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PRAYER - Intimacy

Collect: What is your preferred means of communicating good news. A phone call? A text message? How about communicating bad news? An average of 55 billion Whatsapp messages are sent *every day* – how many do you send?

Context: Luke 5:16: Jesus had come to earth to bring the kingdom of God to men. Jesus made it clear that things in the kingdom were very, very different than things in the world. In the kingdom of heaven, people who have nothing to offer God are accepted. Those who are meek and peace loving, and those who want what is right will finally have what they long for because Jesus came to conquer sin and death. As Jesus taught on the mountainside, many people gathered to hear Him. Jesus taught that those who follow Him should never do good things just to call attention to themselves. The good things they do should be done in secret - just between them and God. God sees what we do in secret, and he will reward those things (Matthew 6:4). One of the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus said that prayer should not be a way to get attention and praise from people. It should be done with a right heart toward God.
'When you pray, do not be like those who only pretend to be holy. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners. They want to be seen by others. What I'm about to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward.
'When you pray, go into your room. Close the door and pray to your Father, who can't be seen. He will reward you. Your Father sees what is done secretly.' - Matthew 6:5-6

Discuss: How does our quiet prayer life effect our public prayer life? Have you felt the temptation to attempt to impress others in the way we pray? Where do you think this temptation comes from?

Prayer is the time you spend being real with God. It is when you pour out your heart to Him. You can tell God anything and everything. You can tell Him when you are angry or hurt or disappointed. You can talk to Him about the good stuff that happened in your day. He is with you every minute, so it should be easier to talk to Him than to your best friend or a parent. Prayer is also when you stop to listen to His voice (John 10:27).

Content: Jesus gave a perfect example of how to pray: 'The Lord's Prayer.' Lots of people can say this from memory, however, Jesus just said not to repeat the same words; reciting this prayer does not take the place of heart-felt conversations with your heavenly Father. Jesus wanted to tell His disciples the type of prayer to pray, the things that God will honour in our prayers.
Luke 11:2-4
'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.[3] Give us each day our daily bread.
[4] Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'

ACTION: When reciting the Lord's Prayer, say each line of verse 4 with a pause after. Jesus took the time to elaborate on forgiveness, and we must not overlook it. Forgiveness MUST be a part of our prayer time! Citizens of God's kingdom understand the forgiving, saving grace of God, and can likewise extend grace to those who have wronged them.
In Jesus' prayer, he started by calling God his Father. If you have faith in God, and have put your trust in him, he is your Father. You are adopted into God's family. You, too, have the right to call him Father. Then Jesus praised his Father's name. This is the best way to begin a prayer. Praise honours God, and it reminds you that God can do anything.

Next, Jesus asked for the Kingdom to break out on Earth. In Jesus' model prayer, God and his kingdom come first (Matthew 22:36-37). Then Jesus asked for his needs to be met that day. It is completely right to pray for what you need. The Bible says that every good and perfect gift comes from your heavenly Father (James 1:17). Next, Jesus said to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others. Jesus explained that if we are not willing to forgive others, God will not forgive us. Finally, Jesus said to ask God to keep us from sinning; this comes only by God's grace (Titus 2:11-12).

Challenge: *Take some time to write a version of the Lord's prayer that fits your current circumstances and needs.*
There is no magic formula for praying to your heavenly Father! But here is how this prayer may sound in your life:
Praise: Lord, You are awesome! Thank you for making those I love. All that you've blessed me with. All that I am able to do and be because of who you are.
Kingdom: Lord, I would love for my friend Sam to know You and enter Your kingdom. Please use me to show Sam how much you love Him.
Needs: Please help me with interview today. I've prepared as much as I can, but I get so nervous about these moments. Please help me to be calm about it today.
Forgiveness: I was spiteful to a colleague today and I know that was wrong. Please forgive me and help me to mend any broken relationship today. I need to forgive where that I have received that same treatment.
Grace: And Lord, give me grace so I won't sin today. Don't let me be tempted look or feel about anyone else different to how you see them.

Of course, there is SO much you can say, and you don't have to touch on every point every time you pray. Just talk to God like you talk to your best friend. God handcrafted you!

Connect: (Psalm 139:13) He knows how many hairs are on your head! (Matthew 10:30) He knows you better than anyone and he wants to spend time with you every day.
God promises to reward you when you come to him privately in prayer. He will hear your prayer and answer you (Psalm 34:17, Matthew 7:10). This does not mean that God will give you everything you ask for. But you can be CERTAIN that he will hear your requests and will answer in the way that is BEST for you.
Jesus' Example (Mark 1:35): Jesus not only told His disciples how to pray. By his example, he showed them how to pray. He prayed out loud in front of them so they would see God's hand at work right before their eyes (John 11:41-42). And very often, Jesus took private time to be with his Dad (Luke 5:16).
Without prayer, you are just doing life on your own. There is absolutely no comparison between God's power and yours. Why wouldn't you want to pray and invite God's power into every situation you face? Remember, when you are at your weakest, God's power is the strongest (2 Corinthians 12:9).
There are no rules about when you should pray. But, taking time every morning to pray is the best way to start your day. It shows God that you are putting him first and it reminds you to depend on him all day long. The Bible says that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). Every day is a fresh start. Why not start it with your heavenly Father? And, when we don't start the day with prayer, we often get so busy with our day that we never get around to it.

Spend some time praying the prayers you wrote and praying that each person of your group learns a new intimacy with their Heavenly Father.