

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Transformed: My Life in God's Kingdom* these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: Prayer is grounded in a desire to honor God.

Introduction: I must confess that, when I was in my teens, I usually tuned out when a preacher announced he was going to preach on prayer. I would often think to myself, "Prayer? How boring! How elementary! I've known how to pray since I was a little kid! What can this preacher possibly say about prayer that I don't already know?" Some people will say that was a terrible attitude – and they're absolutely right! As I've grown in my walk with Christ, I've come to realize that few things are as profound as the whole concept of prayer. Think about it: we have a very big God. The Bible says the heavens declare His glory, "and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). When you look into a starry sky at night, you're reminded of how big the universe really is, but how much bigger is the God that made it! Yet we actually have the privilege of approaching that God with our problems and our needs, and He listens to us.

Yet most Christians, if they are honest, will admit that they do not spend enough time in prayer. Adrian Rogers used to say, "Prayer is the greatest Christian privilege, it is the greatest Christian service, and it is the greatest Christian failure." I firmly believe the main reason so many churches are struggling today is because Christians have forgotten the power of prayer. James 4:2 says, "Ye have not because ye ask not." What would happen if Christians all over the country really got serious about prayer? Yet we must remember that prayer is more than uttering a few token words. We are communicating with the God of heaven, and we must seek His glory above all else. Perhaps the best guidelines for prayer were given by the Lord Jesus in His well-known "model prayer".

I. The Person of prayer.

A. He is our Father.

1. He has legitimate authority over us.
2. He has a personal relationship with us.
 - a. He cares about our problems and needs.
 - b. He cares enough to discipline us when we go astray.
 - I was a little boy when the first "Star Wars" movies came out. This movie talks a great deal about "The Force", which governs the universe, but also obeys the commands of mortals. Our God is the precise opposite. He has the authority to command our obedience, but He also loves us with an indescribable love, and cares about our problems and needs.

- B. He is holy.
 - 1. “Thy Name” – In biblical times, a person’s name represented the person’s total character.
 - 2. What do we mean when we say God is holy?
- C. He is sovereign.
 - 1. We should desire His will above our own.
 - 2. God’s sovereignty is a source of comfort.

II. The principles of prayer.

- A. Prayer acknowledges God’s provision.
 - 1. “Our daily bread” – This phrase probably has its roots in God’s provision of manna for the Israelites.
 - 2. We should acknowledge God’s care for us each day.
- B. Prayer relies on God’s mercy.
 - 1. God’s mercy enables us to pray (Romans 8:26-27).
 - 2. We need to seek His forgiveness regularly.
 - a. We still sin (1 John 2:1). The phrase “if any man sin” is a first-class conditional in the Greek, meaning that the condition is assumed to be true.
 - b. God is faithful to forgive when we repent (1 John 1:9).
- C. Prayer seeks God’s protection.
 - 1. From temptation.
 - a. God Himself does not tempt anyone (James 1:13-15).
 - b. He promises to make a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - 2. From evil – or, “the evil one”.
 - a. Peter warned that the devil is out to “devour” us (1 Peter 5:8).
 - b. We resist the devil by submitting to God (1 Peter 5:9).
- D. Prayer promotes God’s glory.
 - 1. Jesus warned against prayer that exalts one’s self (Matt. 6:6).
 - 2. God shares His glory with no one (Isaiah 42:8).

III. The proviso of prayer.

- A. We must forgive others of their trespasses.
 - 1. Why is forgiveness so important?
 - a. Our willingness to forgive flows from the fact that we have been forgiven (Eph. 4:32).
 - b. If you never forgive, you should examine your heart and see if you have truly been saved.
 - 2. Refusal to forgive is a serious offense against God (Matt. 18:21-35).
 - The story goes that John Wesley was preaching a sermon on forgiveness that really upset a man in the congregation. After the service the man came to Wesley and said defiantly, “I never forgive!” Wesley replied, “Then, sir, I hope you never sin.”
- B. What happens when we refuse to forgive?
 - 1. You retain the guilt for your own sins.
 - 2. Your prayers will go unanswered.

Conclusion: One of my favorite war movies is “The Longest Day.” It’s about the Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II, popularly known as D-Day. The movie has an all-star cast. John Wayne played a battalion commander in the 82nd Airborne Division. In one of the final scenes of the movie, his battalion has entered the town of St. Mere-Eglise. Red Buttons played a soldier in his command, and he stood nearby while Wayne gave some orders to his men. After Wayne left, Red Buttons remarked to

another soldier, “The old man sure has changed since yesterday.” He paused, and then he said, “Or maybe it’s just that *we’ve* changed since yesterday.”

Malachi 3:6 says, “I am the Lord; I change not.” If God does not change, then aren’t we wasting our time when we pray? Certainly not! For one thing, prayer changes us. The more time you spend in prayer, the more you learn about who God is, and you grow in your walk with Him. Furthermore, even though God’s character does not change, the Bible also teaches that He hears and responds to our prayers. History tells of many great spiritual awakenings that began when God’s people devoted themselves to prayer. If there was ever a time when our own country needed such an awakening, that time is now. Who know what God will do if His people commit themselves to prayer?

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