

Permission to Speak



Week 1

I Can Hear You Now
Matthew 6:6-8

Quote

“Because communion with God is so vital, the enemy seems constantly to introduce errors into the church’s understanding of prayer. Every generation at every time faces the necessity to purify a corrupted or confused comprehension of prayer.

In our time, there are many issues to face in this regard. For many, prayer has been replaced altogether with pragmatism. Function overrides fellowship with God. Busyness crowds out communion. For others, prayer lacks a sense of awe and respect. It is flippant, disrespectful, and irreverent. For others, it is demanding, claiming, attempting to force God by some ill-purposed faith to do what He has to do for us. For others, it is routine, ritual, formula.

What God can say in the economy of words that only His supernatural intelligence could select, provides insight into truth that man finds inexhaustible.

Nowhere is that wonder more obvious than in sixty-six words of the Disciples prayer in Matthew 6. Everything every man ever needed to understand prayer is latent in the choice disclosure of those words. That may sound like an astounding claim, but it is true. No set of volumes, no exhaustive thesis of great length, no series of teachings or preachings offered by men could ever have captured the fullness of all that prayer is, and is to be, as does that profoundly simple model.

It sets the standard for all praying. It encompasses all elements in prayer. It is for you, to change your praying—and more, to change your life.”

JOHN MAC ARTHUR, JR.

In A Nutshell

“God invites me into an intimate relationship with Him—my heavenly Father. This relationship is dependant upon God and I being alone together, behind a closed door, where it is only God and I.”

ANDY STANLEY

“The most important thing in your world is not your ministry, family, finances, schedule... It is your personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ because everything else flows from that one thing.”

CHARLES STANLEY

“The church today needs praying people to meet the fearful crisis that is facing her. The crying need of the times is for people in increased numbers—God-fearing people, praying people, Holy Spirit people, people who can endure hardships. We need people who will not count their lives dear unto themselves (Acts 20:24) but count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Savior (Phil. 3:8). The people who are so greatly needed in this age of the church are those who have learned the business of praying—learned it on their knees, learned it in the need and agony of their own hearts.

E. M. BOUNDS

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to be able to describe personal prayer and to apply this description by engaging in focused prayer, approximately 10-15 minutes a day, in at least four of the days during the next week, (seven days).

Scripture Memory

“Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”

Colossians 4:2,3

Matthew 6:5—8

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. 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, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Beginning the Year

“Every week of January we shut down the normal schedule at the Brooklyn Tabernacle for a series of nightly prayer meetings. No other activities or programs go on that week because we know all too well that we must be strong in the Lord for whatever challenges or satanic attacks the New Year might hold. The building is filled to overflowing each night with people seeking the Lord and waiting on His presence.

The next week we return to our regular rhythm of ongoing Tuesday night prayer meetings plus the other classes and activities. Our Prayer Band, headed by Associate Pastor Ken Ware, has a rotating contingent in our building interceding at the throne of grace twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, with no interruptions. At certain times during the year we have also opened up the church in the late afternoons for corporate prayer after work.

Having said all this, I must still admit that our church needs a fresh visitation of God’s Spirit, and all our leadership knows it. Yes we thank God for His blessings, the evidence of His grace all around us. But there is so much more to receive from Him. We are just scratching the surface of what we know God can and will do in and through us.”

JIM CYMBALA

Sermon Notes

“I can hear you now”
Matthew 6:5-9a

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus teaches about what is important when you want God to hear you:

- 1. The question is not “if” but “when” (verses 5a, 6a, 7a.)**
Luke 11:1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”
Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
1 Thessalonians 7:17 pray without ceasing,
- 2. The question is not “if” but “how” (v. 5)**
 - Not to gain reputation (v. 5)
 - Not to receive an earthly reward (v. 5)
 - Not in useless vain repetition (v. 7)
- 3. The question is not “if” but “where” (v. 6)**
Luke 5:16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.
Luke 6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.
- 4. The question is not “if” but “why” (v. 8)**
 - We don’t pray to inform God
 - We don’t pray only to influence God
 - We do pray to be intimate with God
 - Prayer is more than communication
 - Prayer is communion.

Summing it up?

- Do you have a time and a place to meet God?
- Remember: You have, “Permission to Speak.”

Week 1 Group Study

Where do people pray? Can you only pray in a church? People state, "I can pray anywhere." And indeed one can pray anywhere and people do and they should. They can pray on the golf course, while driving their cars, bathing, cooking, eating breakfast, ironing, housecleaning, mowing the lawn, gardening, and just about anywhere at all. And all the while they are praying while engaged in other activities their complete focus and attention is not on Jesus Christ or their heavenly Father.

Life is composed of many relationships and marriage is one of the most personal of all. Marriage is a mirror of our relationship with the Lord. Marriage is always strengthened by deliberate close, connected, intimate communication between a husband and wife. But in the busy lifestyle of today many couples find themselves having hurried conversations about the needs and cares of their lives and families during soccer games, while cooking dinner, getting ready for work, and other accelerated times. Many marriages lack an intimate close personal time of sharing, talking; a daily interlude of focused attention on the one you pledged your life and love to.

We pride ourselves on multi-tasking and list the number of things that we can accomplish simultaneously. "Hey...you don't know how busy I am!" is the cry. In the rush and hurry scurry of life our most important relationships with those we love are damaged and weakened by catching loved ones on the fly.

Marriage is dependant on deliberate healthy intimate communication; it enhances and strengthens our relationship with our mate. So too, does deliberate, intimate communication, known as prayer, strengthen our relationship with God.

So what is Jesus saying about prayer in these first few verses of Matthew 6? In verse 5 Jesus is drawing attention to the hypocrites—Scribes and Pharisees, the religious rulers of the day, who love to stand in prominent places and "PRAY". Using flowery righteous language these hypocrites wanted to be seen by others, they wanted to be recognized and applauded for their piety. They wanted to be rewarded. Jesus states, "I tell you the truth they have been rewarded in full."

But what does He go on to say? "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen." Jesus is still speaking to the disciples and others who are gathered there. He is giving a command, "go"... "Go into your room, close the door and pray." He is telling us to have a definite place for prayer, behind a closed door. He is telling us to be alone. He is telling us to pray! We are to be deliberate about prayer; we are to be alone...with God.

E. M. Bounds states:

*Prayer ought to enter into the spiritual habits, but it ceases to be prayer when it is carried on by habit only...
Desire gives fervor to prayer.
The soul cannot be listless when some great desire fixes and inflames it...
Strong desires make strong prayers...
The neglect of prayer is the fearful token of dead spiritual desires.
The soul has turned away from God when desire after Him no longer presses it into the closet. There can be no true praying without desire.*

A consistent prayer life is to be a daily intimate time with God, when you and I are alone with Him. We are to move beyond where we have been and go where we have never been before, and, our Father will reward us.

The Scribes and Pharisees who were praying publicly had their reward, the applause and the acclaim of men. But when we get alone with God our reward from our Father is not bound to receiving the things we need from God, “for your father knows what you need before you ask him, (Matthew 6:8b, NIV).” Our reward is the joy and knowledge that we have a loving heavenly Father who cares about us and that is engaged with us in a personal relationship.

Our prayer life is also not caught up in the language or flowery words we use. “And when you pray do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words, (Matthew 6:7 NIV).” God listens and He wants us to listen to Him. He wants us to regularly come before Him and focus our attention on Him and talk with Him as we would our dearest closest friend. That is what He is. “The most important thing in your world is not your ministry, family, finances, schedule... It is your personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ because everything else flows from that one thing, (Charles Stanley).”

“Therefore God invites us into an intimate relationship with Him—our heavenly Father. This relationship is dependant upon God and I being alone together, behind a closed door, where it is only God and I, (Andy Stanley).

Identify the Current Issue

The early church fathers were great prayer warriors. They spent hours on their knees before God praying diligently. Great revivals were bound in prayer. In 1830, 1,000 of Rochester, New York's 10,000 inhabitants came to Christ. Albert Finney, the preacher wrote, "Abel Clary continued (praying) as long as I (preached) and did not leave until after I had left. He never appeared in public, but gave himself wholly to prayer."

In 1872, 400 converts came into the church in London England where D. L. Moody was preaching. A bedridden girl in London, Marianne Adlard, had read a clipping about Moody's ministry in Chicago and prayed that God would send him to her church.

In 1909 a great revival in Manchuria, China, took place. The missionary Jonathan Goforth was in London later that year and was taken to see an invalid lady. As they talked about the revival in Manchuria, she asked him to look in her notebook. She had recorded three days when special power (through prayer) had come upon her for his meetings in Manchuria. A feeling of awe gripped Goforth as he realized those were the very days he witnessed the greatest power in Manchuria.

In 1934, in Charlotte, North Carolina, several businessmen along with Billy Graham's father spent a day at the Graham farm praying that God would touch their city, their state, and their world. Many people were moved including Billy Graham who was converted.

JOHN MAC ARTHUR, JR.

"The church today needs praying people to meet the fearful crisis that is facing her. The crying need of the times is for people in increased numbers—God-fearing people, praying people, Holy Spirit people, people who can endure hardships. We need people who will not count their lives dear unto themselves (Acts 20:24) but count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Savior (Phil. 3:8). The people who are so greatly needed in this age of the church are those who have learned the business of praying—learned it on their knees, learned it in the need and agony of their own hearts, (E. M. Bounds)".

Discover the Eternal Principles

Discovery Point One: Get Alone with God

Jesus was commanding us to go and pray. It was not a suggestion but a command to develop a spiritual discipline of prayer. Neither was it a command to go with our list of things that we want or even need. But it was a command to go to a quiet place to be focused on God. We are to give Him our complete undivided attention. Jesus derived His strength from His time of prayer with His Father and so too He wants us to be spiritually strong because every aspect of our life flows out of the relationship we have with God.

- [Q] Where do you currently pray? How conducive is this place to having a conversation with God?

- [Q] Read Matthew 6:5–6. Why would God value a quiet, private place for prayer rather than a busy, noisy place?

- [Q] Where would be the best possible place for you to regularly and intimately pray?

Discovery Point Two: Be “Real” with God

Jesus also wants us to be “real” with God. What does that mean? He wants us be focused on Him. We are not to do all the talking; we should also be still before him. We are to “listen” to Him. Avoid “King James English” or flowery speeches...don’t just babble on.

Pretend; imagine that you are across from Him in the Throne Room of Heaven, what would your posture be, what would your eyes focus on? How would your emotions be responding to this encounter? Not only is He God, He is your Creator, Father, Savior and Friend. He is always forgiving, always loving, always just, and He is God...Jehovah.

[O] In being “real” with God why is it important to know who God is?

[O] Read Matthew 6:7–8. How does it make you feel to know that God values time and place over the words that we use?

Discovery Point Three: Enjoy Your Relationship with God

Just as we enjoy our relationships with others so too God wants us to enjoy our relationship with Him. We were created to have fellowship with God and to have a relationship with Him. Jesus enjoyed His relationship with God the Father. The disciples and others enjoyed their relationship with Christ while He was on this earth. Therefore, because of being created for a relationship with God the greatest experience we can have is to have fellowship with God.

[O] If God knows what we need before we ask, why do we need to pray?

[O] How much time in your prayer life do you spend asking God for things?

[O] How does God reward private prayer? (6:6) Have you ever experienced this?

Apply Your Findings

Read Matthew 6:5–8.

Jesus was giving his disciples a command to pray. He also included instructions. They were not to pray as the Scribes and Pharisees, publicly, but in private. They were not to babble or use vain repetitions as the pagans did. They were to pray in secret and they would be rewarded by God for their prayers.

This command and instruction applies to us today as well and prayer should be a spiritual discipline that we engage in regularly with enthusiasm.

- [Q] What would keep us from being enthusiastic about prayer?

- [Q] Describe the type of prayer Jesus was speaking about.

- [Q] Over the next seven days, make a commitment engage in this type of prayer for at least four of the seven days. Share a testimony about your experience during next week's group meeting.