

The title for today's message is: **Do You Know..... How To Pray?**

Jesus said: ***"When you pray, say: " `Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

When and where did you first learn how to pray do you remember? Our parents may have taught us bedtime prayers, or said grace before meals.

If you were raised in the church you probably prayed in Sunday school, in worship service and in sermons.

You may have even taken a class or two on prayer. Yet for the most part our prayer has been obtained, in bits and pieces over the years.

Our spotty education on the subject of prayer often leaves us with questions such as, "how many times can I pray?" and "do I pray right?"

Why is it "my prayers never seem to get answered, and do my prayers really work?" Look, these are real questions that need real answers.

We also end up with a chronic sense of guilt, prayer is one more Christian activity that were not doing so well. That's right even in prayer we fall short.

My friends, there isn't any excuse or reason for any of us to ask these questions. Jesus promised to hear and answer all our prayers, even our smallest prayers.

Look Jesus not only won for us eternal life when He went to the cross, He also opened direct communication between you and me and God.

Jesus taught us all how to pray so we wouldn't be confused when we pray. Look praying is hard enough without being confused as to who to pray to.

Jesus taught His disciples as well as you and me here today, that there's only one to whom we pray to. He said: ***"When you pray say Father."***

God is our Father and it's important for all people to acknowledge that. A perfect analogy is that a father is to provide for the needs of his family.

And that's what God our Father in heaven does for His family of believers. So there's no question Jesus did give us a prayer to use for all our needs.

The prayer he gave, the Lord's prayer. A prayer that covers three of our most basic needs, that our daily needs are met, and our sins are forgiven.

And finally, we are delivered from the power of Satan who only wants us to sin more and more, and pray less and less.

The implication here, is that if we never prayed another prayer, but prayed this prayer, with meaning every day, this prayer alone, would be enough.

This prayer also does another thing for all who believe, that is it acknowledges our dependence on God, as well as our inadequacies.

Jesus wants us to know that what's most important, is that we acknowledge our dependence on our Father in heaven.

Look, regardless if we pray the Lord's Prayer every day, or whether we pray different prayers every day, Jesus gave us a pattern for our prayer.

Now, there are at least three lessons to be learned here in our text for today about prayer alone.

And I hope that these three perspectives on prayer will enable you to grow and deepen your prayer life.

The first lesson Jesus teaches His disciples regarding prayer, is to enter into God's presence, just as a child does with his or her, earthly father.

Martin Luther expands upon this image in his explanation of The Lord's Prayer saying:

"We should enter God's presence with boldness assured that God longs to have us speak with Him, and that He desires to answer all our prayers."

I remember a famous picture of Present Kennedy conducting business in the Oval Office, while his son, John John played on the floor around his desk.

No one, no one had access to the President of the United States, like little John, John.

Look, John, John's access was based on relationship, the President of the United States was his earthly father.

Just as God our Father always welcomes us into His presence with open arms, and a heart that wants only the very best for each of us.

And knowing that God is our Father, means that nothing is too small, or too big for us to bring before Him.

The fact is God is interested in every aspect of our lives, and He is intimately involved in our lives. Just as a father should.

Therefore prayer is more than a life preserver to keep us afloat, or a stuffed animal to comfort us.

No! Prayer is a real relationship, and as a relationship, we don't simply ask for what we think we need, but we also ask to be changed.

The first petition of the Lord's Prayer focus on God. That God's name would be Holy.

That God's kingdom would come, and that God's will, not ours, but His will be done.

And as we look out on the world today, perhaps we, become even more emphatic with our requests.

We have wars, and the constant threat of terrorist activities. Our society is decaying morally, and ethically, its social fabric is being torn apart.

And we hope that God will hear our prayers and help us to clean up the mess that the world has become.

My friends, the good news is God will and has answered our prayers, but remember He answers them according to His will and time.

So we have to be patient because God's will, will be done and is being done one life at a time.

Now, when we ask that God's name be honored and kept holy, were asking that we too will try to live in such a way.

Through this prayer were asking that our lives will honor God, and glorify His name in all that we do and say.

Were asking that we, believers in God, may live in His kingdom, here on earth, as well as for eternity in heaven.

Look, were committing ourselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and to place His will above our will.

So faithful obedience to God and His Word should always be our desire and goal in this life.

And when God is our first priority, prayer then becomes more than just asking for those things we think we need.

God has given all of us who believe solely in Him the assurance that what we ask for, within reason of course, we will receive according to His will.

And whatever we seek we will find, and whatever doors on which we knock will be opened.

But sadly, we too often bring this guarantee before God demanding to know why He hasn't answered our prayers yet, things like.

The lottery, or why our loved one wasn't healed, or why our dream job was given to another person, who we think is less deserving.

The biggest misunderstanding is that we assume that this guarantee is focused on our physical needs.

Some go even further and believe the guarantee given through the Lord's prayer is focused SOLELY on our physical needs, not so.

Sure the prayer is patterned to give us a way to ask for our physical needs, but the pattern is worthless, without a real relationship with God first.

Look if we have a son or daughter relationship with God our Father, and if we were living as disciples of Christ, we can ask for anything, and it will be given.

But remember, God isn't as concerned with our physical comfort, as He is concerned with our relationship with Him.

God longs for us to commit our lives to Him, and trust that He will move in our lives, providing for whatever we truly need.

Look, when we take on the belief that prayer is not “Asking for what we think we need, but asking to be spiritually and physically changed.”

Then, powerful things can, and will happen in our lives, and in our world. Now you have three new perspectives from which to view prayer.

And through which to grow in your prayer life. These new perspectives are to approach God as father first.

And to realize that the answer to our petitions occurs in our lives, and that the guarantee deals with our relationship, and discipleship with God.

These simple ideas have the potential of enabling prayer to focus on our relationships, and at the same time, be transforming in our lives.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.