

2022 ... A Year of Discipleship

Prayer

Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is one of the most common. Prayer was one of the foundational habits we see in Jesus' life and ministry. In the gospels two of Jesus' prayers are prominent and actually have names ... the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6 and Luke 11) and the High Priestly Prayer (John 17). While prayer was important in Jesus' connection with His Father and prayer is mentioned frequently in the Bible, it is often misunderstood.

1. Read Luke 11:1. Do we know how to pray or do we know about prayer?

Prayer is often called a "conversation with God." Conversation is ideally two-way communication. God speaks to us and we speak to God.

2. How does God speak to His people?
3. We already know how to have conversations. How do we, in conversation ...
 - a. talk to each other?
 - b. share our needs with people who care about us and can help us?
 - c. give and receive information?
 - d. ask for things?
 - e. express gratitude?
 - f. say we're sorry and receive forgiveness?
 - g. say what's important to us?
 - h. speak words of love and delight?
 - i. listen to others when they speak?
4. If prayer is truly a conversation, what difficulties do people have with prayer?
5. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What can we bring before the Lord in our prayers?
6. Read 1 Peter 5:6-7. Why are we invited by God to pray?

7. Read the Lord's Prayer as shared in Matthew 6:9-13. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus gives us an outline for our prayers:
 - three petitions seeking spiritual blessing
 - one petition seeking material blessing
 - three petitions seeking deliverance from evil

Does your prayer life look like this? Where do your prayers tend to focus?

8. Like all gifts given by God, there are times when humans try to make prayer "work for them." Prayer is not a means to manipulate God. Read Matthew 26:36-44. How does Jesus show us the principle of not manipulating God in our prayers?
9. Read Hebrews 4:16. How are we to approach God in our prayers?
10. Read Mark 11:24 and Matthew 21:21-22. What is the role of faith in our prayers?

Prayer can take various forms. We often think of conversational or intercessory prayer, but there are other ways to pray. Like exercise the best way for a person to pray is the best way for them to pray. Prayer can take the form of

- *Lexio Divina* (Read, Write, Meditate)
- Sung ... many psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are prayers set to music. Luther once said, "He who sings prays twice."
- Journaling ... similar to *Lexio Divina*, but this just consists of the writing

One can also use an acronym to assist in prayer

- ACTS
 - Adoration
 - Confession
 - Thanksgiving
 - Supplication
- PRAY
 - Praise
 - Repent
 - Ask
 - Yield

There are many ways we can bring our requests to the Lord. The challenge we face is creating a context in our lives where prayer is natural and expected. We can always grow in our prayer life. Our heavenly Father invites us to come to Him with our prayers; our cares, concerns, and celebrations. May the Lord bless and strengthen you as you come to Him in prayer.