

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message
Matthew 6:5-9, Teach us to Pray, "Focus on our Father"
March 04, 2007

Introduction

1. Read Matthew 6:5-9
2. This is a smaller part of Jesus longer discourse usually referred to as, "The Sermon on the Mount". After an initial read, what would you say Jesus wants us to know about prayer?
3. Ray Pritchard in his book, The Deeper Meaning of the Lord's Prayer says,

"We do not pray to inform God of anything. Because God knows all things from the beginning to the end, he knows the future as well as he knows the past. God doesn't need our prayers, but we need to pray. We pray in order to express our complete dependence on our Heavenly Father. We pray to build our faith. We pray because he is God and we are not."

Based on your own thoughts and the preceding quote, what do you think the purpose of prayer

is? Do you think that is the way that most people usually approach it?

4. One way that people often pray is to treat God like a great cosmic gumball machine. If I do all the right things, push all the right buttons, then I should receive what I want. I do this, and God then you do that attitude. Share in your group any examples of this that you may have witnessed or done yourself.
5. Another way to pray is to approach God from the standpoint of relationship. 3 year old children often enter what is known by many as the "why" stage. It seems that there is a question about everything, and every answer leads to a new question. A parent is asked because they know, have experience, can share wisdom. What would it look like to approach God from this relational standpoint?



Getting Inside the Text

1. Read again verses 5-6. Can you think of any modern examples of people who pray to bring glory to themselves? What do you think is the remedy for this?
2. Read again verses 7-8. It was commonly believed by the pagan idol worshippers that if they spoke long enough and pushed hard enough that their gods would become so fatigued with them that they would have to give in. Jesus says in contrast that we have a God who knows our needs before we speak them and does not need to be coerced to be active. (Thinking question) What does this say about the reason that God wants us to pray?
3. What then do you think is more important in our prayers, using the "right" words or approaching God with the "right" heart? Why then do we seem, as people, to focus so much on the "right" words?
4. Read verse 9. This is the beginning of what we know as the Lord's prayer, and it is no coincidence that Jesus encourages his followers to address God using an intimate relational term, "Father". What do you think is the significance of this family language?
5. Look up 1 John 3:1-3. Sin has made us by nature to be enemies of God, yet, because of Jesus sacrifice what does 1 John tell us about our relationship to God. Why is this significant? What does this mean to you?
6. A quick word study in the New Testament will turn up a multitude of Bible verses that celebrate that we are children of God. That we have an eternal inheritance because of Jesus sacrifice in our place. How can seeing God as our heavenly father affect the manner in which we approach him in prayer?

Our Heavenly Father

1. There are many things that should come to mind as we think of God as a heavenly father. Share some thoughts about your experience as a parent or with your own parents that would be impactful when thinking of God as our heavenly father.
2. Spend some time in prayer as a group focusing especially on God as our Father, the privilege we have in calling him by that name and the grace that allows us to approach him at all.