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Matthew 6:5-15
The Cornerstone Core: Prayer
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Prayer – We invite God to work in our lives, church, and town. (Romans 8:26)

Introduction:

1. It's getting colder and maybe some of you have started receiving your utility bills.
2. A neighbor and I were joking about our bills and shared our energy reports with each other.
3. Have you gotten the National Grid report that lists "Efficient Neighbors, All Neighbors, and You?"
4. Neither of us fell in the elusive "efficient neighbors" category.
5. Some of us use more power because we have families, poor insulation, or too many Apple products.
6. What if you had all the access in the world to unlimited power? (oil, natural gas, electric, propane)
7. As Christians, we have access to an unlimited power source, God himself.
8. A power line runs from my house to the grid to the plant.
9. Each of us have a direct line to God through prayer.
10. Prayer, simply defined, is "Talking to God."

(If we are given this incredible power, we want to use it often, but we also want to use it well.)
(How should we pray? How should we access God?)

I. We don't pray outwardly, we pray inwardly. (v. 5-8)

A. We don't pray outwardly to impress others. (**Read v. 5**)

1. Jesus is preaching to the crowds and his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount.
2. Some religious leaders prayed publicly, not to lead others in worship, but to look holy.
3. There were daily prayers which you could time so you had to pray on a street corner (Psa 55:17)
4. He's not saying it's wrong to pray publicly, but that we shouldn't pray "to be seen by others."
5. The preceding passage on giving says, "Be careful not to practice your righteousness *in front of others to be seen by them...*" (Matt 6:1)
6. The following passage on fasting says, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces *to show others they are fasting...*" (Matt 6:16)
7. A hypocrite is an "actor" who seeks to please the crowd instead of God.
8. Notice the reward matches the quality of the prayer (shallow prayer produces shallow praise).

B. I once pretended to really like a golden retriever to impress a girl.

1. I thought if she saw my sensitive side, she'd be impressed.
2. Little did she know, I'm actually allergic to dogs.
3. Our relationship lasted about two months.
4. When we act spiritual, but aren't, we're building a weak relationship with God and others.

(We don't pray outwardly, we pray inwardly.)

C. We don't pray outwardly to control God. (**Read v. 7**)

1. Jesus also says not to pray like the gentiles, or non-Jews, who "babble" meaninglessly.
2. One translation says "vain repetitions" (KJV) and another "meaningless repetition" (NASB).

3. The prophet Elijah defeated the priests of Baal even though they prayed for hours (1 Kings 18)
4. The chanted, shouted, and slashed themselves but couldn't get God's attention or control him.
5. Elijah prayed to the "Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel" and fire fell from heaven.
6. We believe in a dangerous God who won't be controlled by us.

D. Maybe some of you feel like you never pray enough.

1. You compare yourself to Martin Luther who prayed at least three hours a day.
2. It's good to want to pray for hours like Jesus prayed all night (Luke 6:12)
3. The story of the persistent widow actually tells us God likes us to bug him (Luke 18:1)
4. But if we pray a lot to attract God's attention, we diminish God's power and character.
5. If we think, "If I pray for this amount, God will give me this thing," that's off.
6. No matter how much we pray, God doesn't owe us anything.
7. God is less concerned with the quantity of our prayers than he is the quality.

(We don't pray outwardly, we pray inwardly.)

E. We pray inwardly to know God and trust him. **(Read v. 6, 8)**

1. Jesus tells the crowds and disciples to hide away in their "room" to pray.
2. Early homes had "inner rooms" which were windowless storerooms (only door and lock).
3. We hid ourselves to make sure prayer is about God, and not about ourselves.
4. We pray in secret to hear from God and to grow in our trust for God (no manipulating people).
5. When we pray to impress others, the reward is impersonal, unsatisfying, and temporal
6. When we pray to know God, the reward is personal, satisfying, and eternal.
7. God rewards us with himself.

(This leads us into our next point.)

(We don't pray outwardly, we pray inwardly.)

II. We don't pray impersonally, we pray relationally. (v. 9-11)

A. In prayer, we approach God as our Father. **(Read v. 9)**

1. Here Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer, which is a model, or guide, for praying (not strict, ending).
2. The "our" shows us this isn't just an individual's prayer, but a church's prayer.
3. Jesus teaches us to address the God of "heaven", the God who is supreme, as "Our Father."
4. "Heaven" reminds us God is the Lord of the universe, and "Father" reminds us of love.
5. We hallow, or "make holy", God's name by approaching him the right way.
6. We approach God as a child, who both fears and loves her father.

B. Maybe if some of you have kids, you can imagine what our relationship with God can be like.

1. When you come home from work, your children run to greet you yelling your name.
2. They depend on you, trust you, and love you, which is how we approach God.
3. I think it was my old youth pastor that once described his relationship with his father.
4. He would run in, sit on his dad's lap, and give him a kiss, and that's when he was 18.
5. Just because we grow older, doesn't mean we don't want a relationship with our Father.
6. Maybe some of you didn't have good fathers—God provides perfect fatherhood for you.

(In prayer, we approach God as our Father.)

C. In prayer, we submit to our Father's plans (**Read v. 10**)

1. Jesus teaches us to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
2. Here we're praying that God's plan would take place no matter what.
3. We're praying we would yield to God's authority no matter if his plans are easy or hard.
4. When we pray "your kingdom come," we pray for the return of Jesus (Revelation church suffers).
5. But when we pray for God's heavenly will to be done here and now, we're praying for peace.
6. Ultimately, we're saying, "God we trust you no matter what, do your plan."

(In prayer, we approach God as our Father and we submit to our Father's plans.)

D. In prayer, we depend on our Father (**Read v. 11**)

1. Jesus invites us to ask God for our "daily bread" or "daily needs."
2. This applies personally and literally to you and me (pray for lunch, car keys, health, job).
3. It also applies corporately to "us"—would God meet "our" new church plant's needs.
4. One of our Core Values is "Prayer – We invite God to work in our lives, church, and town."
5. We believe so much in praying together that we're starting the Cornerstone Prayer Chain.

(In prayer, we approach God as our Father, submit to our Father's plans, and depend on our Father.)

(We don't pray impersonally, we pray relationally.)

(We're all born broken in sin, so how can we pray at all?)

III. We don't pray perfectly, we pray in him. (v. 12-15)

A. We don't pray perfectly. (**Read v. 12-15**)

1. In v. 12 we ask God to "forgive us our debts" which means "cancel what we owe you."
2. Another way to translate "debts" is "sins"—sins are all the ways we short-change God.
3. God is completely good, kind, just, and he created us, so we owe him everything.
4. But none of us are able to pay back God for all the good things we owe him.
5. When we do good, we're don't earn anything, but we are doing what we're supposed to do.
6. If you give to charity or drive below the speed limit, that doesn't mean you can rob a bank.
7. We confess that we need God to forgive us of what we owe him.
8. Experiencing God's forgiveness is what strengthens us to forgive others.

B. We don't pray perfectly, we pray in him.

1. The prayer ends by calling for God to lead us away from temptation and deliver us from Satan.
2. Jesus not only teaches the Lord's prayer, he accomplishes the Lord's Prayer for us.
3. Jesus forgives us of our sins, conquers our temptations, and escaped the evil one for us.
4. If you trust in Jesus, God has forgiven every moment and every dark corner of your life.
5. If you're unwilling to forgive others, you haven't tasted the unfathomable grace of God.
6. Grace says, "We are far more sinful than we realize and much more loved than we know." (CE)
7. Once we've tasted this forgiveness, we can forgive others naturally (fruit!).
8. We don't pray perfectly, we pray in him.

(So how should you pray?)

(How does this apply to you?)

C. Pray in him.

1. If you came the last two weeks, you know we went through Community and Bible.
2. Our Community gathers around Christ, the Bible is about Christ, and we pray in Christ.
3. I hope you're seeing the Christ-centered pattern that is Cornerstone!
4. The Lord's Prayer can be summed up in this idea, "Approach God in prayer as Jesus does."
5. In Christ, we don't pray pridefully because we see the greatness of our sin.
6. In Christ, we don't pray so as to control God, because we trust God.
7. In Christ, we approach God as our Father, and bask in his great love for us.
8. In Luke 11, Jesus' disciples see Jesus praying, and ask him to teach them how.
9. He teaches them The Lord's Prayer—when you pray it, you're approaching God just like Jesus.

(Pray in him.)

Conclusion:

1. This church is an answer to prayer, let's make this church a place of prayer.
2. We can approach God confidently because that's how Christ approaches him.
3. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Rom 8:34)
4. We are seated with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6)
5. In Christ, you are seated next to the Lord of the universe.
6. That's why prayer is called "Talking to God."
7. Pray in him.

Benediction: *But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.* Jude 20-21 (NIV)