



Part 7: The Practice of P.R.A.Y.

Matthew 6:5-13

That we might all experience the sweet intimacy of talking to God.

If we are honest with ourselves, I believe that in our experiences with prayer, we are often live in a tension between bewilderment and frustration on one side and sweet intimacy on the other side.

Context: Jesus' disciples asking, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1)

- The disciples probably knew how to pray. In fact, they would pray the Shema twice a day and had the Psalms as a source of many beautiful prayers. And yet, they probably saw a sweet intimacy and power when Jesus prayed. And they wanted that!

Our Heart Posture in Prayer (Matthew 6:5-8)

- 2 Unhealthy postures
 - The hypocrite prays for the esteem and attention of others.
 - The babbler says repetitive mantras in a paganistic way of trying to convince the gods.
- Healthy Heart Posture
 - Not about us being perfect, but rather being real and intimate with God.
 - Is a picture of intimacy with God. To go to the room of your soul, where your deepest desires and pains reside, and speak to Him (Matthew 6:6).
 - The reward we receive in prayer is His presence, peace, perspective, and His power.

"Why is it so important that you are with God...? It's important because it's the place in which you can listen to the voice of the One who calls you the beloved. To pray is to listen to the One who calls you "my beloved daughter," "my beloved son," "my beloved child." To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being, to your guts, and let that voice resound in your whole being. "From Solitude to Community to Ministry" Henri Nouwen

Discipleship Principle #1 (Isaiah 57:14)

- To experience LIFE with Jesus: 1) Building roads 2) Removing obstacles
- These Practices are building roads to experience God. Yet, if there is an obstacle, no matter how much we read scripture, memorize, or pray, nothing will get through. You need to remove the obstacle.

Obstacles: Sin, Wounds, Warfare

"We all have barriers to intimacy with God in our hearts: sin, wounds, and warfare swirl together and solidify in our souls to create a wall between our hearts and God's heart. This wall keeps God's love, joy, and hope from being poured into us. It keeps us from receiving His love, from loving Him back and from loving others as He does." "The Invitations of Jesus – Barriers to Intimacy with God" Jasona Brown

Tools

Tools: community, spiritual disciplines, mentoring, worship, service, and healing prayer. If you are stuck, we would love to walk alongside you.

The Model of Payer

- Acronym P.R.A.Y. – Praise and Thanksgiving, Repentance and Thanksgiving, Ask, Yield
- **Praise and Thanksgiving**
 - "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." This is a shocking use of the Greek word "*Pater*," which comes from the Aramaic "Abba," "Daddy." There is no historical evidence that Jews ever referred to God as "Father" in prayer. This reflected a sweet intimacy with God and our adoption as His children. Because of His saving grace, we can talk to Him with confidence as His beloved children.
 - And yet, it is with much reverence for our Father "in heaven," who is the majestic creator of the universe.
 - "hallowed be Your name." "Hallowed" means holy or sacred. This is grammatically a passive imperative versus an indicative. It is not just stating something, but petitioning, "holy is Your name."

"...He is saying that we should regard Him as holy, and that such a posture of reverence, awe, and respect for God should define everything in our lives." "The Prayer of the Lord" R.C. Sproul

 - **How do we model Praise and Thanksgiving in our prayers?**
By starting our prayers looking up in praise and thanksgiving, affirming God's holiness. It is easy to start with our needs, like giving God a shopping list. We pray best when we know who God is and who we are.
- **Repentance and Thanksgiving**
 - True repentance comes in response to the penetrating light of God's holy presence.
 - "Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors (Matthew 6:12)." This word 'debt' is not speaking of financial debt like credit

card debt, but metaphorical of our moral debt, that we have fallen short in our sin. Later on in the passage, it uses the word sin, and the parallel passage in Luke 11 uses the word sin.

- Seeking God's forgiveness is a daily reality, and through the power and depth of His forgiveness, we forgive others. This is a daunting challenge that we should forgive others to the depth that God forgave us.

- **How do we model Repentance and Thanksgiving in our prayers?**

Invite God into the process of seeing your sin, confessing, repenting, and receiving forgiveness.

- **Ask**

- "Give us our daily bread (Matthew 6:11)" and "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13)." We are asking God for two things: 1) Our daily needs 2) Strength against temptation. This reflects a dependence on God.
- Boldness in asking (Matthew 7:7-8)
- **How do we model Ask in our prayers?**
Think through what you need today: emotional, spiritual, financial, relational, or physical needs.

- **Yield**

- "Your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)." This is a petition/request for the heart and ways of God to reign. As we petition this, we are aligning our hearts to His heart.
- "...on earth as it is in heaven." Just as everything is in conformity to God's ways in heaven, may it be so on earth.
- **How do we model Yield in our prayers?**
Think through the day and say, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done" at work, at school, in your neighborhood, with your kids, in your marriage, and in your home.

Discipleship Principle #2

- Information – Imitation – Innovation Triangle of Discipleship. We start with information, and then move to imitating, and finally innovating towards something that is unique to us and resonates with our soul.
- Starting points of prayer:
 - Memorize the Lord's Prayer and say it every morning (say this with your kids before they head off to school)
 - Pray through the Psalms (Lectio Divina)
 - Prayer list of people – hurting, struggling, far from God

"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the driver." Corrie Ten Boom (Holocaust Survivor)

Discussion Questions

See Practices P.R.A.Y. (<https://greenwoodcc.com/p-r-a-y/>)