

Session One: Teach Us to Pray

“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to prayer, as John also taught his disciples.’” - Luke 11:1

1. Motivation

- a. Why do you want to learn how to study your Bible better? Why do you want to learn to pray better?
- b. The desire to learn how to pray/study your Bible (we will see throughout this teaching series that prayer and Bible study are one in the same thing, two expressions of the same reality) is maybe the greatest desire we could have as believers. However, the motivation behind that desire is the north star that will guide and direct your endeavors.
- c. Let’s take a step backwards; Why do you pray at all? Why do you study your Bible right now?
- d. Common answers are to learn the will of God, because I’m suppose to, to grow spiritually, to get answers for my problems, etc.
 - i. These are all fruits of prayer and Bible study but they make lousy motivations. God’s will is not always clear, a sense of responsibility will fade with time, growth is almost impossible to tangibly measure most of the time, and answers can take years to come or never come at all.

*“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things** must be fulfilled **which were written** in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, **that they might comprehend the Scriptures.**” - Luke 24:44-45*

*“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and **these are they which testify of Me.** But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” - John 5:39-40*

- e. The only proper motivation and desire that can be primary in prayer and Bible study that will actually lead to joy, fulfillment, and sustainability is encountering and hearing Christ.
 - i. If my primary motivation in prayer is anything but encountering and hearing Christ I will soon cease to pray from frustration. And if my primary desire in Bible study is anything but hearing God speak to me and encountering Him in and through His word than Bible study will soon digress into something burdensome and boring.
- f. Unfortunately too many pray or read for themselves rather than for God. This is evident in the fact that many (if not most) people think the Bible is fundamentally about them.

They are constantly looking for and inserting themselves into the story by asking, “How does this apply to me?” before they do anything else.

- i. For instance you read the story of David and Goliath and you picture yourself as David fighting the giants of resistance by the grace of God. Or you read the story of Abraham leaving his country by faith and see yourself as Abraham needing to leave a current situation and trust God.
 1. While the truths extracted from these interpretations are not necessarily wrong they do show us that we are searching the scriptures for ourselves and not God.
- ii. But the Bible is clear. Jesus is the greater David who conquered the giant of sin and death whose victory was imputed to us even though we didn't even lift an arm. Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing where He went to create a new people of God.
- g. The Bible is not fundamentally about you. The Bible is fundamentally about God.

2. The Word of God

- a. In church culture and Christian lingo we use and hear the phrase “word of God” frequently. Almost universally the term is used to refer to the Bible. And this is true and correct. The Bible is the word of God. However the Bible is not the *Word of God*.

*“In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. **He** was in the beginning with God. All things were made through **Him**, and without **Him** nothing was made that was made. In **Him** was life, and the life was the light of men...And the **Word** became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld **His** glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten **Son**, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has declared Him**.” - John 1:1-4, 14 & 18*

*“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and **the express image of His person**, and upholds all things **by the word of His power**...” - Hebrews 1:1-3*

- b. Jesus is the true and great Word of God! Jesus is what God has to say. When we see Jesus we hear God. When we experience Christ we are hearing God. When we read His teachings we are hearing God. When we behold Christ on the cross we are hearing the Word of God.
- c. So what about the Bible? Does this dismiss the Bible? Does this lower the importance of the Bible? Absolutely not! If Jesus is the true Word of God declaring to us what the Father is like than the Bible becomes even more important.
- d. The Bible is the inspired testimony and word of God that brings us into contact with the Living Word of God.

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- i. The Bible is God's inspired and inerrant window through which we encounter the Man who is Himself the Word of God.
 - ii. Because God in Christ took on flesh in the incarnation He, in His grace, gave us a book that is itself incarnational so that we could continue to hear and encounter Christ.
- e. Put another way, to neglect serious time with and study of the Bible is to neglect Jesus Himself. To ignore or trivialize the tangible leather bound book inspired by God is to turn away from the physical Christ we claim died for our sins and rose from the dead.

“An evangelical believes that God humbled himself not only in the incarnation of the Son, but also in the inspiration of the Scriptures. The manger and the cross were not sensational. Neither are grammar and syntax. But that is how God chose to reveal Himself. A poor Jewish peasant and a prepositional phrase have this in common; they are both human and both ordinary. That the poor peasant was God and prepositional phrase is the word of God does not change this fact. Therefore, if God humbled himself to take on human flesh and to speak human language, woe to us if we arrogantly presume to ignore the humanity of Christ and the grammar of Scripture.” - John Piper

3. Obstacles

- a. If the goal and chief end to prayer and Bible study is to hear and encounter Jesus than we must recognize a few challenges that we will face in our journey of learning.
 - i. Lack of Discipleship - Most Christians that I know have never had anyone actually come alongside them in relationship and teach them how to read their Bible and pray. Instead when someone comes to faith in Christ we simply give them a Bible, tell them to start reading in John, and make sure you come to church to hear the sermons.
 - 1. **The Sign:** You rarely if ever read the Bible or pray with other believers.
 - 2. **The Challenge:** Will you go through the process of forming deep friendships with other believers for the purpose encountering Jesus in a deeper way?
 - 3. **Our Goal:** To create a place where friendships can be formed around the revelation of Christ being given to each individual for the growth of the whole group.
 - ii. Lack of Confidence - To many Christians disqualify themselves from ever being able to study the Bible in a deep way because they don't see themselves as “theologians” or “academics”.
 - 1. **The Sign:** You rarely discuss the Bible or pray with other believers as a normal part of your life.
 - 2. **The Challenge:** Do you actually believe that the Holy Spirit loves to reveal Jesus to you and that the burden of responsibility to make that happen lies upon Him and not you?
 - 3. **Our Goal:** To give you tools that make enjoyable and impactful Bible study and prayer accessible to all.

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- iii. Lack of Effort - Because so many Christians lack confidence in themselves to study the Bible they never put in the effort necessary to go deep in God.
 - 1. **The Sign:** You make/have made excuses for you lack of prayer and Bible study like:
 - a. I don't have time.
 - b. I don't like to read.
 - c. I don't know how to do it or where to start.
 - d. It's hard.
 - e. I don't understand what anything means?
 - 2. **The Challenge:** Are you willing to learn things you don't yet know, do things you don't already do, change things that you don't really want to change for the sake of discovering Christ and His glory?
 - 3. **Our Goal:** To challenge, push, and encourage each other in our individual and collective pursuit of the knowledge of God.
- iv. Lack of Consistency - Many Christians have tried to pursue God, pray more, and begin studying the Bible only to have the fire in their hearts dwindle to nothing in a few months.
 - 1. **The Sign:** You have tried to increase your prayer time and Bible study efforts in the past of no avail.
 - 2. **The Challenge:** Do you believe Jesus when He says that His word is like a seed that *given enough time* will bear fruit worthy of His name and not evaluate whether your seeming success or failure in this journey to soon?
 - 3. **Our Goal:** To provide a time and place where you can gather with other believers in prayer so that the flame of our heart is fanned by the encouragement of other believers.
- b. These obstacles are real and powerful. Yet we can trust that Jesus would rather teach us nothing more than how to fellowship with Him through Bible-saturated prayer.