

Harvest

Evangelical Free Church

Praying Like Jesus
For Adult Bible Fellowships and Small Groups Meeting Jan. 10-16, 2010

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

"How Not to Pray"

Matthew 6:5-8

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

Each of us learned how to listen and talk. We found a way to differentiate between the sounds others made and make sense out of the changes in voice that came from the people around us as children. We discovered that certain combinations of sounds made up words. And then we learned that the words had meanings.

Even as adults we learn to associate sounds with meaning beyond the noise. It might be the sound of a worn serpentine belt from an engine compartment or a pan of pasta boiling over on the stove. We might draw a conclusion about the temperature from the sound of our feet on the snow. We respond to the sound of our cell phone to alert us to an incoming text message.

Sounds are one way in which we communicate meaning and learn to understand our environment. God uses prayer (both audible and silent) as a divine means of communicating with Him and understanding life.

Unfortunately, it's difficult sometimes to understand how to connect well with God. New Christians are encouraged to pray, but given few guidelines. We often simply parrot the people around us. We pick up clues on how to pray by copying those in our Christian circles. So some will pray standing with uplifted arms. Others will learn long and elaborate sentences. Some will conclude that prayer must be dripping with passion and emotion. Some will even conclude it requires using syllables that they don't even understand.

Jesus understands our dilemma. In Matthew 6:5-8 he identifies two kinds of models we bring into prayer that are not very effective. He starts this teaching by telling us how NOT to pray.

Q: Record some of the patterns you saw in prayer when you first became a follower of Christ.

Q: What were some of the positive things you saw modeled? What were some of the negative ones?

Thinking about Patterns in Prayer

Few of us pick up a skill in a vacuum. We usually develop methods of doing things from looking at the people around us. Whether you're learning to frame a door, tie a hook on a fishing line, or wash clothes without everything coming out pink, you tend to build your skills

Our days are filled with expectations. We expect certain standards of purity in the foods we buy.



Mathew 6:5-8

Mathew 6:5-8 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

We expect the state and local governments to use our tax dollars to remove the snow and ice from the streets that we depend on to travel in the winter. We expect that the grocer will charge us the same price for a can of peas that the person in front of us pays for the same item. We expect that spring will follow winter and that there will be another growing season in our hemisphere in 2010. We expect the installation instructions of the products we buy to be in English—even if other languages are included. We expect to get hot water when we turn a lever or push a knob to the “hot” side of the kitchen sink. We expect a new half-gallon carton of milk to contain the grade and type of milk marked on the package, and not something else.

The list of expectations that cross our mind in a given day could be nearly endless. We tend not to see them, because they are so transparent. We take them for granted because they are often met without us worrying about them.

1. List a few addition expectations that you have had about people or things in the last 24 hours.

Some of our expectations are not built on stable or dependable patterns we have seen in the past. They are not like expecting an electricity bill that comes once a month or believing that a gasoline pump at Caseys will dispense a certain grade of fuel for your car or pickup. Some of our expectations are things we have become convinced should occur or should happen. They may be realistic, or they may be very unrealistic!

2. What are some expectations people tend to bring to their fiancées on their wedding day?

List several that would be realistic:

List several that would be unrealistic:

3. What are some of the unrealistic expectations that people tend to have of elected officials?

4. What are some of the factors that contribute to unrealistic or distorted expectations we might have of others?

Some of the Jews in Jesus’ day were not looking for any kind of messiah. They presumed that the promise of a deliverer was overrated. They assumed that the golden age of Israel was over forever, and that the future involved only the domination of the land by foreign armies and pagan leaders. They did not see anything hopeful in the future.

How Not to Pray

Others looked for someone unlike the Jesus who came. We know of no one who figured out the life and ministry of Jesus from the Old Testament ahead of time—despite all the words of the prophets. Many looked for someone who would display power and might for all to see, whose ministry was public, and whose authority from God was reinforced by miracles, judgment, and forceful rule.

5. David was regarded as one of the greatest national leaders in Israel’s history. If the messiah was to be a person like David in all respects, what might the Jews of Jesus’ day have looked for in him?

6. How does Isaiah 9:6 reinforce the expectation that the messiah is to be a national deliverer?

7. What might Malachi 3:1 imply about the events surrounding the coming of God’s messiah to earth?

8. How did the replies to the question, “Who do men say that I am?” reflect this expectation of a national deliverer? (See Matthew 16:13-14.)

9. How long do you think it might have taken for the events of verses 3-6 to take place?

10. The Bible tells us that three kinds of gifts were given to Jesus, not his parents. (Obviously, they were to use these gifts on Jesus behalf.) Why is it significant that Matthew states that the gifts were given to *him* and not to *them*?

11. What false assumption do we sometimes make when we consider the number of gifts that were given to Jesus at this time?

12. What picture of the messiah do you get from Psalm 72:10-11?

Expectations are seldom created from 100% speculation. They are often grounded in some kinds of facts, like those cited above.



Reaching Up and Reaching Out

HARVEST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

524 River Hills Dr. P.O. Box 291

Phone: 515-733-5360 Web: www.harvestefree.org E-mail: office@harvestefree.org



13. To what degree is it fair to fault the people of Jesus' day for not recognizing him as the messiah?

14. Look at Isaiah 61:1-3. What are some of the overlooked parts of the mission of the messiah that are disclosed in this prophecy?

15. The New Testament often makes reference to Psalm 118:22-23 as a prophesy of the surprising response to the messiah. What does this say about God's understanding of the way we can get things backwards?

16. What are some of the realities of the Messiah that were overlooked, partly because they did not meet the contemporary Jewish expectations?

Isaiah 50:6 = _____

Isaiah 53:3 = _____

Isaiah 53:5-9 = _____

Isaiah 53:12 = _____

Zechariah 13:7 = _____

Psalm 41:9 = _____

17. List some of the common ideas evangelical Christians sometimes cling to about Jesus or the kingdom that are not supported by the Bible.

18. What are some of the ways we can damage the mission of Christ by our wrong expectations?

19. List some practical steps a growing believer could take to develop healthy spiritual expectations. What would you advise? (Use scripture where possible.)
