

Starting Off on the Right Foot
Essential Commitments of a God-honoring Church
Committed to the Prayer – Duty or Delight?
Matthew 6:5-14

Second in our series . . .

Committed to Prayer – Duty or Delight?

I want to say yes to both!

The more you're committed to prayer, the more of a delight it becomes

And the more of a delight it is, the more committed to it you'll be

I believe that's the reason the early church, our example, was so committed to prayer

It was duty of delight

So I want to go back to what they based their prayers on – namely, what Jesus said about

it – so we can be committed to it as well, starting off on the right foot

Read Matt 6:5-14 (p. 811)

When I'm committed to prayer I . . .

Check my motives (v 5-6)

5 – *You must not be like the hypocrites* – those whose words don't match their motives

Primary desire was to be noticed by others, not heard by God

Good words, bad motives

Jesus stepped on some toes . . .

5 – *Pray in the synagogues* – customary to stand up front when you prayed

5 – *Pray at the street corners* – they would intentionally position themselves at the perfect public spot to offer up afternoon prayers

V6 – Jesus is NOT saying that private prayer is the only way to pray

Into your room – simply a way to picture the lack of admirers

Early church prayed together at the temple, in various homes, Upper Room, church

He IS saying that private prayer is just as effective as public prayer, but don't be a prayer hypocrite – check your motives

Ask yourself . . .

1. Do I pray to sound good?

Try to be smooth; Use fancy words that don't come naturally; Over spiritualize

This? – “Oh God, through the power of your HS and the might of your hand, will you diminish the spiritual inhibitions in Frank's heart and usher him into your kingdom?”

Instead of – “God, break Frank's heart, bring him to yourself, and use me to do it!”

2. Do I pray to preach?

Try to get a point across to someone you're praying with because you want to avoid the discomfort of confronting them directly and lovingly

3. Do I pray to show what I know?

Oh Jehovah Jirah, I beseech you for the swift eschatological consummation of your soteriological revelation – Lord, come quickly

If you pray any of those ways, you're a prayer hypocrite

You're missing out on God's reward of answered prayer

Check your motives and pray to God

Bite my tongue (v 7-8)

Not only can your prayers be private and still be heard, but they don't have to include a lot of words either

Vs 7-8 – There are times when your words *should* be few

Better that your heart be without words, than your words without heart

Eccl 5:2 – *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.*

Gentile worshippers of Greek gods believed that 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 and used a bunch of words to make sure they hit the magic ones

Jesus says, no-no; I know what you need already; Keep it simple

The effectiveness of your prayer depends not on the amount of your words, but on your heart-felt expression of them

Since God already knows your needs anyway . . .

Wants you to express them as best you can to indicate your trust/dependence on him

God wants you to have that kind of heart and attitude before anything else

That is your biggest need – a heart of dependence and trust on God

Once satisfied in you, all other needs will pale in comparison

Having said what NOT to pray like, Jesus says (v9), *Pray then like this:*

Like is the key word – use what follows as a pattern/template, not a magical spell/chant

Honor God's holiness (v 9)

9 – *Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name.*

Or, Let your name be kept holy

Or, Let your name be treated with reverence

To hallow someone's *name* is to . . .

Put that *person* in the category of being holy

Because a person's name represents all that he is, his entire character

Shouldn't be hallowing anybody's name but God's name – he alone is holy

So we're saying, “Our Father in heaven – holy are you”

Perfect and unique are you; Set apart above all else are you

When we honor God's holiness, grasping who he is . . .

We start to gain God's perspective

It's only as you gain God's perspective that you'll be able to . . .

Embrace God's plan (v 10)

Understand here how Jesus is telling you to pray – He's saying . . .

Lay aside *your* plan, for *God's* plan; *Your* way for *God's* way

Long for God's kingdom

Trust God's will/ways to establish it
That is, establish those who worship him

God has designed his plan and purpose to be fueled and triggered by our prayers
If we fail in our prayers, it doesn't frustrate his plans, we just miss out on the blessing

When I embrace God's plan, I lay aside my own, and trust his to be perfectly fulfilled
Which is also why I can and should . . .

Ask for God's help (v11-15)

James 4:2 – *You do not have, because you do not ask.*

In our passage, we're told *what* to ask for
Before we get to that, I want to look at *how* to ask
Luke records that in a similar account in Luke 11:5-13

Jesus, through a story, tells us to ask – Boldly, Persistently, Expectantly

- Ask boldly (Lk 11:5-7)
I think we're afraid to ask boldly and openly for things because we're afraid God won't answer in the way we'd like, and then we'd look bad
- Ask persistently (Lk 11:8)
The gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long. EM Bounds
God expects you to be persistent in your prayers

Slide (Quote)

I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those prayers down through the centuries, we would be so paralyzed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off our knees for the rest of our lives.

Peter Kreeft

And not only persistent in our prayers, but also persistent in *pursuing* his provision
Persistent in prayer *and* action

- Ask expectantly (Lk 11:9-13)
Nobody would ask God for a thing if they didn't trust his plan and ways, and that he would respond in the best possible way
But because he's the giver of all good things, we can ask expecting the *best* fr him

When we were praying for a place to meet, we didn't just pray and then sit around sipping tea and eating bon-bons . . .
We pleaded with God in prayer to show us the options, then we boldly and persistently knocked on each one, fully expecting that God would respond and open the right door
And he did! (this high school)

We need to pray bold prayers; persist in them; and then expect amazing things
That's how to ask; What about the "what to ask for"?

• To provide for my needs (11)

11 – *Give us this day our daily bread*
Lord, give us what we *need*
Not limited to food or physical things only, but needs of all kinds . . .

Emotional, spiritual, relational, everything
In fact, pray with a list – helps keep you focused
Include: Family, Church (see Launch card), Neighbors, Community . . .
Believers around the world, Nations, People Groups, Situations

• To forgive my sin (12, 14-15)

12 – *forgive us our debts* – forgive us our sins against you, God
Just like we have forgiven those who have sinned against us

The implication (made explicit in v 14-15), is that God won't forgive us our sins if we haven't forgiven others

If you haven't forgiven someone, there's unconfessed sin in your heart that God won't forgive until you come clean

God requires repentance in order to grant forgiveness

Means it's crucial that your plea to be forgiven matches your heart of forgiveness toward others

When the two parts don't match up, you're not praying the way Jesus indicated

It's quite possible that you've never confessed your sin to God

Did you know that it's prerequisite to receiving his free gift of salvation

Stark reality – no repentance, no salvation

Doesn't mean you have utter some formula of perfect words to repent . . .

A simple, "Lord, forgive me, I'm a sinner!" is all it takes

But does mean you have to have a heart of repentance, godly sorrow, and remorse for your sins

If you've never confessed your sin to God, do so now

• To protect me from evil (13)

13 – *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*

These two phrases go together

Keep us from trial, testing, persecution – anything that would tempt us to indulge in evil or sin

Keep us from anything that may influence us to forsake you; Deliver us from that

Not just a present-day plea, but a longing for Christ's final victory over sin when he comes again to bring us into his presence, free of all evil for all time

That's all well and good but . . . (3 Common Objections)

- I don't know the right words
There are no right words! Just pray
The HS will help you (Rom 8:26)
The Psalms will help you as well – pray those words
- I'm embarrassed to pray out loud. I'm afraid it won't sound good
Good compared to what? It's not a competition! Not praying for the applause of men
In fact, your prayer will be a blessing to those you're with
May help them to express similar thoughts to God

- It's hard work
It is hard work – Jesus prayed ‘til he bled; Stephen prayed while he bled
Praying that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. John Jowett
Little . . . little; Much . . . much

Slide (Quote)

Spiritual work is taxing work, and men are loath to do it. Praying, true praying, costs an outlay of serious attention and of time, which flesh and blood do not relish. Few persons are made of such strong fiber that they will make a costly outlay when surface work will pass as well in the market.

EM Bounds

Bill Bright . . .

If you do not have the strength to pray aloud, you can whisper. If you cannot whisper, you can move your lips. If you cannot move your lips, then pray silently . . . Are you still breathing? Then be encouraged, and get busy!

Don't settle for surface work in your prayer life – pray hard, fueled by God's response

As a church, we need to *continue* to be committed to prayer as a duty of delight

Check this out – **Slide** (Church with prayer)

Without prayer, our influence and use will be as short and meager as the flight of a paper airplane

With prayer, we can continue to expect amazing things, here and around the world as God multiplies our influence . . .

Example of one church's influence “around the world” – **Jungle prayer story**

May or may not be true – old story

Heidi and Dave included this account in their March CHUPPDATE. We felt it said it all. This was reported by a medical missionary at his home church.

“While serving at a small field hospital in Africa, I traveled every two weeks by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. This required camping overnight halfway. One of these trips, I saw two men fighting in the city. One was seriously injured, so I treated him and witnessed to him of the Lord Jesus Christ. I then returned home without incident.

“Upon arriving in the city several weeks later, I was approached by the man I had treated earlier. He told me he had known that I carried money and medicine. He said ‘some friends and I followed you into the jungle knowing you would camp overnight. We waited for you to go to sleep and planned to kill you and take your money and drugs. Just as we were about to move into your campsite, we saw that you were surrounded by 26 armed guards.’

“I laughed at this and said I was certainly all alone out in that jungle campsite. The young man pressed the point, ‘No sir, I was not the only one to see the guards. My five friends also saw them and we all counted them. It was because of those guards that we were afraid and left you alone.’

At this point in the church presentation in Michigan, one of the men in the church jumped up and interrupted the missionary. He asked, “Can you tell me the exact date when this happened?” The missionary thought for a while and recalled the date. The man in the congregation told this side of the story:

“On that night in Africa it was morning here. I was preparing to play golf. As I put my bags in the car, I felt the Lord leading me to pray for you. In fact, the urging was so strong that I called the men of this church together to pray for you. Will all of those men who met with me that day please stand?

The men who had met that day to pray together stood – there were 26 of them!

I want to pray *more* together – before service, in SG's, on our service teams, before we teach in Child. Min., etc

As we do, we will continue to bust out in ways we've never experienced

Let's start off on the right foot, committed to prayer

Let's buck the status quo and pray with pure motives, honoring God, embracing his plan, and asking for his help

Let's do so boldly, with much persistence, and see what God does