

A Cup Overflowing – A study of the Christian life

Lesson 9:
A Christian Life is...
A Prayer-filled Life

Let's begin by asking the obvious

- What does it mean “to pray”?
(IOW, what is prayer?)
 - Prayer is communication with God.

7 different words used

- ...and lo & behold, they all mean “to pray”.
 - A seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty to God or to man
 - A petition or supplication
 - To request, entreat, beg, beseech
 - To wish
- No surprises here; let's move on...

The first prayer?

- The first *reference* to prayer is in Genesis 4:26...
 - "At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD."
- The first recorded example of a prayer is in Genesis 20:17...
 - "Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech..."

Requirements for prayer

● For me to pray, I must have

1. an acknowledgement of God's existence,
2. an expectation that God knows and cares about me, and
3. an expectation that God is able and willing to respond to me.

Roles in prayer

- The Father, Son, and Spirit all have definite roles in prayer.
 - Father
 - Prayer is addressed to the Father. (Matt 6:9-13)
 - Prayer is answered by the Father. (Jn 16:23)
 - Son
 - Prayer is offered in the name of Jesus (Jn 14:6, 16:23)
 - He intercedes for us (Heb 7:25)
 - Holy Spirit
 - Our heavenly translator – also intercedes for us (Rom 8:26-27)

Prayers of Jesus

- ✿ Fervent, sometimes repetitive
- ✿ Whatever load was on his heart
 - ✿ On the cross
 - ✿ "...forgive them..." (Luke 23:34)
 - ✿ "...why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46)
 - ✿ Praise: "I praise you, Father..." (Matt 11:25)
 - ✿ Petition: "Ask the Lord..." (Matt 9:38)
- ✿ Private
 - ✿ "Jesus...went to a solitary place" (Mark 1:35)
 - ✿ "After he had dismissed them..." (Mt 14:23)
 - ✿ "Went out to a mountainside..." (Lk 6:12)

Jesus' longest recorded prayer

John 17

- 26 verses; 619 words
- What was its theme?
- What burden was on his heart?

Jesus' prayers...

- ...grew out of his work and his concerns of the moment – it was what was on his mind and close to his heart at the time.
- There were no rituals, no canned phrases, no thoughtless repetition.
- Jesus' prayers arise out of his need for God's help in his work, to help him bear the burden, to choose well, to unite the apostles, etc.

Private prayer

- (Mat 6:5-6 NIV) “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But 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.”

Private prayer

- Are there any “advantages” of private prayer over public prayer?
- What was Jesus’ intent or message in the passage? Did he prohibit public prayer?

Public prayer

- What was Jesus' "style" of prayer?
 - Like a son to a father.
 - Didn't use words or phrases that he didn't use in ordinary conversation.
- Contrast that to some public prayers we hear today.
- Why do you think we pray that way in public?

Group prayer in Jerusalem

- Acts 4 – what's the context?
- Prayer – vs 24-30
 - They recognized the sovereignty of God.
 - They recall that God has often been opposed by governments; they remember Psalm 2.
 - They needed help from God, so they seek his help.
 - They ask God to empower them to be bold in the face of opposition and for him to continue to work through them to proclaim Jesus.

Lessons from Acts 4

- ✿ Prayer was a response to a current situation and need they felt.
- ✿ It brought them into God's presence and allied them with a long chain of God's servants.
- ✿ It enabled them to find a solution to their present challenge.
- ✿ It was not a routine or ritual prayer.
- ✿ We are not under court order to stop preaching, but isn't there always something we're trying to do for the Lord?

The urgency of prayer

- Repeated NT references to urgency in prayer
 - “prayed earnestly”
 - “fervently”
 - “strive with me”
 - “pray without ceasing”
 - “wrestling in prayer”
 - “believing”

The urgency of prayer

- Repeated NT references to urgency in prayer
- These all indicate the depth of concern for the subject of prayer.
- Having prayer as a part of our routine shouldn't lead to just saying something simply because we've been called on when we really have nothing to say.
 - Solutions to this issue?

Doesn't it make sense...

- ...that when we search for qualified men to serve in leadership positions, we search for men who
 - have a genuine sensitivity to the sins & struggles of those in the congregation,
 - have a true vision for winning souls for Jesus,
 - aren't arrogant or self-centered,
 - have a strong faith in Jesus, and show it in word & action, and
 - truly honor Christ in all they say & do?

“Lead in prayer”

- What greater role for leaders than to bring their people and their concerns to God?
- Let’s remember how most Christians learned to pray.
 - some from our parents
 - some from friends
 - mostly from listening to men lead public prayers
- Public prayers substantially affect the spiritual life of the church.

Next week...

- A Christian Life is *A Spirit-filled Life*

Notes for *A Christian Life is A Prayer-filled Life*

Slide 1-5: <none>

Slide 6: Questions 1 & 2

Slide 7:

Question 3.

- Night before his crucifixion, went with his 11 apostles to an olive grove
 - Left 8, continued farther with 3, then went alone to pray
 - **Fervent** – “sweat was like drops of blood” (Lk 22:44)
 - **Repetitive** – prayed: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” 3 times (Matt 26:39, 42, 44).
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- – (Mat 9:37-38 NIV) “...The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”
- – (Mark 1:35 NIV) “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”
 - (Mat 14:23 NIV) “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray...”
 - (Luke 6:12-13 NIV) “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles...”

Slide 8-9: <none>

Slide 10:

- **Question 4**
 - Hypocrisy is intentional deception for personal gain or glory.
- **Question 5**
 - “...they think they will be heard because of their many words.” Matthew 6:7
- **Question 6**
 1. “Are my prayers meaningful expressions to God?”
 2. “Do my prayers avoid ‘vain repetitions’ – do they express real confidence in God’s power to respond?”

Slide 11:

- “advantages”?
 - When we pray, we should be expressing the honest feelings of our heart. When we’re alone, we’re most free to do that.
 - When praying in public, there’s the temptation to impress people, or to pray in a way differently from how you’d pray in private.
 - Praying in private removes the danger to be praying “to be seen of men.”
 - Public prayer commonly produces certain pressures, even if one *isn’t* praying “to be seen of men.”
 - We’re conscious of being in the hearing of other people and may suffer the same nervousness as when making a speech.
 - The presence of God may be crowded out by the presence of people.
- Jesus’ intent was not to prohibit public prayer, but it should make us conscious of the pressures.

Slide 12:

- In his prayers, he simply talks to God like a son to a father.
Should we pray like that also? Like a child to a father?
- It’s important you understand where I’m going with this...

My intent is not to criticize anyone for the way he prays. Like we already mentioned, our prayers are private conversations between us and God. That being the case though, don’t we owe it to God to come into his presence with the awe and humbleness he deserves? Shouldn’t we also speak to him in a way that’s both comfortable to us and respectful toward him?

Some phrases we don’t use in normal conversation:

- “beds of affliction” or just “afflicted”
- “highways & biways”
- “ready recollection”
- Because that’s how most of us learned how to pray – by listening to someone else pray in public.
 - Many of us grew up praying those repeated words & phrases, sometimes not even knowing their meaning
 - We didn’t learn to talk to God from our personal needs.

Slide 13-19: <none>