

How NOT to Pray
The Discipline of Prayer

Sunday's message focused on verses 5-8: How NOT to pray. We will review that but also dig a bit into verses 9-10. Forgiveness will be handled next week.

STUDY & DISCUSSION - 45 minutes

Open: What do you find most confusing or frustrating thing about prayer? The most rewarding?

How NOT to Pray

Interpret: Read Matthew 6:5-8. Jesus started his teaching on prayer by saying what NOT to do. Why do you think that is? What misconceptions or wrong practices do you think people have regarding prayer?

Apply: Sunday's talk summarized these verses by saying that:

- Prayer is Not a Performance (vs. 5)
- Prayer is Not a Ritual (vs. 7)
- Prayer is Not an Act of Desperation (vs. 8)
- Prayer is Not Persuasion (vs. 8)

Which of these have you struggled with the most?

Interpret: On Sunday, prayer was defined as "A Regular Conversation with a Living and Loving Father." What do you think of this definition? What would be different if our prayers were more conversational?

Interpret: Read Matthew 6:9-13. Jesus begins this model prayer with three God focused agendas: Your name be glorified, your kingdom be realized, and your will be accomplished. What can you do to begin your prayers with more of a God focus? How might starting with this God focus change how you feel and how you pray?

Our Father

Apply: "Our Father" is both a simple and personal address in prayer. How should thinking of God as your Father positively affect you when you are praying?

Apply: Due to imperfect relationships with our earthly fathers, each of us carries baggage into our view of God as father. How might your experience with your earthly father color your view of your heavenly Father? How might this affect your prayer life? How have you tried to overcome this?

Interpret: What does it mean to want our Father's name to be kept holy? How do we balance the familiarity of "Father" with respect for a holy God?

Your Kingdom Come

Interpret: If you pray "Your kingdom come your will be done," are you asking God to do something or are you volunteering to do something? Explain.

Observe: Perhaps we should pray less about removing pain and problems and more about injecting God's Presence, Power and Purpose into our world? Read each passage and discuss how God's Presence, Power and Purpose are the main agenda:

- Matthew 26:36-46
- 2 Corinthians 12:6-10
- Colossians 1:9-14,
- Hebrews 13:20,21

Apply: How would your prayer life change if you focused more on praying God into your world than praying things out of your world? How can you specifically apply this to something you have been praying about?

Apply: How would you like your prayer life to grow during this series? Do you have any specific goals?

Sunday's Next Steps:

Discussion: What bad prayer habits have you developed. What good prayer habits do you want?

Action: I will improve my focus in prayer by trying one of the following this week:

- Praying out loud.
- Writing my prayers.
- Changing my prayer posture (kneeling, standing, walking, lifting hands...).