

Bible Stories for Adults

Jesus Teaches Us to Pray

Matthew 6:1-18

Opening

Gathering: Describe what makes a good prayer.

Today's Focus: Jesus taught us how to pray in God's will.

Key Verses: *This, then, is how you should pray...* Matthew 6:9

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*)

Why are these chapters called the *Sermon on the Mount*?

Matthew 5:1-2; 7:28-29 = They include Jesus' teachings to His disciples from a mountainside

Did Jesus simply reinforce the wisdom of society, or did He contradict common sense?

Matthew 5:43-44 = He showed how social standards fall way short of God's standards

How did He define God's standards for His chosen people?

Matthew 5:20, 48 = Be more righteous than the most "obedient", Be perfect

Was Jesus saying that life would be better for us if we live as He described?

Matthew 5:11-12 = No, we may even be persecuted, insulted and abused

Then why should we live as Jesus described?

Matthew 6:19-21 = We will be rewarded in heaven

But we still need to worry about necessities like what we will eat or drink or wear. Right?

Matthew 6:31-33 = Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness & God will handle rest

Praise From Men (*John 12:43*)

What Jewish group worked their hardest to be righteous by keeping every dot of the law – and then some?

Acts 26:5 = The Pharisees

What problem did Jesus find with their efforts? = They taught that riches were a sign of God's pleasure

Luke 16:13-15 = Their efforts evolved into pleasing men, not God

But what was wrong with working to keep God's law?

Amos 4:4-5 = They were doing it to get praise from others, not to worship God

How was it later proved that their motive was to receive praise from men?

John 12:42-43 (5:41-44) = Many kept their faith in Jesus secret to keep praise from men

Jewish Righteousness (*Luke 18:9-14*)

What parable did Jesus tell to make this point?

Luke 18:9-10 = The prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector

What three pillars of a righteous Jewish life did this Pharisee exhibit? = List on board

Luke 18:11-12 = Prayer, fasting and giving to the poor

What did Jesus say God really wants?

Luke 18:13-14 = Putting God first, not ourselves

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Acts of Righteousness (*Matthew 6:1*)

What did Jesus warn about the ways we try to be righteous?

Matthew 6:1 = Don't do them to show off to others

So was Jesus saying we shouldn't try to do good things?

Ephesians 2:10 = No, we were created in Christ Jesus to do good works

So then, is He saying it is wrong to do good deeds if someone sees or finds out about them?

Matthew 5:16 = No, we are to let others see our good deeds and praise God

What is Jesus then saying about the good deeds we do?

1 Peter 4:11 (1 Corinthians 10:31) = Do them to bring glory to God

Giving Alms (*Matthew 6:2-4*)

Tzedakah = Jews used this same word both for *righteousness* and *almsgiving*

Why was giving to the poor such a key part of a righteous Jewish life?

Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10-11 = God commanded them to give to the poor

What warning did Jesus have about giving to the needy?

Matthew 6:2 = Don't make a big show of it; don't do it to be honored by men

Hypocrite = Greek for "an actor who wears a mask" (putting on a show)

What does Jesus say about giving to make you proud of yourself?

Matthew 6:3-4 = Live so that when you give, you don't even notice it is praiseworthy

What, then, should be our motivation for giving to others?

Colossians 3:17 = To bring praise and thanks to God

Fasting (*Matthew 6:16-18*)

Were the Jews required to fast by any of their laws?

Leviticus 16:29-31 = All Jews were to fast on the Day of Atonement every year

What were some of the reasons the Jews fasted? = Don't read if short on time

1 Samuel 7:6 = To prove that penitence was real

2 Samuel 12:16 = In mourning or distress

Judges 20:26-27a = To seek God's intervention to save the nation

Isaiah 58:2-3a = To get God's attention

What was one of the problems with the ways the Jews fasted?

Isaiah 58:3b-5 = They only went through the motions and missed the purpose

What is God's purpose for fasting?

Isaiah 58:6-7 (6-10) = To free us to do God's work, in His name, giving glory to Him

What other problem did some Jews have with fasting?

Zechariah 7:4-6 = They did it for themselves

How was this being done in Jesus' day? = Jews fasted Mondays & Thursdays, busy market days

Matthew 6:16 = Fasters made a show - hair disheveled, clothes soiled, faces whitened

How did Jesus address this problem? Did He say we shouldn't fast?

Matthew 6:17-18 = No, He said not to put on a show; Fast privately with God

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Prayer (*Matthew 6:5-8*)

What was the third key part of a devout Jew's life?

Psalm 32:6a = Prayer

Problems with Jewish habits of prayer: = Don't read if short on time - went through motions

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 = Became very formalized (Verse is part of *Shema*, a required prayer)

Isaiah 1:13-15 = Specific prayers were prescribed for every situation, meaningless

Acts 3:1 = Specific times were prescribed for praying - 3, 6 & 9 hours (9am, noon, 3pm)

2 Chronicles 6:40 = Specific places seen as more effective for prayers (temple, synagogue)

Mark 12:40 = Long prayers became considered better prayers (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

Nehemiah 1:6a = Prayers would be repeated over and over to get God's attention

What other problem did Jesus address? = Would try to be at busy corner at 3/6/9 prayer time

Matthew 6:5 = Some tried to show off with their prayers

What instructions does Jesus give us for when we pray?

Matthew 6:6 = Don't put on a show, Go pray privately with God

Does this mean we shouldn't pray in public? = Public prayer should be built on private prayer

Matthew 18:19-20 (1 Timothy 2:1,8) = No, God wants us to join together in prayer

What other prayer problem did Jesus warn against?

Matthew 6:7 = Trying to make long prayers to make sure God hears and understands us

But what if a short prayer cannot include all the details of what we need?

Matthew 6:8 = It doesn't matter, God knows already, He just wants us to ask

Since God already knows our prayer, do we even need to pray?

Matthew 7:7-8 = Prayer is our fellowship with our Father, He wants us to ask out of faith

What if it God doesn't seem to answer?

Luke 18:1 = We should continue to pray and not give up

How do we know if we are praying for what we should?

John 15:7 = If we remain in Christ, our prayers will be in His will and will be honored

What if we don't know how to verbalize what we really want to say?

Romans 8:26-27 = The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express

A Guide for Prayer (*Matthew 6:9-13*) = Luther's Explanation

What format did Jesus give that can guide our prayers to God? = NIV footnote adds doxology

Matthew 6:9-13 = The Lord's Prayer - *This is how (not what) you should pray*

Why does He address the prayer to *Our Father who art in heaven*? = *Abba* means *Daddy*

Matthew 7:11 = God is truly our loving Father; He loves and cares for us greatly

What does this mean? Here God encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father & we are His children.

We therefore are to pray to Him with complete confidence just as children speak to their loving father.

Why do we place God's name above all names with the phrase *Hallowed be Thy name*?

Psalm 138:2 = *You have exalted above all things Your name...*

What does this mean? God's name certainly is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that we may keep it holy.

When does this happen? God's name is hallowed whenever His Word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God live in harmony with it. Help us to do this, heavenly Father! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to the Word of God dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, heavenly Father!

How do we look for our lives to change by the request *Thy kingdom come*?

Romans 14:17 = *The kingdom of God is of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*

What does this mean? God's kingdom comes indeed without our praying for it, but we ask in this prayer that it may come also to us.

When does this happen? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe His holy Word and live a godly life on earth now and in heaven forever.

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A Guide for Prayer (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

How are we blessed by asking to be included as *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*?

Romans 8:31-32 = God's will is to be with, bless and save all who love Him

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is surely done without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may be done also among us.

When does this happen? God's will is done when He hinders and defeats every evil scheme and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful self, which would prevent us from keeping His name holy and would oppose the coming of His kingdom. And His will is done when He strengthens our faith and keeps us firm in His Word as long as we live. This is His gracious and good will.

Why should we not worry and trust God to *Give us this day our daily bread*?

Matthew 6:25-33 = God knows we need them and provides to those who seek first His kingdom

What does this mean? God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all people, though sinful, but we ask in this prayer that He will help us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanks.

What is meant by "daily bread"? Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name, and true friends and neighbors.

What is our part in *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*?

Matthew 6:14-15 = As we are blessed to be a blessing (Gen 12:2-3), we are forgiven to forgive

What does this mean? We ask in this prayer that our Father in heaven would not hold our sins against us and because of them refuse to hear our prayer. And we pray that He would give us everything by grace, for we sin every day and deserve nothing but punishment. So we on our part will heartily forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

How do we ask for God's help in avoiding temptations with *And lead us not into temptation*?

James 1:12-15 = God does not tempt us, but allows Satan to do so; we ask God's help

What does this mean? God tempts no one to sin, but we ask in this prayer that God would watch over us and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful self may not deceive us and draw us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins. And we pray that even though we are so tempted we may still win the victory.

What event are we looking towards with *But deliver us from evil*?

John 12:31-32 = When the evil one, Satan, is driven out and we are called to heaven

What does this mean? We ask in this prayer that our heavenly Father would save us from every evil to body and soul, and at our last hour would mercifully take us from the troubles of this world to Himself in heaven.

How does God's Word close with *For Thine is the kingdom & the power & the glory forever & ever*?

Revelation 1:5b-6 = Used to open the book describing the promised end times

What does "Amen" mean? Amen means Yes, it shall be so. We say Amen because we are certain that such petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven and are heard by Him. For He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us.

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I done acts of righteousness in order to impress others?
(*Matthew 6:1; 23:5-7; 1 Sam. 15:30; Isaiah 64:6; Amos 4:4-5; Luke 16:15; John 5:41-44; 12:42-43*)
2. Do I give to others out of love or to impress others or to get a tax deduction?
(*Matthew 6:2-4; 10:8; Proverbs 14:21; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15; 1 Timothy 6:18*)
3. What special ways have I expressed my devotion and dedication to God?
(*Matthew 6:16-18; Exodus 28:40-41; Numbers 6; Nehemiah 9:1-3, 38; Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 4:19*)
4. When have I felt uncomfortable praying in a group because I didn't feel that my prayer would be good enough?
(*Matthew 6:5-8; Deuteronomy 4:7; Luke 18:10-14; Acts 1:14; Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 6:18*)
5. How often are my prayers meaningless ritual instead of from the heart? (*Matthew 6:9-13; 7:7-8; 1 Chronicles 5:20; Isaiah 1:13-15; Mark 12:40; Luke 18:1; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17*)