

Communicating with God in Prayer

TEXT: Lk. 11:1-13

THESIS: Communicating with God in prayer is not a bunch of forms, but the connection between two, namely, God and the righteous soul.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Charles Hodge wrote a book on prayer that explained its difficulty by introducing it as *“Simple enough for a little child, yet profound enough to humble philosophers.”*
 - a. Consider also the first statement of his book *“I do not believe in prayer...I believe in God; therefore I pray.”*
 - b. This is an idea that, while some may believe it is far reaching, it shows intellectual and emotional depth.
 - i. It is God, not prayer who works.
 - ii. And so, communication is an effort to understand.
 - iii. But when one does not understand how to communicate, how can they ever understand the object with whom they are trying to communicate?
2. Now, two major obstacles come up in trying to understand prayer and that is:
 - a. We fail to understand God.
 - b. We fail to understand faith.
3. God is the Creator.
 - a. The Creator of the world is also the Creator of prayer.
 - b. And so, when we study prayer from God’s perspective, we come to understand clearly and distinctly what prayer is supposed to be.
4. Prayer is suppose to be our dependence on God.
 - a. Prayer is the vehicle through which we voice our faith.
 - b. And so, I want to look at our communication with God.

DISCUSSION:

I. COMMON MISTAKES IN OUR APPROACH TO PRAYER

- A. Most people use prayer as hands in a dark room.
 1. They cannot see where they are going and so they feel for it!
 - a. This still leaves them in the dark.
 - b. The better way is to simply flip on the light switch.
 - c. And, this is the difference between knowing God and feeling God.
 - (1) God wants to be known.
 2. We must know God before we can feel His presence.
 - a. You cannot find anywhere in the Bible where people were commanded to feel for God.
 - b. But there is an entire writing on man’s need to know who He is (Acts 17)!
 - (1) vs. 11: Hear God and fear Him.
 - (2) vs. 24: God made the universe and everything in it.

- (3) vs. 25: God gave all life and breath.
- (4) vs. 26: God made of one blood all nations of men.
- (5) vs. 27: God knows that we are lost and He wants us to seek Him.
- (6) vs. 28: God wants us in Him, living for Him and to be His offspring.
- (7) vs. 29: God is not some image made of Gold or silver nor is He formed in the image by art.
- (8) vs. 30: God expects us to be in a relationship with Him.
- (9) Vs. 31: He has promised to raise us from the dead.

B. But, the problem is people try to minimize God in prayer.

- 1. It is a common occurrence to reduce God to the human level just as if He were like us.
 - a. Sure, God created us in His image, yet we try to create Him into ours by our prayers.
 - b. We often try to tell God to listen. O.K., here's my problem, this is what I want, Why can't you help me with this.
 - c. But perhaps, when communicating with God, we should first develop the attitude of Samuel, who said to God, "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*" (1 Sam. 3:10).
 - (1) God is to be the direction for our lives.
 - (2) We ought to stop our lives and listen for direction instead of using the excuse that we are too busy or that it is too hard to listen.
 - (3) Maybe it's time to lay down, find a quiet place, like Samuel, and just listen.
 - (4) Hear what God says about your life because He knows our lives better than we do.

C. A common mistake, people make in prayer, is our pace to approach God at His throne and retreat from him.

- 1. We rush in to and away from the presence of God.
 - a. How many times have we rushed the prayer to get it over with and go on with our lives?
 - b. How many times have we tried to get in a quick fix?
 - c. How many times have we casually and rapidly thrown up a prayer hoping, but not even slowing down to get out of our lives for a minute?
- 2. If we are really going to hit our knees, such implies enough reverence to God that we will not skin them when we do it!

D. Too many people have modeled their prayer and this is another common problem.

- 1. They take Christ's example to His apostles so literally that they forget that the man who prayed it knew what he was doing for a reason.
- 2. You see, Jesus had a relationship with the Father (John 10:30).

- a. His trust was something which traced everything back to God.
- b. Jesus and the sheep are in the Father's hands.
- c. Jesus was so sure of Himself because He was so sure of God.
- d. And, He showed that true prayer is a relationship.
 - (1) Jn. 17:11, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*."
 - (2) Jn. 17:20-22, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:"
- e. Prayer is not a form letter.
 - (1) It is not a checklist, there is nothing said in the Bible which states that this is the only way you can pray and that you cannot pray any other way.
 - (2) Many times we worry too much about "*getting it right*" when we haven't got our heart right.
 - (3) Prayer is more than saying what the Bible says.
 - (4) Prayer is our personal relationship, that is, an intimate, close, connection with God.

II. TEACH US TO PRAY (Luke 11:1-13)

- A. When the apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray, they implied a good number of things.
 - 1. They knew that teaching and learning was part of religion.
 - 2. They recognized they could only be taught how to pray by someone who was good at it.
 - a. These disciples saw Jesus with authority, they were awed in seeing the power of their Master, yet, they wanted Him to simply teach them to pray.
 - b. They saw prayer as an indispensable part of their faith because religion at heart is prayer.
 - 3. Sure, the apostles could heal the sick which was exciting, but they couldn't pray correctly!
 - a. They saw that this was hampering the growth of their faith.
 - b. And, they were homesick, desiring, wishing, longing, striving to speak with their God.
- B. Is it possible, that some of the greatest preachers and teachers in the church are terrible when it comes to prayer?

1. How could these men become the future leaders of Gospel preaching without knowing themselves how to communicate with God?
 2. S. D. Gordon said, *“The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is pray. It is not the only thing, but it is the chief thing. The great people of the earth are the people who pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer; Nor those who say they believe in prayer; nor yet those who can explain about prayer; But I mean those people who take the time to pray.”*
- C. Nothing can take the place of prayer and the best way to improve with prayer is to pray.
1. There is no substitute for actually doing it!
 2. To know the ins and outs of Biblical prayer is not the same as actually practicing it.
- D. As a help to our communication with God, Charles Hodge offers, in his book on prayer, three ways in which we can learn to pray as God would have us:
1. **“Teach us to Pray” with FAITH**
 - a. Prayer is not a wish list.
 - (1) God is not Santa.
 - (2) It is not *“Name it and claim it; blab it and grab it.”*\
 - (3) This exposes our greed and exploits God.
 - b. Prayer is crucial because it demonstrates our relationship with God, it shows our real faith and we are often afraid of prayer!
 - (1) Prayer frightens us and if we are disappointed in prayer, we make ourselves our own gods as if God answers to us.
 - (2) When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, they knew that Jesus was right with God, that he had an intimate relationship with a heavenly Father and they thirsted for what He had.
 - c. They did not see a formula or technique.
 - (1) They said teach us to pray not how to pray.
 - (2) They were not impressed with fancy words, but they recognized true prayer when they saw it, when they heard it.
 - (3) You can only learn to pray by praying.
 - d. Prayer is more than talking to God, more than listening to God, prayer is being with God!
 - (1) Prayer is being with God!
 - (2) And, failure to pray is failure to trust in God.
 - (3) So, we pray with faith because prayer is life!.
 - (a) One man cried out, “. . . and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mk. 9:24)
 - i) When was the last time we prayed to have God help us with our unbelief?
 - (b) Prayer is confession, it is submission, it is

helplessness, it is looking up to God in obedience.

- i) Have we ever admitted to God in prayer that we are helpless?

2. ***“Teach us to Pray” with FORCE***

- a. The disciples heard Jesus pray.
 - (1) Have you ever heard God talk to God?
 - (2) No miracle they witnessed was equal to hearing the Son of God talk to God, the Father.
 - (a) And, prayer was central with Jesus.
 - (b) So, if He needed it, do you think we need it even more?
- b. And, prayer with Jesus was directed to God because they are for God.
 - (1) In Lk. 18:9-14, the righteous man gave, fasted and thanked God he was not a robber, was not one who broke the law, was not an adulterer or a sinner. But, the sinner beat on his chest with his fists asking God to be merciful.
 - (a) When we think back to our prayers, have we ever beat upon our chest and prayed as the sinner in Lk. 18 asking God to be merciful to us?
 - (2) Many prayers are phony.
 - (a) Do we pray to God’s heart or man’s ears?
 - (b) Do we pray what is expected or what is needed?
 - i) Have we seriously listened to our own prayers?
 - ii) You know, when the first century church prayed, the whole house shook (Acts 4:31)
- c. Prayer is the most commonly mentioned command in the Bible, but it is the least obeyed.
 - (1) And, churches fail because they fail in prayer.

3. ***“Teach us to Pray” with FORM***

- a. People today are not much interested in truth, doctrine, or form. But there is a HOW to do it. There is a how to pray.
- b. But, Jesus did not begin His teaching on prayer with a complex method.
 - (1) Instead, He used basic principles.
 - (2) Usually prayers begin with, “Dear Lord, thank you, thank you, thank you, in Jesus name, Amen.”
 - (3) But, what has happened to the rest of the basics that Jesus mentioned?
 - (a) Has our hearts forgotten?
 - (b) Did not Jesus begin with praise to God, not just calling Him Father, but Our Father who art in

- Heaven. Hallowed (holy) be thy name.
- (c) Did Jesus not teach us about asking that God's will be done on earth and in heaven?
 - (d) Did he not also teach about us being grateful for our daily needs of bread? Whether we eat it or not should be irrelevant.
 - (e) Did Jesus not teach us to pray for a forgiving spirit?
 - (f) Did He not direct us to pray to God and ask Him to keep us away from temptation and to deliver us when we are faced with evil?
- c. You see, prayer is humbling self, and exalting God.
- (1) In the book of Isaiah, there were those who cried unto another, that is, they called out to God and said, ". . . Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3)
 - (2) Prayer is about humbling ourselves.
 - (3) It is about needs, not wants.
 - (4) Prayer is *about* "*Thy will be done.*"
 - (5) Prayer is about persistence (Luke 11:5-10).
 - (6) Prayer is about trusting in God for results (Luke 11:11-13).
- E. Someone has vividly expressed proper prayer in a humorous little poem that reads:
1. *"The proper way for man to pray,"* said Deacon Lemuel Keyes;
 2. *"The only proper attitude is down upon his knees."*
 3. *"Nay, I should say the way to pray,"* said Reverend Doctor Wise,
 4. *"Is standing straight with outstretched arms with rapt and upturned eyes."*
 5. *"Oh, no, no, no,"* said Elder Snow, *"such posture is too proud.*
 6. *A man should pray with eyes fast-closed and head contritely bowed."*
 7. *"It seems to me his hands should be austere-ly clasped in front.*
 8. *With both thumbs pointing to the ground,"* said Reverend Doctor Blunt.
 9. *"Last year I fell in Hodgkin's well headfirst,"* said Cyril Brown.
 10. *"With both my heels a-stickin' up, my head a-pointin' down;*
 11. *And I done prayed right then and there; best prayer I ever said,*
 12. *The prayin'est prayer I ever prayed, a-standin' on my head."*

CONCLUSION:

1. Often we make the simplest things so difficult.
 - a. Communication with God should be exactly that— communication.
2. How does one talk to God?
 - a. It begins with knowing who He is and what He expects.
 - b. It is perfected in getting together with Him as often as we possibly can.
3. If we knew that Jesus would return tomorrow, how much of today would be given to

- prayer?
4. In heaven, won't most of us confess, "I should have prayed more?"