

STUDY GUIDE

NEW VISION
THE MIDDLE
PRAYER OF
JESUS
MATTHEW
6:5-13
08/20/2017



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

Until we believe what God says about prayer we won't be truly intimate with Him.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Describe your prayer life in one word. Why did you choose that word in particular?

Most Christians would agree that prayer is essential, yet very few of us are satisfied with our experiences in prayer. Why do you think that is?

What are some of the things you must believe to be true about the character of God in order to pray rightly?

Why might Satan want to attack our belief system when it comes to prayer?

Prayer is a gift from God. It is the divinely-orchestrated means by which we can commune with our loving Father. For that reason, the Bible is full of commands and instructions about prayer. Unfortunately, though, most of our prayer lives aren't entirely based on these truths; instead, most of us have bought into some lie about the nature of prayer. Until we confront those lies, we won't be able to be truly intimate with God in the way He desires.

READ AND REBUILD THE STORY READ MATTHEW 6:5-15.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER TELL THE STORY (MATTHEW 6:5-15) DO AS BEST YOU CAN, DO NOT STOP AND TEACH, TRY NOT TO MAKE POINTS (COMMENTARY), JUST TELL THE STORY.

REBUILD THE STORY AS A GROUP: CHRONOLOGICALLY REBUILD THE STORY FROM MEMORY. ASK QUESTIONS IF NECESSARY. LIKE – "WHAT HAPPENED FIRST?", "WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?", "DID WE LEAVE OUT ANYTHING?" FINALLY, HAVE PARTICIPANTS LOOK AT THEIR BIBLES AND SEE IF ANYTHING WAS ADDED OR LEFT OUT OF THE STORY AS THEY GO THROUGH IT ONE MORE TIME

Put yourself in the place of the hypocrites Jesus described. What lies about prayer were they believing?

How did those lies affect the way they prayed?

Based on the way they prayed, how would you describe the god they believed in?

These hypocrites believed in a god who needed to be impressed. No one can be gut-level honest with that kind of god; they would instead fear what this god might think if they exposed themselves before him. Further, they weren't really praying for anything to change, but instead were focused on their own spiritual reputations. The effect was that they babbled on and on.

Does the fact that God knows what you need before you ask Him mean that our prayers don't really matter to God? Why or why not?

How does the fact that God already knows our needs actually fuel our prayers?

Why is it important to recognize the difference between our wants and our needs when we pray?

We can pray confidently and honestly because we know that God is both all-knowing and all-loving toward His children. We don't need to hold anything back from Him because He knows our hearts better than we do. When we pray, we can trust that ultimately He is going to act in our best interest because He loves us.

Do you think prayer usually changes us, or changes God? How can your answer influence the attitude you bring to prayer?

When we remind ourselves of God's unchangingly good and loving character, we can approach prayer with humility. Rather than using endless words that are meant to impress other people, we can simply and honestly talk to God, trusting that over time He will actually use our prayers to mold us into the image of Jesus.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

General Questions to ask after each story. These questions may lead to follow up questions that you ask as you dig deeper into the groups/individuals response to the initial questions.

Where do you see yourself in this story?

What do we learn about Jesus/God in this story?

What do we learn about man in this story?

What is Jesus teaching you personally through this story?

What application/adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?

Extra Questions:

Jesus spend two verses on forgiveness...why is that important?

What does forgiveness look like to you?

What part of forgiveness gives you trouble?

Is it hard for you to forgive the people that have done you wrong?

Since God knows what we need before we ask - why ask?

What is the importance of praying "your will be done"?

PRAY

Spend time in silent prayer, giving your group members the opportunity to voice prayers. After a few minutes, close with a prayer of thanks to God for the ability to communicate with God in prayer.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 6:5-9

6:5. Jesus expects us to pray. He often prayed early at the beginning of the day. At times, He prayed all night, especially before major decisions or significant events. Jesus cited three kinds of prayer to avoid. First, don't pray as those who loved to be seen praying in synagogues and on street corners. Jesus was cautioning against praying in public with the motive of receiving admiring glances and pats on the back for being so devout.

6:6. Jesus instructed us to find a private place for prayer where thoughts of people's responses won't distract us. Thus in secret we can focus on the Father. The greatest reward for praying may be simply having a personal conversation with God; He whom we cannot see sees us and hears us as well (v. 6). Jesus even provided a model prayer to show us how to pray. It begins with a focus on God and His purposes before moving to our personal requests.

6:7. A second mistake when praying is to babble like the idolaters. Jesus was not forbidding prayer for the same thing over and over (see 26:39-44). He even told parables about persistence in prayer (Matt. 7:7-11). Jesus stressed that the Father listens to earnest hearts, not endless words, especially when the words are mechanical. The word translated "babble" appears only here in the Bible (Matt. 6:7). Because of the word's sound, the basic meaning has been suggested as "to stammer"; that is, to repeat words. A derived meaning came to imply going on and on without thinking. This is reflected in various ways such as "use vain [or meaningless] repetitions," "heap up empty phrases," and the like. Prayer that is babble is prayer in form only; it has no substance. Jesus said idolaters prayed that way. Layering on words doesn't impress God, nor do prayers offered with the mind in neutral and the heart in gear, focused elsewhere.

6:8. Third, we need not feel compelled to inform God of endless details about our needs. Jesus reminded us the Father knows the things we need before we ask Him. This is not to discourage us from making specific requests in prayer, for He invites us to do that (7:7-11). It does assure us that He will answer in ways that best meet our needs, further His kingdom, and enhance our usefulness.

6:9. By commanding His disciples to "pray like this" rather than simply "pray this," Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited. "Your name be honored as holy" suggests that Jesus expected His disciples to live righteous lives that honor rather than profane God's name (5:16; Lev. 22:31-32). This is an important precondition for successful prayer.

God is the ideal Father—all-loving, all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, and always present with us. At the same time, He is in heaven, which tells us He is greater than we can comprehend; so we approach Him as our Father with due reverence. The first person plural pronoun "Our" implies that Jesus intended this prayer to be a model for corporate prayer, i.e., a prayer for when disciples gather as a group. This confirms that Matt. 6:5 was not intended to prohibit disciples from praying together publicly in the synagogue or other gatherings but instead prohibited prayers that were motivated by religious showmanship.