

Abide – Pray w/out Ceasing

2/7/21

Matthew 6:5-13

Let's begin w/ a short breathing exercise – I need for everyone to take a couple of deep breaths and let it out (go). Now take a big gulp of air and let's see who can make it 30 sec. (go).

Today as we continue our series on abiding in Christ, we're going to talk about how God wants us to connect w/ Him in prayer.

To be sure, prayer is the most misunderstood and misappropriated discipline in the Christian life. Yet it really isn't that difficult to understand.

Like breathing, prayer is the natural response to a spiritually-awakened life. It's spiritual breathing. Just as breathing is natural for a child from birth, so too is prayer for the new born Christian.

I think this is the heart of Paul's thoughts when he wrote to the Thessalonians to *pray w/out ceasing*.

This doesn't mean we're to walk around w/ folded hands speaking in ecclesiastical tones; rather we should engage life in a bended spirit of prayerful dependence on God - walking thru life attentive and submitted to God for His provision/direction.

Whenever I think of prayer, I'm reminded of Navy Fleet Divers. People who dive as much as 2,300 ft to rescue, repair, salvage, and perform special ops. These divers are able to reach such depths b/c they're tethered to an airline from the surface that's being monitored to support their lives.

### **Prayer is our life-support system/life-line to God.**

In its basic form, prayer is nothing more than talking, listening, and responding to God for the purpose of knowing His heart and seeking His will.

In **Matthew 6**, Jesus taught the (12) about prayer. In sharing this lesson, Jesus was trying to blow up their misconceptions concerning prayer so that they could engage in meaningful communication w/ the Father. Sadly, for most people, prayer had become a mantra of formalized, routine prayers characterized by ritual and repetition.

Now I lay me down to sleep...

Hail Mary full of grace...

Good bread, good meat, good God let's eat...

I Prayer Starts w/ a Right **ATTITUDE**

The power of prayer isn't in how much we pray but in how much our prayers are in alignment w/ God's will/Word. *Nee*

Before teaching us how to pray, Jesus talked about the necessity of having a right attitude in our hearts.

*When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. I tell you; they've received their reward in full. 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. And when you pray, don't keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they'll be heard b/c of their many words. Don't be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*

Matthew 6:5-8

## A Prayer Starts w/ Genuine **HUMILITY**

*When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men...*

**hypocrites** – actors, pretenders, people who play a role. Jesus was singling out the Scribes/Pharisees who prayed in public to get attention and to show people how spiritual they thought they were.

Jesus starts w/ a simple idea – prayer is never about impressing others but only about connecting and communing w/ God. This doesn't mean we're never to pray w/ others or pray in public; but it does mean we're never to pray to make others think we're spiritual.

**Rule** – When people do things in public to show you how *spiritual* they are; generally, it's b/c they are covering up how *unspiritual* they really are.

Scripture teaches that if we want God to hear and respond to our prayers, we need to approach God w/ a broken/contrite (humble) heart.

*You do not desire sacrifice or in burnt offering – or else I would bring it. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:16-17*

## B Prayer Continues w/ Singular **FOCUS**

*When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then God, who sees what's done in secret, will reward you...*

The reason we pray is to meet/speak w/ God. He alone should be the audience of our prayers – for He is the only One able to respond to them.

While I am to pray w/out ceasing on the go of life, it should begin in private to still/center my life on Him. More notably, when our prayers are about aligning w/ God, we release God to be God to speak into our lives to guide/provide as He see fit.

To have prayed well is to have heard God speak to you. *Luther*

## C Prayer Requires an Authentic **HEART**

*Don't recite the same prayer over/over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again/again. Remember, your Father knows what you need before you ask!*

**Point** – there's no magic formula/secret handshake – it's just being real w/ God. God just wants you to talk w/ Him w/ an honest, seeking heart. **Prayer is not:**

- Using unnatural words or holy tones
- Vain repetition or “Hail Mary’s”
- Holding God hostage to your agenda

Prayer is talking/listening and responding to God about the details of your life in light of His will.

## II Prayer Requires a Right APPROACH

After addressing the attitude of the heart, Jesus teaches the (12) how to pray. What's critical to remember is He wasn't giving them another prayer to recite, but a pathway of how they could connect/commune w/ God.

*This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

### A Begin w/ the Right PERSON

*Our **Father** in heaven...*

This phrase is such an amazing statement of tension regarding approaching God.

**Father** – Greek (*pater*) – means provider/protector – yet Jesus spoke in Aramaic (*abba*) meaning **Daddy!**

By qualifying He is **in heaven** reminds us that we're not just entering into the presence of our **daddy** who loves us, we're entering into the presence of the Creator of life who's worthy of awe/respect.

Jesus is inviting us to keep a healthy tension b/w intimacy/awe | personal/powerful | meekness/majesty – teaching us we must do the same. Yet, we should never be afraid to enter into His presence, nor can we ever forget in whose presence we're entering.

**Scenario:** My family goes to DQ where my kids ask for ice cream. Are they going to say, "Thou eminent and wise pastor of FBCPTC, wouldst thou grant to thy offspring the required currency to purchase-eth a savory frozen treat to tickle the taste buds of our tender mouths?" NO! **Yet this is the way some people pray.** My children are going ask, "Dad, can we have some money for an ice cream?" They're going to respectfully yet personally speak to me knowing I want to love/bless them as I'm capable of doing.

### B Enter His Gates w/ PRAISE

*hallowed be your name...*

**hallowed be your name** is to ask God to cause His name to be set apart and treated as holy, holy, holy – and for His person to be revered/honored above all other names in me, thru me, and beyond me.

It's to bend your knee and bow your heart in surrender to ask God to cause His Word to be **believed**, His displeasure to be **feared**, His commandments to be **obeyed**, and His person to be **glorified**.

### C Commit to God's PURPOSE

*your kingdom come; your will be done...*

Essential to prayer is not for "my" will but for His will to be accomplished my life, my family, my church, my nation/world – for a willing spirit to obey His leading.

**This is huge!** This is where most prayers cease to be prayers and become solicitations. I want us to consider (5) questions to abiding prayer that wins the heart of heaven. **Turn w/ me to John 14-15.**

*Whatever you may ask in My name, I will do, so the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:13*

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:7-8*

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other. John 15:16-17*

Notice the common thread in each of these statements on prayer – it's always about the Father's will.

- Does your prayer seek God's glory alone?
- Does it meet the standard of Christ?
- Does it come from an abiding heart?
- Does it pass the sifting of God's Word?
- Will the result of prayer produce Godly fruit?

D Seek God's **PROVISION**

*Give us today our daily bread...*

This request is more than seeking God's provision, it's also **admitting** our need, **acknowledging** our appetites, and **accepting** our responsibility to be good stewards of the blessing God bestows into our lives. At this heart of His provision is our gratitude. ***How much time to you spend thanking God for His generosity to you?***

E Ask God for His **PARDON**

*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors...*

**I'll make this simple** – not one of us is perfect. I know – this is a shocker. And b/c we're not perfect, we're all going to make mistakes – and the result is our sin both infects/affects others. Thus, we all must learn how to seek forgiveness and give forgiveness to others.

F Trust in God's **PROTECTION**

*...lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

We're at war w/ God's enemy who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy; yet in our humanity/flesh, we're incapable of w/standing the schemes of the devil. So, in praying for God's protection, we're seeking His power to overcome the wiles of the demonic.

Prayer is an essential spiritual discipline if we're going to abide in Christ; but prayer is simply talking, listening, and responding to Him about the details of your life in light of His will. It requires checking in...

I love the story of the pastor who decided to walk thru the worship center one day when he noticed an unfamiliar man kneeling in the altar. A bit unkempt and dirty, he overheard the man praying:

Jesus, I just came again to tell you how happy I've been since we found each other's friendship and you took away my sin. I don't know much of how to pray, but I think about you thru-out my day. So, Jesus, this is Jim, just checking in!

As Jim arose to leave, the pastor, feeling foolish, met Jim and learned that he was a new believer who worked at the local mill and had come to pray on his lunch break. Of course, the pastor welcomed him to come and pray

anytime. As Jim left, the pastor knelt at the altar to pray and felt his cold heart melt w/ love. As the tears welled up, he repeated Jim's prayer:

Jesus, I just came again to tell you how happy I've been since we found each other's friendship and you took away my sin. I don't know much of how to pray, but I think about you thru-out my day. So, Jesus, this is me, just checking in!

Well, Jim continued coming to the church every day to pray – always reciting the same prayer until one day he didn't show up. After several days of missing Jim, the pastor visited the mill to check on him and learned that Jim had been admitted into the hospital. At the hospital, the docs/nurses were worried b/c no one had come to visit him. Yet Jim always had a smile and his joy was contagious. So, when the pastor arrived, the head nurse shared her concerns. So, when the pastor spoke w/ Jim, he asked Jim why no one had visited.

Looking surprised, Jim spoke up and w/ a winsome smile said to the pastor, "The nurse is wrong, but she couldn't know, that all the while every day at noon He's here, my dearest friend. You see, he sits right down, takes my hand, leans over and says to me:

I just came again to tell you Jim, how happy I've been since we found each other's friendship and I took away your sin. I always love to hear you pray and I think about you thru-out every day. So, Jim, this is Jesus – just checking in!!

When it is all said and done, prayer is not all that complex. It is nothing more/less than checking in thru-out your day w/ God!