

CONFIDENT PRAYER

Matthew 7:7-12

Before Reading:

When you pray, is it more like speaking to your Father, speaking to a police officer, or speaking to no one?

Sometimes when I'm up late at night trying to get to bed, I'll realise that I haven't prayed yet that day. When that happens, I feel as though I have to pray because that's the right thing to do.

Sometimes, as I sit in my bed praying, it feels like pointless words rattling around in my head - like I'm speaking to nobody. Other times, I feel like I'm in trouble for not praying more often, so I'm shy in praying - the same type of shyness you might feel when you see a police officer on the street.

In this passage, Jesus helps us to understand what it means to be able to call God our Father. Our earthly Fathers, though they are sinful, are usually pretty good at showing us love. That doesn't always happen, and that's really awful. But most of the time, our dads do all right!

So think for a moment what it's like to speak to someone who you really trust. You don't feel shy

or fearful; you feel confident to say whatever's on your mind. You can be honest about your flaws and ask for favours with confidence because of the trust you have with that person.

Jesus says in these verses that God is like the perfect version of that person. He is without sin! He is the perfect Father - the one we can come to and talk about anything that's troubling us. We can ask him for anything, because we know that whether he gives us what we ask for, or something different, he will give us what we need in that moment.

The times when I remember this are then times when I have the best experience of prayer. I can be at peace knowing that God hears me, and he will do what's best for me. Therefore, I can pray confidently! I can have confidence that God loves me, that my sin is forgiven, and that he will answer my prayers how he sees best.

Reflection Questions:

1. Who is the person you feel most confident talking to about anything? Have you ever felt that way praying to God? Why not?
2. Who is a friend who you want to become a Christian? God answers prayer, so pray regularly for them!

Prayer:

Loving Father, you know me better than I even know myself. You know my sin better than even I do. And all the same, you love me as your child. Help me to always remember this when I come to you in prayer. I pray for my friend _____. God, you have the power to make them believe in Jesus, so please do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE TRUE VINE

John 15:1-8

Before Reading:

What does it look like to be a part of God's family?

Jesus says: 'I am the vine, you are the branches'. Notice how Jesus says we must remain in him to bear fruit, but also that he remains in us (v5). We remain in God, walking with and for Jesus, but God has also given us his Holy Spirit to help us serve and glorify him, he is always with us, in good times and difficult times. It's a great gift of God that he enables us to live for him as we should.

Jesus also says 'apart from me you can do nothing' (v5). This verse emphasises the importance of having a personal, devoted relationship with Jesus, and depending on him completely. Much like the branches of a vine could not grow fruit and flourish if they weren't attached to the vine itself, Christians cannot live a fruitful life unless we are trusting in Jesus and depending on him for our strength and joy.

What other things are we tempted to find our joy

and meaning in? There are all kinds of things. But Jesus says that we ought to find these things in him.

He also says that God is constantly shaping us more into the likeness of his Son Jesus. He prunes us, like you would prune a plant so that it can grow strong and healthy, and so that it can produce fruit (v2). When you prune a plant, you cut off the things that stop it from growing; that is what God does to us.

But notice how the passage also says that we are already clean because of what Jesus did for us, dying on the cross so that we can have a relationship with God and be part of the vine (v3). God may 'prune' us and change our hearts in different ways so that we can glorify him, but if you believe in the good news of Jesus you are already part of the vine: God's family.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you think 'producing fruit' as a Christian looks like?
2. Do you depend on God for your strength and your joy? What things compete for this role in your life?
3. What do you feel like God might need to prune away from your life?

Prayer:

Kind heavenly Father, thank you that I can be a part of your vine, your family. Thank you that your Son Jesus died so that I can be close to you. Please help me to depend on you, turning to you every day for joy and for strength, so that I may bear fruit for you. Amen.