

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

E. The Appointment of the Twelve Apostles and Teaching on the Mount

8. Teaching on the Mount, Part VII:

Love for God Motivates Private Prayer

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #074

Base Text: MT 6.5-15 (Parallel Text: None)

5 *“And when you pray, I command you not to 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, I command you to 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, I command you not to keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 I command you not to be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

9 *“When you pray then, I command you to always pray like this:*

‘Our Father in heaven,

cause your name to be honored as holy,

10 *cause your kingdom to come,*

cause your will to be done on earth with the same attitude that characterizes 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.”*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This “superscript ID” is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	On a Mountain in Galilee
Timeline	May, 31 AD (Month Sixteen)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	E. The Appointment of the Twelve Apostles and “Teaching on the Mount”
Title	8. Teaching on the Mount, Part VII: Love for God Motivates Private Prayer

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COMMENT:

In today's reading Jesus taught about the discipline of private prayer. We have seen that the Lord made a regular practice of rising early in the morning, while it was still dark, and finding a secluded place to pray privately every day (DJN #055, #056). He averaged two or three hours a day in this manner. Jesus expected his disciples to likewise maintain their own daily private prayer discipline. In this passage he gave a brief overview of the basic principles of private prayer.

Jesus first addressed the issue of our motivation and preparation for private prayer. He commanded that we “not be like the hypocrites,” who engaged in prayer to receive the praise of those who saw them praying. These people called attention to their prayer life, for they were seeking human recognition of their surpassing spirituality. If we are not emulate the hypocrites, who should be imitate?

Jesus alone is our example. No other prayer example compares with his.

Next, **Jesus commanded that we pray in private.** The goal is to seek the intimacy of the Trinity's presence and fellowship, so we need to make the conscious decision to “shut the door” on everything else and focus on God alone. When our mind wanders we tenaciously keep on bringing it back to the pursuit of God. Having a regular, secluded place to pray is a great resource for the practice of daily prayer.

Jesus' third command regarding private prayer was not to emulate the pagans, either. This deals with our attitude in approaching God. Why will he commune with us, and hear us? The pagan religions assume that their god(s) is (are) are far away, and unaware of their needs, or even actively out to bully or injure them. Pagans are afraid of what their god might do to them next. So, they make large noises, repeat their requests over and over again, and make “sacrifices” to appease the malicious intent of their gods. They have to “convince” their god(s) to do good to them.

Christians, on the other hand, approach God as their Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, in his own resources and position as the perfectly righteous Son (“in Jesus' Name”), by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our God knows everything we need before we are aware of it ourselves, loves us unconditionally enough to sacrifice His Son for us when we were still his enemies, has already given us all the riches of His Son when we believed in Jesus, and has a perfect plan to provide for all of our needs according to his riches—for his glory.

We do not have to convince God of anything when we pray—we just need to agree with his good and perfect will for us. We need to consciously remember these things every time we pray. Jesus commanded us to do so.

Therefore, Jesus next commanded us to follow a pattern of praying passionately about six specific areas of our lives, every day. This was the purpose of his “model” prayer pattern— the so-called “Lord's Prayer.” Jesus' intent was not that we would merely repeat the prayer. He desired his disciples to pray about each of the six essential needs. Jesus used the imperative voice in Greek in each of these requests. This was to underscore how passionately--intensely--earnestly we need to pursue the six needs.

The six requests were grouped in two clusters of three each. The first cluster begins with our need to glorify God—to seek HIS control over our lives.

We begin by praising God's person and character—his “name.” Prayer begins by focusing on the goodness and greatness of who God is with worship, praise and thanksgiving.

The next request is for God's kingdom to come on earth—that we might be faithful in **“making disciples of all the nations.”** Just as we personally worship God, our vision must expand into the burning desire for all people to worship him as we do.

Then, the third request is that we will passionately obey God out of love for him with the same attitude of joyful worship as the angels and hosts in heaven. There is no complaining about obedience in heaven—just rapture in the glory of doing it! This is to be our attitude on earth. This will only happen through passionate prayer.

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The second cluster addresses our greatest personal needs. The first is for **“daily bread”**-- for God to provide for all of the physical, logistical and spiritual needs that we have in order to passionately obey him. HE must give us the power and resources to do his will, for it is way beyond our own sinful abilities. So we pray for his provision.

Our second personal need is for forgiveness. As we seek for an obedient attitude, and the resources to do God’s will, we are constantly faced with the reality of how we fall short in our obedience. We have daily need of forgiveness and cleansing. God loves to clean us up. Praying for our own forgiveness will also lead us into our need to forgive other people as well. It can be no other way.

Having received and extended forgiveness, we are left with the need to pray that next time we will NOT fall when we are tempted, and be led into doing God’s will by the power of the Holy Spirit instead. Thus, we come full cycle again, as we worship, praise, and thank God for his character and goodness that makes this growth process possible.

A disciple who takes the time to pray passionately and earnestly through each of these six requests each day will grow into Jesus’ likeness. It is impossible not to do so. On the other hand, disciples who do not get alone with God each day to pour out their hearts in pursuit of growth in these areas will not grow in them. It is really that simple. These six recurring prayer requests are the engine that powers a lifetime of faithfully following Jesus.

It is significant that Jesus only took the time to re-emphasize one of these requests at the conclusion of the teaching. If we do not forgive others from the heart, just as we ask God for his forgiveness of us, we will find that we remain unforgiven ourselves. What was Jesus saying here?

Our own forgiveness, and our forgiveness of others is based on the fact that Jesus died to forgive all sins. If his death was not sufficient to provide the forgiveness of someone else, then it was not enough to provide our own forgiveness, either. This is the crux of the matter. Either Jesus’ death atoned for all sin, or none. Thank God, he DID atone for all the sins of all the people, of all the ages. Therefore, our personal forgiveness and our forgiveness of others is all based on the same sacrifice of Jesus.

APPLICATION:

Jesus began this teaching by saying, **“when you pray...”** Jesus assumed that we will pray, just as he assumed the Twelve apostles and greater group of disciples he was teaching on the Mount would pray. The only way to learn to pray is to consistently pray.

When do you pray every day?

If you do not have a specific time and place of prayer in your daily schedule, you will not do it regularly. It is that simple.

If you already have a set daily prayer time, how will you redouble your focus on these six specific requests every day?

If you do not have a schedule daily prayer time, when will you begin? Where will you pray? How will you pray through these six requests?