

Week Three: *Prayer*
Matthew 6:5-15

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read Matthew 6:5-15. Then, take a look at Luke 11:1 to better understand the context and purpose for Jesus teaching his disciples the Lord's Prayer. What prompted Jesus to share this prayer with His disciples?
2. What would you say is the chief purpose of this prayer?
3. Break the prayer down into its parts. What part would you consider the invocation or introduction? How many requests are in the prayer? List them in order.
4. Why is the conclusion, "for Thine is the Kingdom and the power, and the glory" not included in either Matthew's or Luke's versions of the prayer? (Check your footnotes or Google the question.)
5. Have you ever been in a church where the entire congregation quit praying after the phrase, "and deliver us from evil," but you continued with the conclusion? The Roman Catholic church does not use the conclusion. Why not? Who's right and who's wrong? Does it matter?
6. How are prayers offered in worship at your church? Does it matter who leads the prayer? Is it better for the entire congregation to pray together, or a leader to offer prayer for everyone or to allow time for silent prayer?
7. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray for the Lord to give you a teachable spirit, to observe and learn from others in spiritual practices.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read Matthew 5:1-6. Do you pray in public restaurants? According to this passage, is this right or wrong?
9. Read Psalm 116:12-19 and Psalm 52:9. Is the Lord opposed to public prayer? What do you think is His reason for cautioning his disciples about praying to be seen? Is there a proper and improper public prayer? What makes the difference?
10. Clearly the Lord encourages private prayer. Read Mark 1:35-39. When do you most often pray "in secret?"
11. What's the difference between a public conversation shared in a group and a one-on-one conversation with a best friend? What implications does that have for prayer?

12. Do you think some people are better prayers than other people? Does a parent listen more to an older, more articulate child than a younger child who is just learning to speak? What matters most when a child asks something of his or her loving parent? What are the implications for prayer?
13. What did Jesus mean when He said, “they have already received their reward in full?”
14. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more faithful in sharing the events of your day, your life and your gratitude to God in private moments during your day.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Take a moment to read James 5:13-20. What lessons are taught about prayer?
16. Praying and anointing someone with oil is sometimes called extreme unction, or last rites, by Roman Catholic Christians. Based on the context and purpose, is the action of prayer to be reserved for the dying?
17. According to this passage, wherein does the healing power lie? Is it the anointing oil or prayer? Is anointing a good, bad or indifferent thing?
18. When people placed too much trust in the oil and not enough trust in the power of prayer or faith in the Lord, the practice of anointing with oil was discouraged during the Reformation. Do you think they threw the baby out with the bath water? Explain.
19. Have you ever been anointed with oil during prayer? Explain the impact of that experience. Would you encourage it?
20. Why does James describe Elijah as a man “a human being, even as we are”? What point is James making?
21. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray to be more confident in the power of prayer to know that God has heard you and, like a loving father, will do what is best for the child He adores.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four.

22. Read James 1:5-8. What point is James making about prayer?
23. Return to our reading for this week in Matthew 5:7-8. What error in prayer is Jesus addressing? What matters most to God when you pray?

24. If, according to Jesus, your heavenly Father already knows what you need before you ask; why ask?
25. Read Luke 11:5-13. Why is persistence in prayer honored by God?
26. What's the difference between persistence and babbling on with long and rambling prayers?
27. There are many different ways to pray as depicted in Scripture: lifting up holy hands, the sinful man who would not even raise his eyes up in prayer, anointing with oil, placing hands on the person for whom you are praying, praying in secret, praying openly as a witness to your faith in God, etc. Bottom line – what do you think makes a prayer acceptable or not acceptable to God?
28. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, take a moment to pray silently for a more humble and sincere spirit in prayer. Pray also for greater love and a gracious spirit toward believers and non-believers who have different attitudes about prayer than you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Read The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5:9-15. Out of all the petitions in the prayer, why do you think that Jesus came back to the question of forgiveness in the last two verses?
30. We know that God's love is unconditional, yet He expects (demands) we be forgiving of others if we expect to receive forgiveness from God. In other words, this says more about our attitudes than God's. If a person is unwilling to forgive others, what does that suggest is his understanding of the necessity of forgiveness for himself?
31. Of all the petitions, how many focus on material needs? How many on spiritual concerns? Does that percentage fairly represent your prayer life?
32. The fourth petition is the only one that asked God to provide for our material needs, and yet it, too, has a spiritual component. Why should we ask only for today's needs and not the needs of tomorrow?
33. The petitions about temptation and evil are a reminder that the world is a constant test of our faith. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. Explain in your own words the attitude and behavior God suggests to overcome the temptations and evil of the world.

34. Why should we pray that God's will be done in our lives? Do you think God's primary concern is that we would honor Him in this way or is it for our own good? Why do parents train their children to do what is best and right in life?
35. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, end your prayer time by praying the Lord's Prayer.