



Prayer As Relationship With God

Teaching Tool Text: Matthew 6:5-14

Series: The Beautiful Life (Sermon on the Mount)

Date: 06/13/10

LEADER NOTE

This is a discussion guide that is based on the same topic of the Sunday night sermon at Joshua House. It has been created to be a *tool* to help you teach and facilitate discussion in your group, not a *rule* to constrict you. So feel free to adapt it to fit your personality and discussion style as you see fit. You may want to add verses or skip questions as you adapt it to fit what your needs are. Make it your own.

SUNDAY NIGHT SYNOPSIS

[Leader: this section is here to remind you of the direction of the weekend message.]

Jonathan spoke this weekend on the Lord's Prayer, from Matthew 6:5-14. He talked about how the nature of prayer is essentially about relationship with God, not how to get our way with God or perform mechanical incantations. When Jesus teaches us to pray, he begins with adoration of God our Father, and then moves to petition of personal needs. There is so much packed into this teaching of Jesus on prayer that we are going to focus on the same text in this study. There aren't too many places where Jesus gets this specific—"This, then is how you should..."—so it must be pretty important!

TONIGHT'S BIG IDEA

Prayer is about relationship with God. We cannot have a close relationship with God if we never talk to him or listen for him to speak to us. Jesus gives us a model in the Lord's Prayer of how we can use prayer to grow in intimacy with our Father in heaven.

GETTING STARTED

- What person in your life (friend, family member, spouse, etc.) do you talk to the most and how often do you talk to them?
- What do you think it means about your relationship, that you talk with them so much?
- Have you ever felt hurt by a friend because they never call you or reach out to you? Explain.
- POINT: Relationship takes communication and that's exactly what prayer is: talking with our Father in heaven and it draws us close into relationship with him.

GETTING INTO THE TEXT



Text: Matthew 6:5-15

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

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 others 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.

- How did the Pharisees misuse prayer in verse 5? *[They misunderstood the purpose of prayer by using it for themselves, to be seen by others, to please people]*
- It’s easy to pick on the Pharisees, but what about you—have you ever worried about what people thought about your prayers? Why?
- What’s Jesus’ suggestion for getting rid of this people-pleasing temptation of prayer? Why? *[Pray in secret]*
- How did the pagans misuse prayer in v. 7? *[They babbled with many words]*
- What’s wrong with being wordy? *[Prayer is not magic—it’s not about saying the right words (like a spell) and prayer is not informing God of something he doesn’t already know.]*
- When Jesus says: “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him”, is he saying that we don’t need to ask God for anything? *[No, Jesus tells us in Matt. 7:7 to ask God for what we need. What he means here is that we shouldn’t think that the point of prayer is to inform God. It is to relate with God and express our hearts to him]*
- Read the prayer (verses 9-13). Let’s take some open-ended time to discuss what strikes you about the prayer and why? What do you like about it? *[Allow time for discussion]*
- When Jesus instructs us to begin by praying to our Father, is that an easy thing for you to do? Why or why not?



- Unlike earthly fathers, God is a perfect father. What are some characteristics of God as a perfect father? [*generous, loving, brings purposeful correction, available, involved in life, etc.*]
- The prayer is made up of adoration of God for who he is, and petition for our needs as his children. Which side of this prayer do you find yourself doing more of in your own personal prayer life, adoration or petition? Why?
- **MINISTRY—Lectio Divina:**
 - Tonight we're going to practice "Lectio Divina" (divine reading), which is an ancient form of listening prayer practiced by the church. The text is read out loud three times. Each reading is followed by a period of silence, after which each person is given the opportunity to briefly share what they are hearing as they listen to God.
 - **First Reading**—During the first reading, read the text aloud twice. Read through slowly. The purpose of the first reading is for each person to hear the text and to listen for a word, phrase, or idea that captures their attention. As group members recognize a word, phrase, or idea, they are to focus their attention on that word, repeating it to themselves silently.
 - **Second Reading**—Read the text again. This time, listeners are to focus their attention on how the word, phrase, or idea speaks to their life that day. They should ask: What does it mean for me today? How is the Holy Spirit speaking to me about my life through this word, phrase, or idea? What is God speaking to me? After the reading, allow a brief period of silence and then invite group members to share briefly what they have heard.
 - **Third Reading**—Read the text again. This time, listeners are to focus on what God is calling them to do or become. Experiencing God's presence changes us. It calls us to something—during this final reading, what is God calling you to do or to be as a result of this experience? After the third reading, allow a period of silence, then invite group members to share what they are being called to do or to be. Finish the exercise by having each one pray for the person on his or her right.