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## TEACH US TO PRAY



It seems like such a simple request. It was a request made by the disciples to Jesus one day. They saw Him praying and were so impressed and impacted by His prayer that they wanted to learn to pray like Him.

Prayer can be one of the easiest things to do and one of the most difficult things at the same time. It's like talking to a friend – that's easy. It's talking to a friend you can't see or audibly hear – that's hard. Let's be honest, you look weird talking to someone that is invisible.

I have come to realize that even though God is unseen it does not mean that He is not accessible. He can be reached. He is just a prayer away. This guide will help you to connect with Him deeper and get more out of your time in prayer.

## PRIVATE PRACTICE



I took piano lessons when I was a teenager. I actually think I started when I was 10 or 11 and kept going until I was 17. That was a long time. Twice a week, every week and even during the summer when school was out, I still had to go to lessons.

After reading that you might believe that I am pretty good on the piano. You would be wrong! Don't ask me to play anything unless you want to hear a bunch of wrong notes and stop-and-starts. I'm not that good and that is being nice.

My problem was I did not practice as much as I should have when I got back home from music school. It was time consuming and I wanted to do other things – like anything else. I did not like practice.

There were times people would find out I knew how to play the piano and they would ask me to play something. I could get some tunes out

## Teach Me How to Pray

(I play a mean chopsticks...Google it) but I could not play as well as I wanted to. I wish I knew how to play a bunch of songs. But the problem with me was I did not like to practice.

The lesson I learned through that experience is "Private Practice Produces Public Performance."

What you do by yourself, in secret, when no one sees, gives you the ability to do the things that people see. And that goes for prayer as well. Your private time with God fuels you to live out your Christian life in public – at school, in your neighborhood, with your friends.

How do you develop that? How can we make our time alone with God meaningful and enjoyable? How can we develop our private practice?

Before I give you some tips, I want you to know that God does not want time with Him to be boring, and something we treat like nasty medicine – hold your nose and just do it. No! He wants us to find our private time with Him to be the most enjoyable time of our day. He wants us to look forward to it and gain something from it.

The best model for how we should treat our personal, private time with God was Jesus and how He did it while here on earth. Mark 1:35- 37 gives us a sneak peek into Jesus' prayer life:

*"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you'"*

Here are some lessons we learn from Jesus and some tips to have private practice time with God:

### 1. MAKE IT THE FIRST THING YOU DO.

The Bible says Jesus got up very early in the morning and had His special prayer time before He did anything else. Ok, I just read your mind – "I don't have time in the morning when I wake up. I have to go to school, or rush to work, and I barely wake up in time to get ready so I don't have time in the morning." Raise your hand if you have ever said or thought that.

I can relate. I still think like that sometimes. With everything I have to do,

I think I don't have time to spend time praying first thing in the morning. And even when we plan to wake up to spend time with God, we end up hitting that snooze button a few times too many...and there goes our private practice time.

Well, I am sure Jesus had really important things to do, like heal the sick, raise the dead, and open all-you-can-eat restaurants in the desert. It would have been easy for Him to say, "I'm too busy to pray." Maybe He understood something that we know but forget. If we do not get our private practice in first, then the chances of us spending time in prayer later go way down.

Life tends to take up all our time. So we plan to check our social media for just a minute and that turns into an hour. We plan to pray later in the day but that time never comes.

To develop our private prayer time, we have to make it first.

So, how do we make this happen?

Go to sleep earlier so you can wake up earlier to spend time with God.

Even if you go to bed 15 or 30 minutes earlier, you can wake up earlier to spend time with God. (Some of us need to go to bed... period. Scrolling on the internet and texting all night will definitely stop you from having private practice with God in the morning.)

### **Set your alarm and when it goes off, get up.**

I am a snoozer! I admit it. But when I stay in bed after those 9-minute intervals, I still feel as tired most times as I did when it first went off. If you want to develop your private practice, you have to stick to the time you planned to meet with God. And if you snooze you will lose (I didn't make that up). So here's my tip: when the alarm clock goes off, jump out of bed. It helps if you put the alarm on the other side of your room so you have to go turn it off. By then, you are already out of bed. Remember we are trying to grow our prayer time with God. We have to change some things up.

### **Don't touch distractions.**

This is a big one. We may take the initiative to go to bed earlier and wake up earlier but the trick is to actually use that extra time to spend it with God. The temptation we all face is to do just one thing before we have our private practice prayer time. That one thing might be to check YouTube, Snapchat, IG, our text messages,