**Calvary Fellowship 5.29.2022 Matthew 6:5-14 “How to Pray Like Jesus”**

* **So my youngest daughter Olivia is 10 & she’s so much fun**
* Her birthday is right after Christmas& we throw her a party every year b/c we want her to know that her birthday isn’t swallowed up by Christmas
* So we threw a huge party when she turned 3 - It was supposed to rain the entire day & the whole week we were praying for good weather & the day of, it was perfect weather for a party
* Olivia had also been sick & we scheduled the party for the week before & we moved it to the next week so she would feel better
* We rented tables, white chairs, white linens, & a bounce house for everyone
* So we’re getting ready for the party & I’m bringing the coolers out I notice that a bird has come by & “used the restroom” all over our tables & white linens
* So my mom & I take the next hour to grab all of the linens & wash them, dry them & then put them back on the tables like nothing ever happened
* I go inside to grab some party supplies & bring them outside & another bird w/ intestinal problems comes by & relieves himself all over my tables again
* So I grab all of the linens, take them inside, wash them, dry them & bring them out before the party starts
* So then people are arriving & we’re putting out the food & I see another table where a bird has left its’ mark
* By the time, I don’t even care anymore - I put a napkin over it to cover it & no one was any the wiser
* At the end of the day, I was praying & I said, “Lord, it was supposed to pour. Thanks for changing the weather. Also, thanks for healing Olivia.”
* “And God, I understand that U allow things to build up our faith. But I do have 1 question: what was up w/ those birds? God, that was disgusting.”
* **Prayer is a funny thing - sometimes we see pray & we see God work in amazing ways & other times birds are pooping all over us**
* Have U ever had the experience where U don’t know what to pray?
* **There are moments in our lives when we want to pray for someone but we don’t know how to pray for them**
* Have U ever prayed for 2 people who like each other to get together? That’s a scary prayer to pray - what if it happens & it’s a disaster?
* Then in some odd way U think it’s your fault b/c U prayed for it to happen
* It’s not b/c thankfully God is sovereign & has veto power over all of our prayers
* **And I know that everyone prays - even atheists pray - atheists are all anti-God under 1 of their kids gets sick - then they become very open to God**
* But I believe 1 of the reasons people we don’t pray 1st is b/c we don’t know the power that’s found in prayer & calling on God to act
* **1 of my favorite stories about prayer is found in Acts 12 - Peter has been put in prison & the believers are praying for Peter to get out**
* So God answers the prayer & an angel breaks him out of prison
* Then Peter goes to the house where the prayer meeting was taking place
* He starts banging on the door & no 1 answers - finally a girl named Rhoda goes to the door & sees it’s Peter - but she’s so excited, she forgets to open the door
* “When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, ‘Peter is standing at the door!’ ‘You’re out of your mind!’ they said.” (Acts 12:14-15)
* Thy were praying for Peter to get out of prison & when Peter shows up, no 1 believes it b/c, U know, Peter’s in prison, but we’re praying he gets out
* “Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.” (Acts 12:16)
* So we can find ourselves in the place where we aren’t sure if our prayer is going to be answered - That’s a frustrating place to find yourself in
* And we all find ourselves there at certain moments of life
* **Here’s the question we need to answer: What do we do when we’ve prayed for a week, month, or year & we still haven’t seen the result we’re hoping & asking God for?**
* These are the moments that we want to give up b/c we start believing 1 of 2 things: #1 - either prayer doesn’t work, or #2, prayer just doesn’t work for me
* Neither of those things are true - prayer works, but sometimes there’s a work God wants to do in me & in U that’s greater than the answer we want
* And there’s something that happens to us in the process of praying & that’s what Jesus wants to talk to us about
* **We’re been in a series of teaching through Matthew that we’re calling, “The Story” - we call it that b/c if U will learn His story, it will change yours**
* And Jesus has been giving a sermon called, “The Sermon on the Mount” & He’s been telling us that we need to consider what we do
* B/c it’s not just our actions that matter, but also the motivation behind the actions - He mentioned that about giving last time
* And here He’s going to talk about what we do when we pray
* B/c the attitude behind our prayers matter & what we are seeking from God when we pray matters & what we do w/ the answers God gives us matters

**———(v. 5-8)———**

**#1 - Prayer is Connecting with God**

* This is totally counter cultural – Rabbis in Jesus’ day taught the exact opposite
* **The Pharisees set up a system that at 9,12, & 3 – no matter where they were, they would stop & pray – that doesn’t sound like a bad idea**
* But they worked it out so they’d be at the busiest intersection in town at each of those hours so everyone could see them
* That’s not connecting w/ God – that’s performing for an audience
* Jesus contrasts their performance prayers w/ entering a secret place or closet
* When Jesus talks about a prayer closet, don’t think about the place in your home where you mop, broom, & the rollers blades you swore you’d use are
* The prayer closet had to do w/ this: **Shawl** - Every Torah observant Jew wore 1
* So when a Jew wanted to connect w/ God, he would put his shawl over his head & enter his prayer closet - It isn’t loud, it isn’t flashy, it’s isn’t a show
* There’s no selfie stick - It’s a private place where I can shut the outside world out & connect w/ God b/c that’s what prayer is about
* Why? B/c prayer is 1 of the places where we build our relationship w/ God
* And U can hear it when people when people pray - some Christians pray like they just met God earlier today - “Hello God, How are U today? It’s Bob… Franquiz. I don’t know if U remember me. We met a while back through a mutual friend… well, he’s not really a friend. More like a frenemy - but I guess I’m not allowed to have enemies. But anyway… what was I saying?”
* And then there’s people who pray & U know this isn’t their 1st rodeo - they’re been rolling deep w/ Jesus for quite some time
* **Let me tell U who the best person I know at praying from your heart - my son Xander - He and God are good friends, I’m sure of it**
* B/c Xander talks to God so naturally & comfortably like they’ve been pals for yrs
* I realized this when Xander was around 4 years old - he prayed a pray that are so fantastic & so typical of how he always prays, that I got up from dinner & wrote ti down so I wouldn’t forget it
* This was 4-yr old Xander’s prayer at dinner: “God, thank U for this food & for our family & our friends. And God, I’ve been playing the Jake & the Neverland Pirates game on Disneyjunior.com/pirateandprincesssummer
* And the level where Jake has to ski down the hill is really hard
* My mom says I need to relax b/c it’s only a game & games shouldn’t get me upset. So I just take a deep breath & say to myself, ‘calm down’.
* Oh yeah, Lord, thank you for making everything & all of the awesome stuff in the world. And help us have a great day. And God, I hope U have great day too. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”
* This is the heart of God for U - when U pray or give or serve or fast w/o any fanfare, it builds your relationship w/ Him & that changes your life & your future like nothing else can

**———(v. 9-14)———**

**#2 - Prayer is Changing My Perspective**

* U may have grown up in a religious tradition where U prayed these words every day, but U never stopped to think about the words
* They are so powerful & if we’ll model our prayers after Jesus’ prayer, we will be closer to God, more forgiving, more grateful, & free from the guilt off the past
* **So let’s walk through this prayer phrase by phrase & really understand what Jesus is trying to teach us…**

**#1 - Acknowledge the Relationship** - Remember, Jesus said that some people pray & think they’re going to be heard by their many words

* They believe it’s the way they pray or the length of the prayer or the approach they take that will cause God to answer their prayers
* Jesus says, “That’s not the right approach at all. There’s the best approach: realize that God is your Father who loves U & ants to hear from U.”
* I mean do U listen to your kids b/c they come to U in the right way & say the right words?” No - in fact, your kids probably approach U the wrong way all the time - but U answer b/c of the relationship
* **1 of my kids - and I’m not going to tell U which 1, b/c if I do it triggers a** compensation agreement that we have where I pay my kids when I tell certain stories about them - so I’m trying to save a few bucks here, ok?
* But they came into my office at home to talk to me & sat down & said, “What’s up my dude? Can I ask U a question?”
* I said, “I don’t know. Is your dude in a question answering mood? But ask your dad. He might be more amenable to your inquiry at this time?”
* Why? B/c relationship is the best means by which to be heard by God & the best means by which we can know that God hears us
* And U can be confident that if we love our kids & want what’s best for them, that God loves us even more - He’s expound on that idea in chapter 7

**#2 - Acknowledge God’s Position** - Hallowed means holy - I think 1 of the things that gets lost in the modern church is the holiness of God

* In OT times, people were very aware of the holiness of God b/c if U didn’t approach God correctly, it was over for U
* But now we act like Jesus is our pal or like He’s 1 of the people we hang out w/
* Do U remember this? (pic) He’s called “My Buddy” - He had a catchy song
* My Buddy always reminded me of this guy (pic) - I always thought they were related, but Chuckie was the 1 that smoking meth in High School
* I think a lot of people see God as their buddy - God hangs out w/ them - He’s their co-pilot - that’s the dumbest bumper sticker ever
* If there’s 2 options for a pilot - U & God - you’re going to put God as the co-pilot
* In fact, what are U doing even near the controls?
* When we pray “Holy is Your name” we are reminding ourselves that while God loves & Jesus died for us - He is a holy God & deserving our worship

**#3 - Invite God’s Rule** - “Your Kingdom Come, your will be done” is asking God for earth to become like heaven - b/c if U haven’t noticed, this isn’t heaven

* And listen, my heart goes out to the people of Uvalde, TX & this tragedy
* And our heart breaks b/c God’s will hasn’t been done on earth like it is in heaven - we get angry b/c God’s will isn’t being done on earth like in heaven
* We have to start w/ a belief - that God is completely good
* “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)
* Now, some people struggle w/ this b/c they’ve bought into this idea started around 300 B.C. w/ Epicurus (pic), he created what is called Epicurus’ dilemma
* It was later brought back by Scottish skeptic David Hume in the 18th century
* But U probably know it best by the latest philosopher Lex Luthor **——video——**
* **Isn’t this a difficult dilemma? Well, if you’ll indulge me, let me change the story & allow me to be the object who has the dilemma**
* **The other day I took my family went out for lunch & as we’re walking out we see this green caterpillar & the kids are going crazy over it**
* My kids like Caterpillars & multi-legged bugs like that b/c at bedtime I sometimes tell them the tales of Maxi-million centipede secret agent
* So they asked, “Can we take him home?” We said no - they begged & pleaded & cried & we still said no - so let’s stop & create the dilemma
* What if my kids said, “If my dad was all powerful he would bring this good into my life & if he was all good, he wouldn’t keep this good from me. There’s no way dad is neither good nor powerful or able to bring us joy
* Here’s the problem w/ that dilemma - those green caterpillars are poisonous & I said no b/c I want my kids to be alive
* Here’s the point: God’s delay in doing what U want doesn’t mean He lacks power or love - it means U & I lack the understanding to know what He’s doing
* B/c contrary to what Lex Luthor thinks, God’s ultimate goal for me isn’t my happiness - it’s my transformation into everything I was created to be
* That means sometimes God will do things or not do things that I don’t understand b/c God has His eye on the long term
* And God will even make decisions that make Him look bad in our eyes in the moment b/c God’s goal is our ultimate good not just our momentary happiness
* And by the way, to answer Lex’s question about his dad - God knows & God weeps over the violence in this world
* And God has a plan - it’s called the Gospel of Jesus Christ transforming lives as the church of Jesus Christ rises up to reach a lost world
* But God won’t violate your ability to chose - b/c` for Him to violate your ability to chose would be cause to call Him not completely good
* But U can’t make evil choices & then hold God responsible for not stopping U from doing the evil - that’s an argument from absurdity
* God is completely good - so good in fact that He’s willing to be misunderstood by U in the moment so He can do His ultimate good in U
* **And when someone says, “Well, why couldn’t God have stopped the shooter?”And it’s true - God could have, so let’s examine that**
* If God stopped every bullet & every evil thing from happening, there’s a word for that - heaven - wanting that is a good thing - we all seek it
* “Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope,the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.” (Romans 8:18-23)
* **So let’s dig a little deeper - the supreme ethic God has given to us is the ethic of love - but U can’t have love if there is no freedom to not love**
* It’s like my daughter Livi - she has this Elmo doll that says, “I love U” every time U press the button - but it’s not really love b/c the doll can’t decide to not love
* We all want God to stop every bullet & keep every disaster from happening, but this isn’t heaven & everyday the world reminds us that this isn’t heaven
* B/c mankind was given a will - the ability to make choices to follow God or reject Him & for God to deny a person of the ability to make a choice (even a terrible one) is denying that person the ability to be human
* So when we ask God to intervene, we are asking Him to rob us of our ability to love - And in doing so, we’re asking God to rob us of our humanityAnd here’s the other thing - we’re asking the question of God to stop the bullet b/c we were created w/ the ability to choose
* If God stopped every evil thing from happening, we wouldn’t have the ability to ask the question b/c the freedom of choice had been taken away
* And we have the ability to choose b/c we were created to love God & love others - that’s why these moments hurt us so deeply
* B/c they are an offense to what it means to be human - b/c we intrinsically understand that were created to love & these moments violate our humanity
* But the Christian is able to love God supremely & trust that there is a meaning to all of this madness & that there will ultimately be justice
* And by the way, all the people who say that hell is this barbaric idea
* They are all strangely silent about that right now - b/c they know that if there’s no eternal punishment, then there real is no justice
* This person took 18 lives & justice was him getting 1 bullet - nope
* Justice is him standing before God who is the 1 who’s able to dispense real justice & real vengeance on those who thought they’d get away w/ something
* No 1 is getting away w/ anything & every time U pray for God’s kingdom to come, you’re praying for God’s rule on the earth like it is in heaven
* And that day is coming - Jesus is is coming back - sooner than U think

**#4 - Invite God’s Provision - In this culture, it would have been tough to stay away from carbs b/c bread was a staple that was eaten at every meal**

* When Jesus teaches us to ask, “Give us this day our daily bread,” it’s a petition for God’s provision in our lives
* Too often we think that if we’re going to get ahead or succeed it can only happen b/c of our effort or strategy - no, God is our provider
* That means everything we have is from God - and why is it daily bread?
* Why isn’t it weekly bread, or monthly bread, or yearly bread?
* B/c 1 of the principles Jesus is going to expound on later in chapter 6 is that we shouldn’t worry about tomorrow - that brings a lot of sorrow
* Instead, deal w/ today - pray for today - give us our daily bread b/c it will keep us close to Him & seeking Him every day & that’s a good place to live

**#5 - Model God’s Forgiveness - Notice what Jesus says, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” - why is this?**

* B/c forgiven people are forgiving people - we freely forgive b/c we have been forgiven of worse & more than we are forgiving
* That’s why Jesus tells us to pray this way - b/c we really have trouble forgiving when we forget how much we’ve been forgiven of
* **Here’s the funny thing about forgiveness - when someone hurts U, U can’t stop thinking about it - U keep replaying the scenes in your mind**
* How do U know when you’ve released the other person? When U stop running the tapes in your mind of what the other person did
* That doesn’t mean you’re going to magically forget it
* But it does mean when you’ve forgiven someone, that after a season of time U won’t think of that incident when U see that person
* **Listen to what I’m going to tell U – it’s not easy at 1st, but once U forgive U realize that the days you spent w/ unforgiveness was a prison**
* U had no peace, no rest – only torment b/c of what someone else did to U - & we let it keep happening to us b/c we refused to forgive
* That’s why bitter people talk about the same hurts over & over - they can’t move past it - but when U forgive, U open the prison & are free
* **Forgiveness takes 3 intentional decisions:**
* **#1 - It Takes Being Forgiven to be Able to Forgive** - If U haven’t made a decision to receive the forgiveness of God, today’s the day
* We need God’s power to help us forgive & walk in that forgiveness
* **#2 - It Takes Recognizing that it’s about you -** Don’t wait for that person to do something before U forgive - U have to decide to do it
* B/c that other person that U can’t stop thinking about what they did
* Listen, they aren’t thinking about U - and somehow what they did is controlling U - God wants U to be free & the only way to be free is to forgive
* **#3 - It Takes Deciding to Forgive Right Now** - Don’t wait until next week to think about it - forgiveness begins w/ a decision U make in your heart today
* And don’t think that U can’t forgive - U can - U just have to decide to
* B/c what’s the alternative? U know people who were hurt by a former spouse & never let it go - did that make their lives better? Did it make their next relationship that much more joyous? No - they’re miserable & bitter
* So who do U need to forgive? Your parents/ a family member/ friend, an ex-spouse/ 1 of your kids/ your boss/ a co-worker? Forgive & be free
* **The question for U to answer is, do U want to be free?**
* Are U willing to forgive someone who hurt U for the sake of U being let out of the prison of your own bitterness, hatred, revenge, & misery?
* This is why the Lord’s prayer is so important - it’s the prayer that says, “God, keep me close to you. B/c when I’m close to you I can forgive those who hurt me & I can stay out of trouble.”
* That’s why Jesus wants us to forgive – so we can be like our heavenly Father
* B/c as I walk w/ God, I should take on more of His attributes
* That’s why unforgiveness towards someone else isn’t acceptable to God b/c it doesn’t reflect who God is & what we’ve experienced from Him
* Some of us think God is keeping score whenever we mess up & if we think that, we’ll tend to reflect that - He’s not keeping score, He’s erasing the score
* This is what Jesus did when He died for us - He wiped the slate clean
* Some of us need to extend that forgiveness to someone else
* Sometimes we withhold forgiveness b/c we think we’re letting the other person off the hook - no, we’re letting ourselves off the hook & setting ourselves free
* But to extend forgiveness, U have to experience forgiveness…