

The Habit of Prayer: Connecting with God Matthew 6:9-13

Today we are looking at the truths of the Gospel that Jesus taught to His disciples and then asked them to go everywhere and teach everyone that becomes a follower of Christ. Follow along in your Bibles at the commencement ceremony for the disciples after 3 plus years in training.

THE LAUNCHING OF THE STUDENTS

This ending to Matthew's account flows right in step with the rest of the book.

Think about what Matthew does: he records Christ's birth, baptism, temptation, calling the 12 around the Sea of Galilee, training the 12, warning the 12 of His death, dying, rising, re-gathering the 11, inviting them to meet Him back where it all started by the Sea of Galilee, and then comes: Mt. 28:19-20.

So the whole structure of the books looks like a complete training plan with the training captured for us; and then the commission of the trainees to become trainers.

Simple as that.

Now follow along with the commencement address Christ gave them:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

THE SIMPLE PLAN: BECOME & MAKE

So Jesus told them the Gospel truths, they told others those Gospel truths, and today those Gospel truths we were told, we are to live out and pass on.

Kind of a very simple plan.

Not a lot to remember: just pass on to others what you received.

So, what were those Gospel truths they were to pass on? If they were to teach each one who became a disciple how to observe what Christ left for all disciples to observe, it must have been clear to the eleven on the mountain what they were taught, and what they were to pass on. Jesus said, the simple Gospel truths I taught you, that you heard me say and watched me do: that is what you are to write down (that is the written record we know as the 4 Gospels), and that is what you are to teach them to observe.

So what were those truths?

Just using the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel by Matthew, we can trace those basic Gospel truths. We could call what we see in Matthew:

SEVEN GOSPEL TRUTHS CHRIST LEFT US TO PASS ON

Jesus spent 3+ years teaching and preaching some basic Gospel truths. If we sift through His messages we can find there are at least seven basic truths of Christ's Gospel taught, illustrated, and re-taught by Jesus. But, before all the other truths, foundational to everything else is: *becoming a disciple, a child of God, being born-again or saved.*

That is first, and that is what we see opening this Gospel.

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES HOW TO BE: **SAVED.**

That means Gospel truth 1 is Understanding Salvation.

Jesus came to save (Mt. 1:21). So, knowing what salvation is, assured that the work of grace has begun, and knowing how to share that faith is foundational. Since Baptism is always portrayed in the Gospels & Acts as a first step that follows salvation, Believer's Baptism is very much about declaring that we know our Father in Heaven, and are His children.

Matthew 1:21, 23 (NKJV) And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Matthew 4:17 (NKJV) From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 5:3-6 (NKJV) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

So, Gospel truth one to teach others to observe is: **Understanding Salvation.**

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES HOW TO BE: **WORD-FED.**

That means Gospel truth 2 is our Daily Nourishment comes from the Scriptures.

Some of Christ's first words are about the "daily bread" we need from God's Word (Mt. 4:4); and because all our minds are being fed something, we all should be asked: "What is feeding yours?"

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

So, Gospel truth 2 to teach others to observe is: **Feed on the Scriptures daily.**

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES HOW TO: **STAY CONNECTED TO GOD.**

That means Gospel truth 3 is Understand how to: stay connected to God.

Christ's teaching on the necessity and His example of personal prayer habits is a strong reminder (Mt. 6:9-13). Our prayer life always reflects how much we need, trust, and love our Lord.

Matthew 6:9 (NKJV) In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

How many mornings had those disciples awakened to see Christ's bed empty, and they had to go out and look for Him. When they did find Him, what was He often doing? Praying.

So, Gospel truth 3 to teach others how to observe is: **Stay Connected to God**

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES HOW TO: **STAY SURRENDERED.**

That means Gospel truth 4 is Stay Surrendered to God.

Move on to Matthew 6:33. Look how simple, clearly, and directly Christ taught. Read these words with me:

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

We all know that Paul capped his monumental doctrinal letter with a plea for regular, ongoing choices of surrender (Rom. 12:1-2): because we must keep presenting our bodies and seeking the renewing of our minds. But Paul was only reflecting what all those 12 disciples had heard Christ saying over and over again. Look onward to:

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

So, Gospel truth 4 to teach others how to: **Stay Surrendered to God**

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES HOW TO: **SEEK SPIRIT-FULLNESS.**

That means Gospel truth 5 is Seeking Spirit-Filled Living.

As we turn onward to Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus is continuing His training on prayer. This is the famous: ask, seek & knock passage. But look at v. 11. Do you see the Spirit of God in Matthew 7:11? You may not, but the disciples sure did.

Matthew 7:11 (NKJV) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

One of the most powerful parts of studying the Life of Christ is to see how the Lord used four different perspectives to capture a perfect portrait of His Son.

When you look at what else Jesus said, it all connects.

Look at Luke 11:13 with me.

Luke 11:13 (NKJV) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

You see the Holy Spirit there? Luke fills in for the purpose of His Gospel the power of the

Spirit of God. Then the Gospel by John captures words and a scene no other Gospel writer is directed to record. Look at John 7.

When Jesus described salvation it included an overflowing river of the Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39); because we can only be useful to God when we allow Him to overflow our lives.

John 7:37-39 (NKJV) On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So, Gospel truth 5 to teach others how to: **Seek Spirit-Fullness.**

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES HOW TO: **INVEST WITH GOD.**

That means Gospel truth 6 is: Understanding Life is a Stewardship:

Christ's parables so often pointed at an accounting, or stewardship of our lives. We all need to soberly remember that we are each given a lifetime that can be invested or not invested, for the Lord.

Jesus often reminded the disciples that as Christ's servants we have a choice of how good and faithful we will be by how we invest what our Master has entrusted to us. Look next at Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:23 (NKJV) But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

See the different levels of fruitfulness. Now think of the added message Jesus gave in Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:21-23 (NKJV) His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were **faithful over a few things**, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; **you have been faithful over a few things**, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Fruitfulness is rewarded. Fruitfulness is a choice to be a good steward. God has given us all things necessary for life and godliness. That is how Peter put it. We have been given much. God will require from us an accounting.

Growing up under the hearing of God's Word means an accounting.

Growing up with your very own personal copy of God's Word means an accounting to God.

Growing up in a Christian home means answering to God.

Our life is as a steward for God of our time, our gifts and calling, our finances, and our

opportunities. Did we invest each day for the Lord?

So, Gospel truth 6 to teach others that: **We will give an account to God.**

JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES TO: **EXPECT SPIRITUAL WARFARE.**

That means Gospel truth 7 is: Understanding Satan wants to devour me.

Remember how Jesus went right from Baptism to the Wilderness of Temptation (Mt. 3:16-4:10)? That should be a warning because, so do most believers.

The only difference is that He was prepared. Jesus told us the way to survive is to “watch & pray” (Mt. 25:13; 26:41).

Matthew 26:41 (NKJV) Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

We must learn to resist Satan’s neutralizing attempts at our desires to be: Serving in Christ’s Church, Soul-winning as a lifestyle, maintaining Simplicity prompted usefulness & and experiencing the power of Scriptural Meditation.

So, Gospel truth 7 to teach others is that: **Expect Satan’s attacks.**

THE SIMPLE PLAN: BECOME & MAKE

So Jesus told them the Gospel truths, they told others those Gospel truths, and today those Gospel truths we were told, we are to live out and pass on.

Kind of a very simple plan.

Not a lot to remember: just pass on to others what you received.

So, what were those Gospel truths they were to pass on?

Jesus said, the simple Gospel truths I taught you, that you heard me say and watched me do: that is what you are to write down in the Gospels, and that is what you are to teach them to observe.

JESUS TAUGHT SIMPLE GOSPEL TRUTHS

These are the truths that sharpen us as believers, that focus our lives on what matters to God, and what opens our lives to His power and blessings. Here they are:

1. Jesus taught the disciples how to be: **Saved.**
2. Jesus taught the disciples how to be: **Word-Fed.**
3. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Stay Connected to God**
4. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Stay Surrendered.**
5. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Seek Spirit-Fullness**
6. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Live as God’s Steward.**
7. Jesus taught the disciples to: **Expect Spiritual Warfare.**

What’s amazing is that the Gospel truths Jesus taught, are the same truths we are to teach all new believers to “observe” as Matthew 28:20 states it.

Being taught to observe something for the rest of my life is another way of saying cultivating a new habit.

That leads us back to the title of this entire series:

SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL BELIEVERS

These elements are blended, connected, and displayed from the pages of Scripture in the lives of those who followed and served the Lord.

I like to say that the lives of highly useful or effective believers are marked by ongoing right choices, which can be cultivated into spiritual habits. These are actually the 7 Gospel truths that become habits that mark the lives of those who are highly effective for God.

These are the foundational truths of Christ's ministry and are reflected throughout the Book of Acts & the Epistles.

1. **(Saved)** Understanding Salvation
2. **(Word-Fed)** Seeking Nourishment from the Scriptures
3. **(Connected)** Living in Connection to God
4. **(Surrendered)** Cultivating Surrendered & Consecrated Living
5. **(Spirit-Filled)** Seeking Spirit-Filled Living
6. **(Invested)** Understanding Life as a Stewardship
7. **(Watchful)** Expecting Spiritual Warfare

THE LORD'S PRAYER REFLECTS ALL SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL BELIEVERS

These are the truths that sharpen us as believers.

This is the framework for a daily prayer that keeps my day focused on what matters to God.

This prayer can open our lives each time we ask, to His power and blessings.

“OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME”:

That is only possible because I'm **Saved**.

So God wants me every day through prayer to understand more about all Christ did for in through my Salvation.

So, knowing what salvation is, assured that the work of grace has begun, and knowing how to share that faith is foundational.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Focus me** back upon who you are as the God of my salvation.

“THY KINGDOM COME”:

That is only possible when I'm **Surrendered**.

So God wants me every day through prayer to **Cultivating Surrendered & Consecrated Living**: Paul capped his monumental doctrinal letter with a plea for regular, ongoing choices of surrender (Rom. 12:1-2): because we must keep presenting our bodies and seeking the renewing of our minds.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Control me** as my Master.

“THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Spirit-Filled.**

The only ones that can know God’s plan, and will each day for their lives are those who are Seeking Spirit-Fullness.

When Jesus described salvation it included an overflowing river of the Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39); because we can only be useful to God when we allow Him to overflow our lives.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Lead me** in doing what pleases You.

“GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Word-Fed.**

The more I understand how much I need You God, the more I will do what You told me is the only way to survive. I need to Seek Nourishment from the Scriptures.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Supply me** with everything I need to do Your will.

“FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Connected.**

Christ's teaching on the necessity and His example of personal prayer habits is a strong reminder for me to Stay Connected to God. Our prayer life always reflects how much we need, trust, and love our Lord.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Cleanse me** from anything that displeases You.

“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Watchful.**

We must learn to resist Satan’s neutralizing attempts by **Expecting Spiritual Warfare.** Satan’s wants to neutralize all our attempts to be: Serving in Christ's Church, Soul-winning as a lifestyle, maintaining Simplicity prompted usefulness & and experiencing the power of Scriptural Meditation.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Protect me** from getting devoured by the Devil.

“FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY: FOREVER”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Invested** in Heaven.

I need to soberly remember that we are each given a lifetime that can be invested or not invested, for the Lord.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Empty me** so You get all of the credit from my life.

JESUS TAUGHT SIMPLE GOSPEL TRUTHS

1. Jesus taught the disciples how to be: **Saved.**
2. Jesus taught the disciples how to be: **Word-Fed.**

3. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Stay Connected to God**
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7. Jesus taught the disciples to: **Expect Spiritual Warfare.**

JESUS TAUGHT A SIMPLE PRAYER TO CHANGE ME

The seven simple steps, habits, or Gospel truths we are to live by, are found in the natural phrase divisions of this prayer:

1. God, **focus me on who You are**; I NEED You to help me focus;
2. God, **control me each day**. I NEED You to bring me under Your control;
3. God, **lead me through all the myriads of choices life presents each day**. I NEED Your leadership;
4. God, **supply me with whatever I need to accomplish Your will**. I NEED what only YOU can supply;
5. God, **cleans me so I stay in close touch with You and Your plan**. I NEED Your cleansing;
6. God, **protect me from everything that seeks to keep me from You**. I NEED Your protection;
7. God, **empty me so You get all the glory and honor for my life**. I NEED You to empty me so I can be filled with You!