

Lesson #13: A Prayerful Life

“The news about Jesus spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” —Luke 5:16-17

Jesus prayed a lot. He prayed in public and He prayed with people. And very often He got alone and prayed. Over time, it appears his disciples saw the connection between His prayer life and His transformational ministry. They began to understand that Jesus focus, power, and impact grew out of a transformational prayer life. This is probably why, on one occasion after spending time in prayer, his disciples asked him to “teach us how to pray”. (Luke 11:1).

In Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us how to pray. In two of these in particular Jesus gives us great insight into transformational prayer.

- The Lord’s Prayer passage in 6:9-15 reveals the content of transformative prayer.
- The “Ask, Seek, Knock” passage in 7:7-12 reveals the qualities of a transformative prayer life.

About the “Lord’s Prayer”.

Jesus did not intend for the Lord’s Prayer to be quoted verbatim.

- Jesus said this is “how to pray” not “what to pray”.
- Nowhere in Scripture do we find Christians praying the Lord’s Prayer verbatim
- Jesus just warned his followers about empty, repetitious praying.

What purpose does the Lord’s prayer serve?

- It is an instruction on what to include in our prayer life.
- It is a look into the right focus and attitude to adopt in prayer.

- It is an order you can follow in extended times of prayer.

The Content of Transformational Prayer - Matthew 6:9-15

9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

The Lord’s Prayer, which Jesus gave different versions of in His instructions on prayer, provides great insight into the content of transformational prayer. It is important to note why, and why not, Jesus gave us this model prayer.

Transformational prayer is focused on God.

- It is personal - “our Father”.
- It is reverential - “who is in heaven”.
- It is worshipful - “hallowed be your name”.
- It is missional - “your kingdom come”.
- It is deferential - “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”.

Transformational prayer displays dependance on God.

- Dependance on God for physical needs - “give us this day our daily bread”.
- Dependance on God for forgiveness of sins - “and forgive us our sins”.
- Dependance on God for direction in life - “lead us not into temptation”.
- Dependance on God for deliverance from evil - “deliver us from evil”.

The Qualities of a Transformational Prayer Life - Matthew 7:7-11

Jesus returns to the subject of prayer in Matthew 7. But here His focus is on the quality of our prayer life instead of the content of our prayers.

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

A transformational prayer life is persistent. (Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking)

A transformational prayer life is expectant. (You will receive, you will find, and the door will be opened.)

A transformational prayer life is submissive. (You Father gives good gifts to His children.)

The Impact of a transformational prayer life.

12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. —Matthew 7:12

Questions about the Golden Rule.

Context options:

1. Jesus dropped this pithy saying in randomly.
2. Jesus is summarizing all He previously said in this sermon.
3. Jesus is communicating something about how prayer impacts the person praying.

The meaning of the Golden Rule.

Have the same attitude, speech and conduct toward people as you would want them to have toward you.

Reflect

- ♦ Evaluate the content of your prayers. Is there anything that should be added or changed? Is there any shift in values that should take place in your heart?
- ♦ What evidence is there that you are persistent in praying? Do you expect God to answer - or just hope?
- ♦ Is the Golden Rule the rule of your life? What those close to you say it was?

Do

- ♦ Once each week spend at least 30 minutes in prayer using the outline of the Lord's Prayer to guide you.
- ♦ Keep a prayer list and pray for the items on it every day until God answers it or takes the desire to pray for it way.