



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: PRAYER READINESS (OUTWARD) MATTHEW 6:9-13

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MAIN POINT

Believing requires more than intellect—it involves action, perseverance, hard work, and readiness to act.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to believe?

Show your group the Session Four video called “Faith,” then discuss the following questions:

Which is easier for you to describe – what to believe or how to believe?

Why is a time of difficulty an appropriate time to ask not only what to believe, but how to believe?

Why is it important to believe not only in God's power but also in God Himself?

How would you describe the prayer life of someone who truly believes and trusts God?

Most of us think of believing and loving in the same, although incorrect, category: that both are something you can just fall into and out of. One day you love someone or something, only to wake up the next day and discover that you no longer do. When someone asks you how to love, you answer the same way you would if someone asks you how to believe: you just do. That works great when you feel like loving. Or when you feel like believing. But what about when you don't? That's when you begin to learn that faith – real faith – takes work.

UNDERSTANDING

Why do you think faith is so important to God?

Do you place the same value on faith that God does? Why or why not?

Faith is at the core of everything. It's at the center of our being. It's the driving force behind everything we do. We fool ourselves when we think belief and trust are related to only some of life's issues. Whether or not a person is a Christian, what they believe is at the core of everything else.

How is believing different during difficult times?

There are certain times in life when it's harder to believe than others. That almost goes without saying. But what makes believing doubly difficult during those times is that it's not a one-time choice but one that must be made over and over again. Trusting God is something we must consciously choose many times during the day, especially on those days when we're fighting to hold on to faith.

How are prayer and belief connected?

READ MATTHEW 6:9-13.

What does Jesus' model of praying for daily bread demonstrate about God's character?

What does that request tell us about ourselves?

If we are to pray today for our daily bread, then what must we pray for tomorrow?

Jesus told us to petition God for our daily bread. That might mean asking the Lord for material provisions today because you don't know from where the money or food or shelter is going to come. But it also might mean asking Him for the strength and grace to simply endure while it feels as if your life is falling apart.

Is there a spiritual principle we should recognize in praying for daily bread each day? What is it?

Are you praying each day for faith as you face hardship? Why or why not?

The choice to believe and trust must be made over and over again in a myriad of contexts and situations. This is part of what makes the work of faith so hard – that

you must persevere in believing in God, day in and day out, and in believing that He will give you what you need.

How would you describe your belief in God during difficult times: struggling to believe, wavering in your faith, or remaining steadfast?

APPLICATION

Believing isn't just about intellect. It's about action. And perseverance. And sometimes – many times – it's hard work to believe. But the good news is that we don't have to do the hard work on our own. God will help us believe. We know Jesus is even now at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf. He's praying for us as we pray for strength in the battle for faith.

What difference does it make to know that Jesus is continually interceding for you as you face hardship?

What changes do you need to make to your prayer life based upon what you've learned?

How can we, as a community of faith, encourage one another to keep believing during difficult times?

PRAYER

Give your group the opportunity to pray "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13) silently from memory or with their Bibles open. Encourage them to consider how

praying in that manner consistently will deepen their faith in God. Close by asking God to give each person the strength to believe and to trust Him no matter what circumstances they face. Pray for the courage to persevere and to choose to believe day in and day out.

COMMENTARY

6:9–13. An important point to be made about the “Lord’s Prayer” is that Jesus intended it to be a pattern for the servant of his kingdom, just as he intended much of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not a magical formula. The specific words he used are not any more sacred than requests we might make expressing the same kinds of desires to the Father. We should seek to learn how to pray like Jesus prayed, not merely what Jesus prayed. That was his point when he said, This, then, is how you should pray (6:9). The pattern of meaningful prayer is to begin by majoring on the person and nature of God and his kingdom interests, coming to personal requests and needs only secondarily.

You in Jesus’ introduction (6:9a) is grammatically unnecessary, and is therefore emphatic. It is also placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis. His implication is, “You, on the other hand (in contrast to both the pompous hypocrites and the thoughtless, superstitious Gentiles), are to pray simply and meaningfully, as follows.”

Our Father in heaven. The plural pronoun our indicates that prayer should be an expression of corporate desires to God, and should often be prayed in fellowship with other believers. The words Father and heaven together demonstrate the loving closeness and awesome transcendence of God to his child.

Hallowed be your name. The verb hallowed means “to sanctify, make holy.” Because the grammatic form here is unknown in English, we tend to take this line in Jesus’ prayer as a statement of fact, when, in fact, it is a request. Jesus was teaching us to make the request, “Lord, may your name be sanctified.” Why should we pray to God

that he would sanctify his own name? Probably as a reminder to ourselves to live a life that advertises a holy God. Also, this kind of greeting was a form of blessing on the one addressed.

In both Old and New Testament thinking, a person's name was equivalent to his or her very person (thus the careful choice in those days of children's names for their meaning, not just their sound). For this reason, it is not important to know what name of God Jesus may have meant. To say that the word by which God is called is to be holy falls far short of Jesus' meaning. Jesus was asking that God himself be set apart as holy, and so Jesus also modeled the attitude we should have toward God during prayer.

Hallowed has to do with something or someone being different or set apart. We must come before God with an attitude of reverence for God's perfection (in contrast to our imperfection), his wisdom (in contrast to our foolishness), his power (in contrast to our impotence), and his love (in contrast to our selfishness). God's holiness is everything that sets him apart from us and all the rest of his creation. Addressing such a being should never be done casually or flippantly.

Your kingdom come. The kingdom servant sees God's kingdom as not yet completely fulfilled on earth. This prayer is not only for the future coming of Christ (although this can be included), but it is also for the spreading of God's kingdom around the world through his kingdom servants. Therefore, it is a prayer that we, his servants, would be faithfully obedient and effective in living his kingdom principles in our own lives and then spreading the kingdom through our actions and words.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This request assumes that God's will is done in heaven, but not yet on earth (in the same full way). Sin and rebellion are absent in heaven, but hindrances are present on earth. This is another request for the spreading of God's kingdom rule on earth, primarily through the church as the agent of the kingdom. Our prayers are to be continual reminders to ourselves to "get with" the kingdom program. Sadly, too many believers live for the weekends and not for Christ's kingdom.

Give us today our daily bread. This petition is probably best taken at face value—as a request for the food needed daily, and that it be provided when it is needed. Most of the people in Jesus' day lived hand-to-mouth. This was true particularly among the lower classes to whom Jesus' message appealed most. This request acknowledges God as the provider of every physical need, but it also reminds the petitioner to trust

God to provide as the needs arise, and not necessarily in advance. Compare this with the lesson Israel had to learn during forty years of daily manna; any excess spoiled by the second day. They were always just one day away from starvation, and yet they ate well during all those decades.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. The Greek word for debts in the New Testament appears only here and Romans 4:4. It is clear that Jesus and Matthew intended the word to mean “sins” here (Luke 11:4). The choice of this word reflects the fact that all sins place us in debt to God. In a more extended treatment and parable on this same concept in 18:21–35, Jesus used the idea of debt to teach about sin and forgiveness.

This is the only petition that seems to have a condition prerequisite to its fulfillment and two full verses of explanation following (6:14–15). The context is the relationship of a child to a father. This is “family forgiveness,” not forensic or judicial forgiveness. Jesus is not saying that our forgiving is a necessary means to earning God’s forgiveness. The Bible makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to merit God’s judicial forgiveness, but that it is given freely (e.g., Rom. 5:6–8; Eph. 2:8–9).

One does not gain forgiveness by forgiving. But a person evidences his or her own forgiveness by forgiving others. Since this is family forgiveness, our sense of forgiveness is denied us when we deny forgiveness to others. As God’s children, we are commanded to be forgiving. When we fail to forgive, we reap the consequences of spiritual and moral defeat.