NOT a rebuke of sharing our needs with others, since we are called to do that as well (Jas 5:16)

Humility in Prayer (v. 7-8)

- Jesus also tells us that we are not impressing God with our lofty words and long prayers
- Scripted prayers can be used, like the Psalms
 - But we don't need to impress God to be heard
 - Rather, He knows our hearts and our needs before we even pray
- In fact, there are real dangers in using flowery language in prayer
 - In public, it can make people think that they are not able to pray because they can't replicate such forms
 - In private, it can lead us to think that we somehow deserve God's blessings by our performance
- Real prayer is a cry from our heart to our heavenly Father
 - We speak to God with respect, but without pretensions
 - We come humbly, but with confidence (Heb 4:16; cf. Eph 3:12)

So What?

- Do we come to God in prayer with humility and sincerity?

Meditation Verse: *Matthew 6:8*