

THE BIG IDEA: Prayer is where a good Father prepares His children to receive good things.

The Take-Off

What do you think of when I say the word “prayer?”

My guess is we all had a lot of different things come to our mind depending on how honest we allowed ourselves to be I’m also pretty sure that the words we associate with prayer have changed over the different seasons of our lives

At different points in my life, I would have said:

Boring

Exciting

A waste of time

The best time

Long

Short

Felt like work

Felt like worship

Disappointing

Fulfilling

Optional

Necessary

And that’s just me! I bet you have a similar struggle of conflicting words, and that’s one reason why we can all be thankful for the beautiful simplicity of Jesus in our passage today.

Jesus takes something complicated like prayer and breaks it down to its simplest form: a conversation.

And not just any conversation, either.

In **Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV)**, Jesus shows us that prayer is a conversation between a Father and His children.

Maybe you’re like I was a couple of years ago: prayer was something that I had to do (or at least something I thought I was supposed to do) instead of something I get to do.

It didn’t used to be that way for me - I can remember waking up early in college just to be with God

But somewhere along the way, I lost that and prayer turned into a lifeless task.

But remembering that prayer is talking with my Dad transformed it from a lifeless task into a life-giving talk!

This section of Scripture played a big part in that switch for me, and I want to share with you what the Holy Spirit shared with me as I studied it.

In these 5 short verses, Jesus shows us why we pray and how we pray, and all of it is grounded in a conversation with the Father.

1. Why we pray

- a. Not to be too simplistic, but we pray because we need
 - There are things we haven’t received, and that’s why we ask
 - There are things we haven’t found, and that’s why we seek
 - There are doors that have yet to open, and that’s why we knock
- b. Some think that praying because we have needs is selfish, but Jesus says it’s the primary reason
- c. We need something, so we ask, we seek, we knock
- d. What we’ll find is that as we grow, the something we need will change, deepen
- e. There’s another reason why we pray
- f. Not just because we need, but because God gives
 - **Verse 8** is clear that if we ask, seek, and knock we will receive
 - **Verse 11** reveals who the giver is - it’s God
- g. God is a giver!
 - **John 3:16** / He gave Jesus
 - **James 1:17** / He gifts are good and perfect
- h. Not that we always appreciate it, but the greatest gift that God gives us in prayer is Himself - His presence
- i. Remember, prayer is a conversation between a Dad and His kids, which is why Jesus uses the illustration of parents and children next

- j. We can't miss the relational aspect of prayer specifically and God generally
- k. 18 times over the 3 chapters that make up the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses "Father"
- l. Did you know that every time it's connected to a possessive pronoun like your, my, our?
- m. Jesus is driving home the relationship we have with the Father

2. How we pray

- a. That "child asking Dad" picture really comes into focus when Jesus teaches how we pray
- b. First, we pray without stopping
 - We keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking
 - If that doesn't sound like a child asking for something, nothing does!
- c. Second, we pray without wavering
 - We lean into the definitive word "will"
 - It will be given, it will be found, it will be opened
 - **Hebrews 11:6** / He IS a rewarder of those who seek Him
- d. Finally, we pray without wondering
 - Typically, we have 2 questions that we wonder about in prayer: Is God able and is God good?
 - We only really doubt His goodness when it seems that He's answering our prayers in a way that we didn't want
 - Sometimes a no now opens the door for a yes later
 - Look back at **verses 9 and 10**: what if the child actually asked for a snake? A good parent says no because a wise parent knows what's best for the child.
- e. **Prayer is where a good Father prepares His children to receive good gifts.**
- f. It's a conversation between a Father who knows His kids better than they know themselves, and it's the place where the kids learn to trust that.

The Landing

The Father is good, and if we needed any more proof of it, we need only look to the cross.

It was there that the Father gave us His greatest gift - there that He sacrificed His only Son on an altar

But the sacrifice turned the altar into a table - a place where family gathers

And today, we gather at the table - virtually, of course, but at the table together

When you come to my house, at my table, as the father I pray a blessing over the meal and over those with us

As you receive communion in your home, with your family, listen and worship with Phil and Jennifer as they sing a blessing from the Father over each one of us

When you're ready, take the bread and the juice there with you and receive communion together.

I'll close us out after the song.

Let's pray.