

November 19, 2017

Learning to Pray Jesus' Way

Sermon Topic: Learning to Pray Like a Child

Mark 10:13–16

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. (ESV)

Introduction – Are you satisfied with your prayer life? Most likely not. No one more so than me!! Have you ever felt like you should pray more often? Longer? More fervently? More effectively? Let me tell you that is totally the wrong approach to improving your prayer life. All of those efforts are nothing short of legalism. You are concentrating on the wrong thing. You are concentrating on praying instead of the person you are praying to.

Illustrate: Think about having your good friends over for dinner. Do you concentrate on what topics you will be discussing ahead of time and how you will be saying it and feel like a failure if you don't stay on topic for an hour? Or do you concentrate on enjoying your friends and letting the conversation unfold naturally?

Confession: My prayers are more mechanical than relational. I tried systems with my prayers. A.C.T.S. for one. How do you think God feels when we approach prayer by thinking and saying, "I'm going to spend 10 minutes adoring you God, then 10 minutes confessing my sins, then 15 minutes thanking you, and then I'm going to spend 20 minutes with all my specific requests, in order of importance? Is this how we approach one another? Not likely. Then we are not treating God as if he is a person. Our prayers must be relational, even more than our conversations with our good friends.

Correction: To cure me and you of all this, I am going to talk today about learning to pray like a child. We are going to remove the formality of our prayer life and learn to talk to God like a child would talk to his father. Ready?

But, before we talk about praying like a child let's point out:

1. Prayer is hard. It's hard to ask a friend for help. It's harder to ask God for help especially if you are not convinced he wants to help you.
2. Life is busy and full of problems and heartaches. It's easy to get distracted and not bring those problems to the Lord.
3. Prayer should be easy and it will get easier once we stop treating it as a project and start seeing it as a way to develop a friendship with the God of the universe.

Learning to Pray Like a Child

- **Child-like faith.** The way into the Kingdom of Heaven is to have faith like a child. – Mark 10:13-16
- **Child-like honesty.** If the way into the Kingdom is to have child-like faith, then it is also the way to approach the Father. Children say what's on their minds, no pretense, no filters, no pre-planned approaches.
 - Illustrate: I will now start my prayers with an image in my mind. It is of a bird eating out of a person's hand. I'm the bird eating out of God's hand. I'm dependent, weak, needy, and hungry. I have messed up more times than I can count, and any perfectionism in me has long since vanished.
 - Pharisees are perfect, perfect hypocrites. Jesus wants honesty. Here is his invite - Matthew 11:28–30 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (ESV) He wants us to come to him with our burdens, our worries, our fears, our exhaustion.
 - Illustrate: Before I pray now, I pause to think about what I am worried about. For example: It might go like this: "Lord there is no way our little flock can put a pitched roof over our heads to keep our carpets dry. How are we ever going to raise the money to pay for a steel roof and badly needed carpeting and counter tops that need to replace ones that won't pass a health inspection? And Lord, I feel guilty about raising money for a new roof and new carpeting and new counter tops when we can't even afford to pay our missionaries what we would like to. Does it bother you that we are trying our best to preserve the building you gave us to worship in for future generations when we should spend that money on missions?"
 - How does the Lord's Prayer start? "Our Father". That's the emphasis. We are his children not his partners.
- **Child-like expectancy.** *Matthew 7:7–11 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (ESV)*
- **Child-like persistence.** *Luke 18:1–8 And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (ESV)*

- **Child-like impulsiveness.** Children jump from topic to topic or toy to toy. In our prayers we kick ourselves because we just wandered off topic. Maybe that wandering was Spirit prompted. Why are we upset when we drift to our daily schedule and appointments? Why not pray over them while you are thinking about them?
- **Child-like hunger for time and direction.** Jesus lived out these principles of child-like faith. Here's what he lived about needing time: *Luke 6:12–13 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: (ESV)*
And His need for the Father's help: *John 12:49–50 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” (ESV)*
- **Child-like neediness.** Children ask because they can't get it or do it themselves. (I don't tell my granddaughter she doesn't need a chair to help me make pancakes. She knows she's not tall enough to reach the stove on her own. Yet how much of the Christian life do we think we've got it covered? *2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (ESV)*

Assignment for this week:

1. Pick a time and place.
2. Approach in child-likeness.
3. Think short-term requests – today only. What are your worries?