

What If We Prayed? (Part 2) – Various Scriptures

Mt 6:5-15; As we gear up for another ministry year, we started a mini-series last week titled *What If*; Starting with prayer; *What If We Prayed?*

It's something the Lord's been impressing on *me*, and I want to pass it on to you
B/c too few do; Whether it's a Night of Prayer every now and then, or our pre-service prayer every weekend – very few people pray

And to change that, I gave you the opportunity to do so during the message; To pray as I preached; And I'd like to do it again this week
Occupying the chairs 3 or 4 minutes at a time, all the way through the message
Calling out to God in hushed tones, so that only those with you can hear
And when you're done, somebody else step in; Right away
It's an opportunity to apply the message in real time, and make a change that lasts for a lifetime

So let's get at it; 12 people; You come as I pray

“Lord, we come to you this weekend grateful for your mercy, and dependent on your grace; Will you fill us with your Spirit? Would you stir our hearts? Will you reveal your glory more and more?”

➤ Last week (**Part 1 Summary Slide**), after establishing the fact that we often fail to pray b/c we don't believe in it, I asked “What if we did?”

What if you believed that God cares, hears, answers, gives, and waits
What if you believed that the Spirit helps you to pray, and that it's powerful?
What if you really believed those things; And prayed like it? That was last week

➤ This week, is another question

What if you prayed like God wants?

It's one thing to believe and pray however *you* want, it's another to believe and pray like *God* wants; One is effective and the other isn't; The *first* part of which, is to pray . . .

• Privately (Mt 6:5-6)

That's the first way God wants us to pray

[5] “*And when you pray* [in addition to when you give], *you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.* [Namely, the recognition of man; B/c they pray like *they* want] [6] *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret* [Pray privately]. *And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

That's God's way; Pray privately

It guards your heart from hypocrisy, and ensures the greatest reward

2nd, God wants us to pray . . .

• Publically (Acts 4:23-31)

And though it's not found here in Matthew, I insert it here so as not to give you the wrong impression, that prayer is only meant for your closet; It's not

God wants us to pray publically as well

As in, out loud, with other people; B/c that's the example of the early church as recorded in Acts, and God blessed it

Like when Peter and John were released by the authorities in Acts 4

They went to their friends, told them what had happened, and it says in v24 that – *when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God*

IOW they prayed out loud, *publically*; Luke even records what they said

Or how about Acts 12; When Peter was imprisoned?

Many were gathered together [it says] *and were praying* (Acts 12:12)

Praying publically, praying with others out loud, is one of the ways God *wants* us to pray

Even if we're “no good” at it; Even if we're embarrassed

Even if we're not eloquent, or polished, or knowledgeable

➤ I love the story of **Stonewall Jackson** in that respect

As you might surmise from his nickname, he was a highly regarded general in the

Confederate Army during the Civil War, known for his boldness and tenacity in battle

But he was scared to death to pray publically; And told his *pastor* so

But he also said, “If you think it my duty, then I shall waive my reluctance and make the effort to lead in prayer, however painful it might be.”

And at the next prayer meeting, he did; He got over himself, and prayed publically

And though it was “faltering, agonizing, and cringe-inducing” according to his pastor, he continued; He kept coming, and kept praying (*Rebel Yell*, Gwynne)

And I can't help but think, that his obedience to pray like God *wants*, was a significant factor in his leadership of a revival among the Confederate Army

A revival that saw 150,000 men come to Christ, smack dab in the middle of the war

“My comfort or discomfort is not the question,” he said. “If it is my duty to lead in prayer, then I must persevere in it until I learn to do it aright . . .”*****

What if *you* did that? What if you prayed publically, like God wants?

3rd, what if you prayed . . .

• Simply (Mt 6:7-8)

Jesus continues in v7 – “*And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

Gentile worshippers in that day, believed they had to address the right god, by the right name, with the right words in order to be heard

So they named them *all* in their prayers, all their gods, and used a bunch of words to make sure they hit the magic ones

And Jesus says in v8 – *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.* It's not the *number* of words that God responds to in prayer

It's not the kind of words; But the heart behind them

And given the fact that he already *knows* your heart, you can keep it simple

➤ And by all means, keep it real; Dispense with *empty phrases*

“Oh Jehovah Jirah, I beseech thee for the swift eschatological consummation of thy soteriological revelation”

Dude, shut up; “Lord, come quickly” will do just fine; Keep it real; And pray simply

4th, pray . . .

• **Reverently** (Mt 6:9)

[9] *Pray then like this* [Jesus says]: “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

It’s not a mantra meant to repeated every time you pray; It’s an example; Pray *like* this he says; Use this as a pattern

Starting, with an expression of reverence; That’s what *hallowed be your name* is

It’s an acknowledgement of God’s holiness, and glory, and sacred consecration

What if you prayed that way? What if you prayed from a perspective of awe?

5th, what if you prayed . . .

• **Submissively** (Mt 6:10)

Laying aside *your* plan, for God’s plan; *Your* way for God’s way

That’s the idea of v10 – *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* Not my will, but thine; That’s the idea; Pray submissively

Like Jesus himself did, 3 years later; “*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*” (Mt 26:39); *Your* will be done

Co-equal as part of the godhead with the Father, he still prayed submissively

How much more should we? Bring your petitions, yes; Demands? No

6th, what if you prayed . . .

• **Humbly** (Mt 6:11-13)

Acknowledging your *need*, and God’s ability to meet it

[11] *Give us this day 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 evil.*

It’s a humble admission of our *need*, and God’s sovereign ability to meet it; Otherwise, why would he tell us to ask? Especially when he already knows

Whether it’s providing for our basic necessities, *our daily bread*; Forgiving our worst

sins, *our debts*; Protecting our weakest defenses, *our temptations* . . .

Or breaking our strongest bondage – God can do it; And will

If we *humble* ourselves, and pray, and seek his face, and turn from our wicked ways, as he answers; What if you prayed that way? (2 Chron 7:14)

And what if you prayed . . .

• **Purely** (Mt 6:14-15)

With a pure *heart*; Especially when it comes to those who have wronged you, or cheated you, or slandered you

[14] *For if you forgive others their trespasses* [their sins], *your heavenly Father will also forgive you, [15] but if you do not forgive others their trespasses* [if you continue to hold it against them], *neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

One of the reasons God wants us to pray with a pure heart toward others, is that it affects *his* heart toward us; Pray purely

7 ways to pray, straight from the mouth of Jesus

But that’s not it; The Holy Spirt gives us 6 more from some other passages; Like 1 Thess 5:17 – *pray without ceasing*; God wants us to pray . . .

• **Unceasingly** (1 Thess 5:17)

Not 24/7/365; But making Jesus the constant companion of your thoughts; Whether you’re on your knees or on your way

Realizing that failure to do so is actually a sin (1 Sam 12:23)

Like the prophet Samuel said– *As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you*; Referring to the people of Israel whom he led
What if you had the same mindset? And did it?*****

#9, what if you prayed . . .

• **Unwaveringly** (Col 4:2)

Or as Col 4:2 says, steadfastly; *Continue steadfastly in prayer* it says; Unwavering; In spite of the distractions or temptations to do otherwise . . .

And regardless of the consequences

Like Daniel; Who after being told *not* to pray, got down on his knees 3 times a day, for all to see; *As he had done previously* it says (Dan 6:10)

Threats or not, he was unwavering; He got at it, and stayed at it

As did Jesus; Who despite the crowds and their *needs* – *withdrew to desolate places* and prayed (Lk 5:16)

What if? What if you set a time and place to pray, and stuck to it? No matter what

And what if you did the same with *others*? Consistently; What if you prayed like that?

And what if you prayed . . .

• **Persistently** (Lk 11:5-8)

Not just getting *at* your prayers, unwaveringly; But staying *with* your prayers, persistently
Luke 11:5-8

In addition to what *Matthew* recorded after The Lord’s Prayer, Luke says this . . .

[5] *And he said to them* [Jesus did], “*Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, [6] for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; [7] and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’?*”

Who has a friend like that Jesus asks? Somebody who would say, “Bug off, I’m bed?”

[8] *I tell you, though he* [that friend] *will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence* [his shameless persistence and insistence] *he will rise and give him whatever he needs.*

God not only *waits* for us to pray, he waits for us to *persist* in our prayers; To ask again and again and again

Stretching our faith, and testing our resolve, for reasons we may never know this side of eternity (Lk 18:1-8); What if you prayed like that? Like God wants

And what if you prayed . . .

• **Honestly** (Heb 5:7)

Like Jesus, who *offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears* (Heb 5:7); That’s honest

Or how about King David in the Psalms? (Ps 69:1-3)

[1] *Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. [2] I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over*

me. [3] *I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.* It's gut-level honesty

➤ I'll never forget a time like that when I was growing up
My Dad had been drinking, my Mom was mad, and my oldest brother was fed up
And the fight that ensued was the worst of my entire childhood; So bad that my Dad left the house, to his credit, b/c it was close to becoming physical

And I remember gathering on the bed in my brother's bedroom, and crying out to God
With loud cries and tears; All of us
Asking him to intervene in the situation, calm my brother, save my Dad, and preserve our family; It was gut-wrenching, it was open, and it was honest*****

And I'm here to tell you, that combined w/ all the other times we prayed – God answered
So that today, my Dad is saved, my parents are in their 58th year of marriage, my brother loves the Lord, and our family is as close as we've ever been
What if you prayed like that?

#12, what if you prayed . . .

- **Thankfully (Phil 4:5b-6)**

Instead of constantly asking for more, instead of asking with an air of presumption – like you *deserve* everything you're asking for, and it's God's duty to supply it . . .
What if you prayed thankfully? With an attitude of gratitude?
Letting your requests be made known to God, *with thanksgiving* the Bible says (Phil 4)
What if?

And last, what if you prayed . . .

- **Spiritually (Eph 6:18)**

Not religiously, or piously; But *in the Spirit* as Paul says it; That's **Eph 6:17-18**
Where describing our battle against the spiritual forces of evil, he says . . .
[17] *Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*
[18] *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*
In the Spirit meaning – under his influence; With his help; According to his desires

It doesn't mean praying in tongues; It doesn't mean *preaching* in your prayers; And it certainly doesn't mean *impressing* someone
It means expressing your heart as the Spirit moves you; Prompts you; Leads you
And if he doesn't, it means remaining silent; It means listening and waiting*****

What if you prayed like that? In *every* respect; All 13 of them (**Summary**)
What might God do? What might *you* do? What if?

Prayer - Father, forgive us for praying in the flesh so often; According to our own whims and desires; Solidify our convictions; Help us to be disciplined; We want to pray, and pray your way; For your glory and our joy