

“PRAY JESUS' WAY”

Text: Matthew 6:5-13

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INTRODUCTION:

1) Prayer and spiritual life: Being a pastor, I have heard many people asked me how to build a stronger spiritual life. Many Christians even believe and ask pastors to help them grow their spiritual life. These people want to learn some secrets by which they may grow a more mature Christian life, like the disciples of Jesus came to him asking Jesus to show them how to pray. Many Christians think there may be some secrets only a few special people like pastors, and they want to know those secrets. But in the Bible, there are plain teachings that will certainly grow our spiritual life if we are serious in growing and can spend time to do them. Spiritual growth is never a spoon-feed process by someone else, but a biting, chewing, digesting process we do it ourselves day in and day out on spiritual principles everyone can and need to do to achieve the goal. Pastors and church spiritual leaders can and should teach, show, like Jesus did, to disciples. But the real growth depends on personal endeavor, practice and grueling efforts we put in every day.

2) Elements of effective prayer: Many of us teach new Christians that prayer is like talking, except it is talking to God than to people. Basically this is true. But not all talking, even people to people, are effective communications. So, we need to learn how to talk to be effective communicators. Same happens in our talking to God. We need to follow some simple guidelines to talk to God so our prayers will be effective in building our spiritual life and a stronger relationship with God. Here in this passage, Jesus showed us a few important but simple steps we need to learn and follow, not just to have effective prayer life, but also building stronger Christian foundation.

PROPER ATTITUDE BEFORE WE PRAY: It's all about attitude. If you treat prayer as important conversation with God, aiming for good results, your preparation is important like you go to an important meeting with someone very important. Yes, we love to see that God is our Father in heaven and he is. But He is also our God, the almighty, who created the universe and all of us. So, be well prepared is an important step we all need to take to have effective prayer for best possible result. Three steps to prepare for pray:

1) Prayer with honesty and sincerity: “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues or street corners to be seen by men.” (6:5) In this teaching of Jesus on prayer, he pointed to

the hypocritical attitude in prayer, not to gain access to God but to gain praises of men. This kind of prayer without honesty or sincerity isn't prayer at all. It is like putting on a show to earn attention or honor from those around that guy. If a prayer is offered without honesty and isn't sincere, there isn't going to have any desired result from it. If we want honesty and sincerity in human conversation, how much more we need to be honest and sincere when we talk to God in prayers. We all know that casual talks usually don't come to any fruition on things we talk, how can we expect God to do anything for us if we don't even pay him respect by being honest and sincere to him when we pray?

2) Prayer with concentrated: When Jesus said, “Go into your room, close the door,” (6:6) he isn't just talking about a proper place to pray, but to pray in a place where you can concentrate without anyone or any thing that may interfere your prayer. That is called focus, focused on God and God alone. In any personal and intimate relationship like in marriage and family, we love to have undivided attention of the other person whom we love and care. How much more should we pay that undivided attention to God when we pray to Him? If this is important to you, you may want to set aside a definite time and place in a condition you can really focus in pouring out your heart to God in prayer. Too many people complain that they never have any feeling of God answering their prayers. They may need to examine the way and the attitude they have when they pray to God. If we are so casual to God, how can we expect God to be serious to us and our prayers?

3) Prayer with strong faith: “When you pray, do not keep babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” (6:7-8) In Jesus' words, it isn't about words we use in prayer, but about faith when you pray. Some people love to write up a prayer on paper, using beautiful words and writing skills to make it like some kind of art work to present it in a public prayer time, others in some churches using a prayer book written by Bible scholars, for reading in worship services. These are all good works but not spontaneous from the heart of the one who prays and can represent the true faith and honest feeling of the congregation. It is faith in God that brings his answers to our prayers, never the words of literary style that may impress people, but it can never impress God.

PROPER ATTITUDE WHEN WE PRAY: (6:9-10)

1) Recognize God's Fatherhood: “Our Father who art in heaven.” (6:9)

Acknowledging God as Father is unique in the Jewish faith which transforms the relationship between human who prays and God the object of prayer. In all human history, no other religion teaches the idea of a close relationship between human and God as Judaism and by extension, Christianity. This relationship between man and God demands a life connection to begin with and that connection is through our faith in God's Son Jesus Christ. So, anyone who wants to have effective prayer to God, he must become a child of God by believing Jesus. Prayers without faith in Jesus is like pouring water on rocks that won't bear any result. God is Spirit but He isn't some deity in distant land but is close to us as our Father. Being Father to us, He loves us, knows our needs and cares our well being. If you are not a believer of Jesus you need to be so your prayers will be effective and fruitful. We as children of God need to keep a close relationship with him. Many Christians treat God as a lawyer or an auto-mechanic or a doctor whom we usually keep a long distance until we need some help from them. Never treat God that way.

2) Recognize God's holy nature: “Hallowed be your name.” (6:9b) *Hagiarzo*, holy in English carries multiple characteristics of God. Holy ascribed to God is about his complete purity without any blemish, superior level of honor, and highest level of integrity and good will. Jesus told us when we pray, we need to know the true nature of God as completely honorable, distinctively honest, truthful, pure and blameless. Many of us go to the Lord without the proper attitude of respecting, trusting Him. We ask, and wait to see if He gives. This kind of prayer isn't effective because we rank God with his giving or answer instead of trusting his character no matter if He will do what we want him to. If we can't trust God's holy nature, how can we trust that his giving is the best regardless of how, what and when. Even God rejected the plead of Paul in his most sincere, repeated prayer of removing the thorn in his flesh, Paul never doubt the holy, blameless nature of God.

3) Recognize our obedience to God: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (6:10) This idea of obedience comes from the first two points: when we recognize God as the Father who knows it all, with all the pure and blameless purpose and good intent, there is no room for us to disobey God's decision and answer, particularly if that isn't what we asked. In many cases, we want God to obey our request, instead of we obey God's way of answering our prayer. We need to trust God's wisdom and his way dealing with our prayers. Do we truly believe that His way is higher than our way, his thought better than our thought? (Isaiah 55:8-9) We need to trust God and his infinite wisdom. He sees things much farther and clearer than we can. His

knowledge of future is much farther and accurate than ours. Whatever way he may answer our prayers, we need to obey him completely without doubt. In doing this, our prayer is closer inline with his will in our lives than ours.

PROPER CONTENTS IN OUR PRAYERS: (6:11-13)

1) Prayer for God's provision: “Give us today our daily bread.” (6:11) In placing our material needs first in the model prayer doesn't mean it's the most important need in our life but the most obvious concern of most people when we pray. If we analyze the things we mostly prayed for, it is needs, material needs. We pray for job, income, food, clothing, housing, cars, and many other things related to our everyday needs. Some people may think that praying for all these material needs is not spiritual. They may have a point. These are not very spiritual but they are practical and necessary. So, Jesus placed it on top of other things. God knows what we need and He will provide our needs as Jesus concluded this subject of material needs in 6:33, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” But this shouldn't be all we pray for. Jesus want us to pray for our need not our want. He allowed us to pray for “daily bread”, not daily banquet.

2) Prayer for God's pardon: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (6:12) “Debts” here doesn't mean monetary debts but “sin against” God and others. Jesus wants us to focus on our relationship with people and how we need to ask for forgiveness from God, and to forgive others as God has forgiven us. To sin against or to offend others is part of being human, be it intentional or unintentional. Since we are to be light of this world, we are to demonstrate God's kindness and forgiveness to one another to build cordial relationship with one another. We should ask God to help us forgive others as He has forgiven us our debts. Jesus set the extreme example of forgiveness as he prayed for those who put him to death on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do.” (Luke 23:34) Our forgiving others has a direct relationship with God forgiving us.

3) Prayer for God's protection: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (6:13) *Peirasmos* can be translated “temptation” as it is here, or “trial” as in James 1:13. Temptation itself is neutral, but in biblical use, it is usually inclined to “evil” or “sin”. Our God with his holy nature cannot and will not “lead” his children into temptation or sin. So, Jesus was teaching his disciples to pray that God will “protect” them from facing situation that could lead them into sin. And if they had already fallen into temptation of sin, then they should ask God to deliver or rescue them from the power of evil

that keeps them continue living in sin. All this is about the spiritual aspect of our Christian life that need to be included in our prayers. This is exactly what most of us miss or neglect to pray for. Jesus wants us to know that a complete prayer is more than asking God to give or provide our material needs which we don't need to be taught to do that. We also need to pray for God's pardon of our sin and his protection that we won't be led into temptation and sin.

THINGS WE NEED TO DO:

1) Take prayer very seriously: Some people were amazed of the miraculous effect of crisis prayer as one in Acts 4:31 when the early Christian prayed for Peter, or we pray for God's healing of someone in critical illness. We also need to have a normal, regular intake of spiritual practice of prayer to sustain and grow our spiritual life. A strong spiritual life needs spiritual food, the Word of God, and spiritual oxygen, prayer, to keep us growing.

2) Focus on relationship with God: Keeping an active, vibrant connection with God is the foundation of effective prayer. We can't treat God like our crisis rescuer and blame him for not answering our prayers in crisis. If we believe God is our Father, we need to treat him like a Father with love, respect and obedience.

3) We need to pray Jesus' way: Pray on a higher level, more complete and godly level. Pray more on spiritual growth, forgiving of others, less focusing on our own needs. We also need to pray for others, their needs and growth. A truly humble and sincere prayer can change us from so much of being human to be more like disciples of Jesus. Prayers can change ourselves and others, improving our relationship with God and man.

The effectiveness of prayer isn't like taking a spiritual injection you may see results in 30 minutes. The power of prayer is like taking a spiritual vitamin pill each day and in time you will feel and see visible improvement in your life that God is working in you. Start the practice tonight.