

Sunday School
April 26, 2020

-Read: Matthew 6:7-15; 7:7-11

-Questions to consider and discuss:

- Jesus' model prayer is instructive in numerous ways. First, Jesus doesn't say all that much, yet what he does say is extremely impactful. 1st-Century Pagans would mindlessly repeat the names of gods or phrases over and over. God isn't looking for a mantra, or even a grocery list, but rather earnest, honest engagement with God. Second, Jesus begins his prayer focused on God, then moves to the individual (though focused in a communal setting).
 - The flow of Jesus' prayer: 1) Extolling God's name/character; 2) A desire for God's plans and purposes to be accomplished on this earth through whatever means God chooses (including through us); 3) A plea for God to take care of the necessities of daily life; 4) A request for mercy *and* for mercifulness towards others; 5) Committing one's life into God's hands, seeking refuge, protection, and pure living.
 - **Q:** Which of these areas do you need to focus on more in your prayer life?
 - The connection between prayer and forgiveness is apparently quite important to Jesus, as he makes clear in vv. 14-15, immediately following his example prayer. If we want a good connection and relationship with God that is truly reconciled, then our relationships with others must look that way as well.
- Read: Proverbs 30:7-9. This passage lines up extremely well with Jesus' ask that God "give us this day our daily bread." We should not want too much, but also not too little; rather, we should want God to supply us with *exactly* what we need.
 - Most Americans are wildly wealthy when compared to the vast majority of the global population. We struggle with entrusting our daily needs to God. Frequently, *we* want to ensure that we will have enough, and so we work really, really hard, we save, we stockpile, we sometimes hoard. This boils down to a trust issue. That's not to say that we shouldn't have savings accounts (God still expects us to be good stewards and to exercise wisdom with finances). However, we need to rely on *God*, not on ourselves. Also, we shouldn't be asking for or expecting a surplus. We should trust that if God was able to get us through 1 day with the things that we really need (food, water, shelter, etc.), then God will be able to get us through the next day, and then the next, so on and so forth.
- In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus gives a 3-part model for petitioning God: Ask, Seek, Knock.
 - Read: Luke 18:1-8. Jesus could have just stopped at "ask." However, he wanted to show his disciples that your prayer should be aligned with taking faithful action (like a farmer who prays for rain, then gets the fields ready). Also, prayer should have a persevering aspect to it. Certain prayers might last for a long season. Jesus parable of the persistent widow displays the effect of steadfast endurance in prayer.
 - Read: James 1:17. God knows how to give good gifts to us, plain and simple. God seeks to bless, but desires that we rely on God for our needs and blessings (and also give honor and glory to God). This doesn't mean that everything will go well

100% of the time for believers, or that if you pray and give money to God, that you'll be blessed with immense health and wealth. God simply wants us to acknowledge that God is the source of all good things.

- What is one takeaway from this teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that you can apply this week?