

Essentials

New Way to Pray (1)

Matthew 6:5-15

July 30, 2017 am

HDBC

This is message # 11 in this series called **Essentials** which is a study of the Sermon on the Mount. This is a lesson taught by Jesus on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. In it He is outlining the essential expectations He has for His disciples. These are practical life instructions for those who have chosen to follow Christ. This morning we come to a section on prayer.

Of all the things that the disciples might have asked Jesus to teach them about, the one thing they chose was prayer. They asked Jesus to teach them to pray. On more than one occasion, Jesus answered that request. **Mt. 6:5-15 is one of them.**

Here, Jesus calls His followers to abandon the stale, lifeless praying of the religious hypocrites and embrace a **New Way to Pray**. In doing so he gives some clear instructions and provides a great illustration of how we are to pray. This morning we will focus on the first of these. Next week the second.

Read the Text: Matthew 6:5-15

In this section, Jesus tells us three things that we are to be as we pray.

1. Be Sincere (5-6)

Some things are expected to be done in front of a crowd. **Circus acts, athletic events, a piano recital, press conference**. But are there some things that are better done behind closed doors? Prayer is one of those things. There is certainly a place for public praying, as is demonstrated by Jesus, Himself. But our most intimate and important praying should be in secret. Jesus speaks of praying in public and in private. But, it becomes clear that Jesus is not actually focusing on the place, but the motive.

Remember the teaching about giving in verses 2-4. We are expected to give, with the right motive. Wrong motive negates the reward from God. The same is true of prayer. In calling us to **be sincere** when we pray, Jesus speaks of the places we pray because **the places often influence our motive**.

When praying in secret, we generally do not struggle with the wrong motives. When we pray in front of others, we can be tempted to think more about what the people around us think of our words than we are of what God thinks about our words. **Underlying principle** is that when we pray, we should pray with the right motive.

A. Public Praying

Is it legitimate? Certainly, but could be problematic. Note the Pharisees:

In the synagogues - Normal places for prayer. The synagogues were places for gathering in order to worship. Place for corporate praying. **Corporate prayer is an important function of the church even today. Sundays and Wednesday, as well as other times when groups gather for prayer.**

At the street corners... Jews had certain hours designated for prayer. Wherever you were at that time, you stopped to pray. Some made sure they were in very public places so that they would be seen by others.

Jesus was not condemning public praying, but the wrong motives behind it.

B. Private Praying

It is the foundation of all our praying.

Inner room - literally a closet, private room. The point is that when you are in private you can pray without distractions, interruptions or temptations to try to impress others. Go into the inner room, and **close the door**. Shut out mental distractions. **Have you ever tried to carry-on a conversation on the phone while others around you are all talking?**

Prayer is personal communion with God. Intimate fellowship. Deserves this consideration. How often do you enter the secret room to meet just with the master? It takes discipline and sacrifice.

Susannah Wesley prayed from 9:00-10:00 A.M. every day. Once a visiting preacher had to wait 40 minutes for her to finish. Appointment with God!

Place of refuge. Place of warfare. Where men and women become mighty for Jesus. Victories are secured. Demons are defeated. Satan hates it when Christians pray, either public or private.

Be Sincere when you pray!

2. Be Smart (7-13)

Jesus then offers some thoughts about the content of our praying.

A. The Negative (7-8)

Meaningless Repetition - Stammering, babbling, repeating words uselessly. This is not condemnation of repetition, for Jesus and Paul did that. Refers to the belief that repetition would overpower the Lord or unduly influence Him. Belief that the repetition of the words had some kind of magical power. Jews had certain prayers that they repeated three times per day.

Robert Cook, All of us have one routine prayer in our system; once we get rid of it, then we can really start to pray!

Jesus is condemning praying where the mouth is working but the mind is not. We are to avoid simply saying words that are hollow and devoid of meaning and passion.

B. The Positive (9-13)

Lord's Prayer. Actually the Model Prayer. Look at it in detail next week. The point here is that Jesus provides us with a kind of outline for praying. These are the kinds of things to include in our praying. These are categories.

In light of the negative that we just considered, this was never intended to be what it has become for so many. Never meant to be repeated like a mantra. The modern practice of reciting the Lord's prayer is often violation of the very words which precede it.

High School coach before games would lead us to recite it. Great, but would have been greater had he prayed for us.

3. Be Forgiving (14-15)

This is a very interesting thing for Jesus to say in this context. It almost seems out of place. But Jesus wants us to understand that our praying is effected by our willingness to forgive others. How we deal with the offenses of others.

Our willingness to forgive is one of the keys to our effectiveness in our praying. If we can't forgive others, our own forgiveness is effected and our praying is impacted. Let's be honest. These are **troubling words**.

Forgive – Literally “to hurl away.”

The point is that we must not harbor unforgiveness in our hearts or it will not only affect our relationship with others, but also the Lord. It will hinder our ability to effectively pray. Jesus presents this principle with a positive statement (14) and with a negative statement (15) to make sure we fully understand.

Believers cannot fully experience the practical, ongoing forgiveness of God, which keeps fellowship with the Lord rich and sweet, apart from forgiving others. An **unforgiving spirit is inconsistent for one who has been totally forgiven** by God and it brings chastening from God.

Forgiveness of others is one of the greatest needs in the body of Christ today. So much bitterness being allowed to grow. So much discontent and discord. What is Jesus saying?

When we forgive others we are giving evidence that we ourselves have been forgiven. As I forgive others, I am free to enjoy and experience the freedom that is mine through Christ's forgiveness of me.

John Wesley was serving as a missionary in one of the colonies and was having a difficult time with General Oglethorpe, who was known for his pride and unbending nature. In a particularly prideful moment Oglethorpe quipped, ***I never forgive.***

The evangelist replied, ***Then I hope, sir, that you never sin.***

Charles Spurgeon wrote, ***Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death-warrant when you repeat the Lord's prayer.*** For in this prayer we are to ask forgiveness of the Lord in the same manner that we have forgiven others (vs. 12)

Kent Hughes even wrote, ***If we will not forgive, we are not Christians!*** He goes on to point out that this does not mean Christians will not struggle with forgiveness for seasons. But the ultimate desire and intention of every true Christ-follower is to be forgiving of others.

If you find within yourself, no serious desire and intention to forgive others, regardless of how mean the offense or how often the offense, then I think you should come to the conclusion that you have not been forgiven and are in need of salvation.

Be Sincere

Be Smart

Be Forgiving