

Lesson on Prayer

Handout

As followers of Christ, we have a special relationship with God. But did you know that Jesus isn't just our Savior, but our friend? This lesson describes how Christians are able, and should desire, to communicate with God.

Introduction:

Take a moment and think about a close friend. What makes that friendship so strong? Is it by simply doing things together that you have developed that close friendship? Probably not. All relationships are initiated and strengthened through *communication*. Imagine what would happen to most of your healthy relationships if communication ceased? It would not be a pretty picture!

Although we can't see God or hug him or interact with Him in the same way we do with our human friends, our friendship with God is still very real and too important to neglect. A powerful way that we can be a good friend to God is by talking to Him through prayer.

Have you ever been in church before and, during the middle of a prayer, wondered, "What is that guy *saying*?" His prayer is long and confusing and full of words that I've never heard in my day-to-day life!" We have all heard those prayers before, and we have all been confused by them! Unfortunately, many people today do not pray as Jesus taught us to pray. Jesus doesn't want us to pray any differently than we converse with a friend. After all, that's what prayer is, a conversation!

Today we are going to look at a *model* that Jesus gave His disciples, and us, to use when we pray.

Read Matthew 6:5-13:

5"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9"This, then, is how you should pray:

*" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

*10your kingdom come,
your will be done*

on earth as it is in heaven.

11Give us today our daily bread.

*12Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Questions:

Look at vv5-8.

1. Looking at the text, what is the reward of those who pray to be seen and heard?
2. If God knows what we need before we ask Him, why do we even bother with prayer (v. 8)?
3. Do you think God only wants you to talk to Him when you need something? Imagine how your earthly friends would feel if you treated them in that way.
4. What are two ideas from verses 6 and 7 that you can use to help you as you pray?

Look at vv9-13.

5. Jesus addresses God as "Father." Can you easily identify God as your heavenly Father? If you have difficulty embracing God as Father, read Matthew 7:11. Jesus assures us that God is the perfect Father.

6. We often neglect to praise God when we pray, placing the focus on us and our needs. Jesus begins praying with *adoration*: “hallowed be your name” (v. 9). What are some other ways that you could tell God how wonderful and awesome He is?

7. Have you ever been in a relationship where the other person always had to have things *his way*? Didn't you get weary and wish that your friend would listen to you sometimes? Jesus prays, “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (v. 10). When we pray, we need to ask God to use us according to His plan, even if that means giving up our plans. What are some ways that God could be wanting to use you? If you can't think of any, start asking Him!

8. If we are going to start asking God to use us in His eternal plan, we are going to need some help! In verse 11, Jesus prays, “Give us this day our daily bread.” What is the significance of Jesus asking for “*daily bread*”? Also, what is the “bread” that we should be asking for? If you struggle to trust God for your daily bread, pray with Matthew 7:7 in mind.

9. What is the connection between our relationships with others (horizontal relationships) and our relationship with God (vertical relationship) (v. 12)?

10. In verse 13, Jesus prays for help in battling the temptations he faced. What are some temptations that you need God's help to overcome?

Conclusion:

Jesus was both fully God and fully human. As a part of the Trinity, Jesus had a perfect relationship with the Father, a relationship that he wants us to have with God too! But because Jesus was human, he had to maintain that relationship with God through prayer. In Matthew 6: 5-13, Jesus gives us an insight into how the Son prayed to the Father. Let's try to imitate the perfect prayers of Jesus by remembering the model he gave us. As you pray, remember to focus on Him, be yourself, and don't forget that God truly does hear your prayers and cares about you.