



THE 1ST PRINCIPLE OF PRAYER

A lot of people think that prayer is difficult as many haven't taken the time to listen to what Jesus taught on the subject. Today we discover the 1st principle of prayer: *Remember WHO you're praying to.*

teachingnotes

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* All Scripture is from CSB (Christian Standard Bible) unless otherwise noted.

After watching the life and ministry of Jesus, it was His prayer life that so intrigued the disciples to ask, "Lord, teach us how to pray". And so He did.

The Prayerful Practice of Jesus

Luke 11:1 ¹ He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

Over the next few minutes we are going to learn what Jesus taught them, about how we should NOT pray, and how we should pray. We will focus on **the 1st principle of Prayer**:

BIG TRUTH: Remember WHO you're praying to!

If we get THIS wrong, then prayer because difficult, ritualistic, and false.

When you pray...

Matthew 6:5-6 "Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because **they love to pray** standing in the synagogues and on the street corners **to be seen by people**. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your **private room**, shut your door, and **pray to your Father** who is in secret. And **your Father** who sees in secret **will reward you**."

Don't be like the **hypocrites** - pretenders, who pretend to talk to God, but who really want **to be seen by people**. So, when it was time for prayer, these hypocrites would find spots to pray where others would be sure to notice them. **Their reward** is to be **seen by people**. People might applaud them, but God will not.

❓ Have you ever prayed out loud, but were more concerned with what people thought than what God thought?

Go into your private room. In Jesus' day, the average person didn't have a walk-in-closet. Jesus was likely referring to a small storage room. Is this the only place God hears prayers from? Of course not. We never read about Jesus nor His disciples going into an inner room to pray. Maybe they did. But the Scriptures show us that Jesus often prayed somewhere else.

Luke 5:16 Yet He [Jesus] often **withdrew to deserted places** and **prayed**.

Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up, went out, and made His way **to a deserted place**; and **there he was praying**.

Matthew 14:23 After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain **by himself to pray**. Well into the night, He was there **alone**.

In all of these cases, Jesus is praying outside. The point is NOT WHERE we go to pray, but WHY we go to pray. Jesus went to be alone to pray to the Father. Wherever we go to pray, our reason should be the same - NOT so others will *SEE* us, but so our Father will *HEAR* us.

So, why should we **pray** in **private**? **God sees**, hears our prayer, and **will reward** us by answering our prayers!

* **Jesus was not condemning prayer in public, but prayer for the public.** There are many biblical examples of people praying in public. Jesus prayed in public. So did His disciples. Our goal in prayer is NOT to be heard by people, but to be heard by God.

Does God Hear because of Many Words?

Matthew 6:7 ⁷ When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words.

Close to 850 years before this, **Elijah had a showdown with the false prophets of Baal** where he challenged them to call on their God to ignite a sacrifice. They called out saying, "**Baal, answer us!**" As **they danced and chanted from morning until noon** (1 Sam 18:26).

1 Kings 18:27-29 At noon Elijah mocked them. He said, "Shout loudly, for he's a god! Maybe he's thinking it over; maybe he has wandered away; or maybe he's on the road. Perhaps he's sleeping and will wake up!" They **shouted loudly**, and **cut themselves** with knives and spears, according to their custom, until blood gushed over them. **All afternoon they kept on raving** until the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no sound; no one answered, no one paid attention.

* Go read the rest of the story!

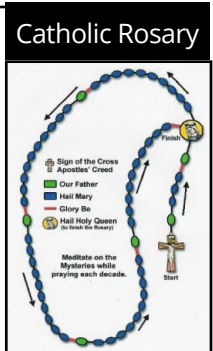
In the 1st century, Paul and his companions shared the gospel with people of **Ephesus**. Many responded and followed Jesus. But others, not wanting to offend their local deity (Artemis), gathered at the amphitheater and defended her as...

Acts 19:34 they all shouted in unison for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Artemis, the false God, like Baal, the false god - did NOT respond because of their many words.

✗ Sadly, there are some who name Jesus as their savior who wrongfully believe that God DOES hear them **for their many words**.

✗ **Catholic Rosaries** are used to count off repeated prayers of 10 "Hail Mary's" and 1 "Our Father" with several other prayers. Praying to Mary is wrong. Further, God doesn't hear because of our many words.



But Jesus didn't teach His disciples to pray that way. Instead, He says:

Matthew 6:7-8 When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. Don't be like them, because **your Father knows** the things you need **before you ask Him**.

When you pray, there isn't a secret prayer code that guarantees an audience with the Almighty. When you pray, you can simply trust that God **knows the things you need before you ask Him**.

✗ God doesn't want big wordy, elequent prayers.

✓ God wants **simple & sincere prayers** where you share your genuine feelings and concerns with God. He doesn't hear you because of many words. As we said last week, **Our God Hears because our God cares!**

✓ God wants you to call on Him as **your Father**. Just as good earthly fathers love their children and care for their needs, your Heavenly Father is attentive to His children. What you are asking for doesn't surprise Him...He knows what you're about to ask for and He's prepared to respond.

Remember WHO you're praying to!

During Jesus' day, calling God "Father" was not the norm. The biblical scholar **D.A. Carson** notes that "*there is no evidence of anyone before Jesus using this term to address God.*"¹ Yet in the 4 Gospels, **Jesus refers to God as "Father" more than 60 times!**² The followers of Jesus adopted the same intimate Aramaic term that Jesus used - "Abba"? This term might better be translated 'Dad or Daddy' in our culture. Look at the significance of this from the pen of Paul.

Galatians 4:6 And because **you are sons**, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "**Abba, Father!**"

¹ Carson, 169.

² R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 155.

The Holy **Spirit** of Jesus has come into the **hearts** of believers. As He prayed "Abba, Father", so His Spirit encourages us to do the same!

Romans 8:15-16 ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received **the Spirit of adoption**, by whom we cry out, "**Abba, Father!**" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that **we are God's children**,

The God of the Universe - really loves us! We can truly be forgiven & be adopted into His family - we can call him "Father"!

Psalm 68:5 God in his holy dwelling is **a father of the fatherless** and a champion of widows.

How we Pray begins who WHO we Pray To! And the 1st principle of prayer is:

Remember WHO you're praying to!

❓ *Is God really YOUR Father?* Have you been adopted into his family by turning from your sin and turning to Jesus?

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Steve & Debbie Bass (673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (973-0047), Jere & Darlene Burnette (673-1888) , Fain & Linda Poppell (464-1282) , Jim & Derita Pinkard (464-6188), or Boss & Amelia Mulkey (464-6717).