

C*A*L Reflections – On Prayer

Confession:

One: Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and one another.

Leader says each part of the confession, repeated by the group:

**I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven,
And to you, my brothers and sisters,
That I have sinned in thought, word and deed,
By my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault;
Wherefore I pray God almighty to have mercy on me,
Forgive my sins and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

One: The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. Amen.

Lesson 1: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Take care not to perform righteous deeds
in order that people may see them;
otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets
to win the praise of others.

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,
so that your almsgiving may be secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners
so that others may see them.

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door,
and pray to your Father in secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.
They neglect their appearance,

so that they may appear to others to be fasting.

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you may not appear to others to be fasting,
except to your Father who is hidden.

And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

Discussion What is Jesus saying about prayer here? What does the phrase "your Father who sees in secret" mean to you? Can you imagine his presence now? How do you want to respond to that presence? Are prayers and good deeds by hypocrites still valid?

Lesson 2: Matthew 6:7-15

<p>Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"This is how you are to pray: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'</p> <p>"If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>New International Version</i></p>	<p>"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this: Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are. Set the world right; Do what's best— as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.</p> <p>"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The Message</i></p>
--	---

Discussion Can you imagine that God knows what you need before you ask? Why, then, do we pray? How do our prayers fit with Jesus' model? What confuses us about prayer?

Prayer is for us. It deepens the connection between us and God, and opens us to seeing the world as God sees it. It changes us.

Prayer (activities) Draw a way in which you have experienced God's love and care today (or this week.)

Going Deeper Consider the main movements of Jesus' prayer: Reflecting God's light to the world, being part of God's kingdom/mission here and now, seeking daily bread, expressing being forgiven by being forgiving, staying the course with Christ, relying on God's power to save. Is Jesus giving us a formula for prayer, or is he modeling a way of life? How does Jesus' life reflect this model? How can you integrate this model into your life?