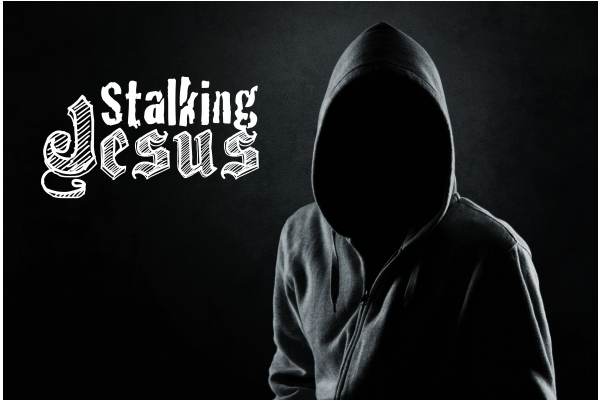


onechurch

bigIdea small group discussion



Have you ever been stalked? I don't think I have, but I suppose it would be hard to tell if the stalker was any good! Stalking is one of those creepy things where once you start talking about it, you imagine it's always happening to you.

More people trying to follow Jesus should think about what stalkers do, but not for the reasons you might think at first. Because a lot of people stalk Jesus—they collect information and memorize things about God, without ever talking to God. They talk about knowing Jesus like they are best friends when actually, they really hardly knew each other at all. Because knowing facts *about* a person isn't the same as having a relationship *with* a person.

BIG IDEA: The Purpose of Prayer is to surrender our will—not impose it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever stalked someone on Facebook?
2. Chris said...

When you stalk someone, you observe people from afar. You don't really interact with them or talk to them. You just watch and observe them from afar. But knowing facts *about* a person isn't the same as having a relationship *with* a person. What makes the difference between stalking Jesus and actually having a relationship with Jesus? Talking to Him. We call talking to God *prayer*.

3. Have you been stalking Jesus? Have you confused collecting information and memorizing things about God with actually knowing God? Explain.
4. Talk about a time when you experienced an answer to prayer.
5. Have you ever been impressed by the way someone prayed? What about the prayer did you like?
6. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 6:5–6 in the broader context of Matthew 6:1–4.* Is there a common theme within verses 1–6? If so, what is the common theme? What is the problem with praying publicly as described in these verses?
7. Would you say that regular prayer is a given in your life these days, or are you a little less reliable than that? Select an option below and explain your answer.
 - a. “Prayer? Well, I have good intentions but...”
 - b. “I start to pray, but I get easily distracted and my mind starts to wander.”
 - c. “Every time I start to pray, I go to sleep.”
 - d. “For me, prayer is like oxygen. I breathe it in throughout the day every day.”
8. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 6:7–8.* List some weird ways in which people talk to God in prayer. (Example: repeating the same phrases, etc.)



9. There are four common pitfalls when we pray. Which one are you most likely to fall into?
 - a. Praying in clichés: for example, “Bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies.”
 - b. Praying nonsense: for example, asking an omnipresent God to, “Be with us today.”
 - c. Praying on autopilot: for example, using the same words over and over in your prayers, like “Father God.”
 - d. Parroting other people’s prayers: for example, piling up impressive phrases you’ve heard others pray, even when they don’t reflect your heart’s desires.
10. In Matthew 6:7-8, Jesus tells us some specific things *not* to do when we pray. What are those? What’s so ironic about His list of what *not* to do and what follows as what we call *The Lord’s Prayer*?
11. Respond to Chris’ statement: “The purpose of prayer is to surrender your will, not to impose it on God.”
12. Do you believe that prayer can change God’s mind? Why or why not?
13. What makes it hard to pray “Your will be done” with sincerity?

GOING DEEPER

1. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 6:9.* What element of God’s character most leads you to worship Him and pray, “Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy”?
2. Of all the things Jesus could have told us to begin our prayers with, why do you think He chose worship as the starting point?
3. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 6:10.* Jesus teaches us to pray, “Your will be done.” God’s will is already being done in heaven, but we should pray for His will to be done here on earth as well. More specifically, we should pray for God’s will to be done in our life. This portion of Jesus’ prayer centers on submission. If a person has a heart that is submitted to God, how will this impact the other areas mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 6:11.* Jesus encourages us to bring our needs to the Father, knowing that He cares about us. It is important to notice that Jesus said to pray for our daily bread, not for a daily steak and lobster buffet. I think His choice of bread was intentional because it is very easy to confuse our needs with our wants. God is more concerned about meeting our needs. What are some of the “Steak, lobster, and caviar” prayers that we can get lured into praying?
5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Matthew 6:12.* Jesus teaches us that there should be a component of confession in our prayers. Often the hardest two words in the human language to say are “I’m sorry.” Why is regular, specific, and honest confession essential for a vital prayer life and relationship with God? Why is just praying the prayer, “Forgive me of all my sins” not good enough? Why does God want us to list out our sins?

MOVING FORWARD

Can you imagine what would happen in our families, churches, communities—the world—if Christians prayed until we could earnestly say, “your will be done”?

As you pray this week, declare God’s greatness, surrender your will, and acknowledge your dependence.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Jesus gave us a way to approach God, and it centered around **DSA**—**D**on’t **S**tart off **A**sking.

Declare God’s greatness.

Surrender your will.

Acknowledge your dependence.

—Provision

—Pardon

—Protection

How can you implement **DSA** into your prayer life this week? What is going to be the biggest change in your prayers if you **D**on’t **S**tart off **A**sking?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

But 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. Matthew 6:6