

BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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"TEACH US TO PRAY" Study 3, Sunday, February 28, 2010
"A Prayer Life Foundation" (Matthew 11:25-30)

Notes by Rev. Gary Lockyer

Introduction to Today's Study

What would define a "successful" prayer? Most would assume this question is referring to a request for God to do what we ask; if so, the definition would be: "When our request is granted." Shouldn't present our requests before God? And shouldn't we expect that God will answer? The answer to both questions is YES. We are instructed to DO the first, and EXPECT the second:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **Philippians 4:6**

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And ... we know that we have what we asked of him **1 John 5:14-15**

We noted from last week's study that when Jesus took extended time to pray he was actually maintaining a RELATIONSHIP with his Father.

We also noted that we have been welcomed into the "family circle;" since we have been adopted as his sons (**Ephesians 1:3-6**) we are invited also to share in this INTIMACY with God.

For example, listen to Paul:

... I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ... I want to know Christ ... becoming like him ... **from Philippians 3:7-10**

Authentic Christianity is not learning a set of doctrines and then stepping into cadence with people all marching the same way. Nor is it simple humanitarian effort for the less fortunate. It is a walk, a supernatural walk with a living, dynamic, communicating God." Bill Hybels

Prayer, then, can never be just about have our requests answered. If that is our primary FOCUS, we will miss out on something far greater - BUILDING and ENJOYING an intimate relationship with God! - of which prayer is a vital component.

Our text today is Matthew 11 : 25-30. The context is REJECTION:

of John the Baptist and Jesus (Matthew 11:1-19)

"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: " 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." **Matthew 11:16-19**

of Jesus specifically (11:20-24)

Jesus began to denounce the cities in which his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. " ... Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **Matthew 11:20-21**

Instead of reacting in anger, Jesus makes a gracious invitation, "Come to me." **Matthew 11:28**

This invitation is still open; *"Come and enjoy an intimate relationship with me."*

In fact, this open invitation has three components that form the foundation of our relationship with the Lord - of which prayer is a such a vital part.

COMPONENT 1: "AVAILABILITY" ... "Come to me" Matthew 11:28

To "come to me" is to CHOOSE to arrange life's priorities so that our relationship with Jesus grows - a commitment to him as Lord. The Pharisees emphasised obedience as the great obligation a person has before God. They would have commanded, "Do!" Jesus commands us, "Come."

In Revelation, John writes to the Church at Laodicea under instructions from Jesus and in his name:

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ...

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. **from Revelation 3:15-20**

These "*followers of Jesus*" had to remember to "*follow*" every day. It had been some time since they had made that choice - instead they had declared the INDEPENDENCE.

The way was still clear for them to enjoy fellowship with their Lord. They had chosen NEGLECT. What would they continue to choose?

To "come to me" is not a one-of event. but a deliberate, conscious day-by-day response to God's grace. The maintenance and growth of our relationship with the Lord is the outcome. Our choice indicates that we are available; only as we are in his presence can we can respond to whatever is asked of us.

COMPONENT 2: "USEABILITY" ... "Take my yoke upon you." Matthew 11:29

Yoke: a wooden assembly worn around the neck of a person or animal to spread the load of whatever burden is being carried.

Contextually, the burden that the Pharisees placed on people - meticulous obedience to the moral and ceremonial law of the Old Testament - led to FEAR. This was the way to earn God's favour! for they thought God related to them through legalism, not through love

By comparison, Jesus' "yoke is light" - his mercy and compassion, leading to PEACE with God:

since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. **Romans 5:1-2**

Devotionally, we may see "*taking the yoke of Jesus*" as our willingness to:

be USEFUL in the Lord's Service,

in CO-OPERATION with our brothers and sisters in Christ **(Ephesians 4:11-16)**

and as PARTNERS with the Lord - "labourers together with God" **1 Corinthians 3:9**

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." **Philippians 4:13**

COMPONENT 3: "TEACHABILITY" ... "Learn from (of) me" Matthew 11:29

Notice that we don't learn rules & regulations or religious principles. **We are to learn of Jesus, by: following his EXAMPLE.** In any given situation, the first question to ask is not,

"What should I do?", but "What would Jesus do?"

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. **John 13:15-17**

taking on his character ATTRIBUTES, as God's Spirit works in us.

And we ... are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. **2 Corinthians 3:18**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit **from Galatians 5:22-25**