COMMUNICATION (LARGE GROUP)

Lesson 3: Communication with the Creator

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-14

GAME/ACTIVITY:

Group Charades: Play normally except for the fact that the audience does the acting and a person in front of the crowd guesses the word that you either wrote on a large poster board behind the guesser, OR put on a screen that the guesser stands in front of during the game. There is an app that you could use as well. Guesser puts phone on forehead and guesses the word. Can be done with multiple teams as well.

Telephone: Classic game. Can be done with multiple groups as well. Whisper a long sentence in the first person's ear. They pass it down the line until the last person announces the message.

Guess that word: If accessible, use noise canceling headphones. Play a song and have that person listening to music. Someone comes up and speaks a word that the wearer of the headphones needs to guess. Ideally, if the headphones are truly noise-canceling, the wearer can only read the person's lips. Can be done on teams. Playing for points or number of words correctly guessed. If noise canceling headphones are not available then have the person mouth the word without speaking.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION:

We have talked about communication and have learned what it means. We have also discussed some tips on communicating effectively with other people in our lives, hopefully decreasing friction and drama. But there is one form of communication that is so vitally important. Our communication with God is extremely important. It is called prayer. You may have some questions about it. You may have tried it and given up. Or you may try it every once in a while with varying degrees of success. I am here to tell you that whether you have no clue what it is, how to do it, or the opposite end of the spectrum, you have the hang of it, we all can learn more. Jesus took a moment with His disciples to explain because even they had questions. The disciples started noticing that there were times that Jesus would disappear for a while and then pop back into their lives. They realized that Jesus was communicating with His Father often. They got curious. They had questions. They wanted to learn how to do it like Jesus did. They were disciples which means learners. So that is where we pick up in the story. Listen to Matthew 6:5-14

Jesus was explaining what not to do first. Let's take a look. First, Jesus says DON'T pray like the hypocrites. Gotta know what a hypocrite is. Verse 5 helps. Why are the hypocrites praying? To be seen. To look good. To have people say "Oooh and aaah!" They are not praying to communicate with their Creator. Seems like they could care less about that. Their reward, according to the verse, is being seen by people which means they are not being heard by God.

There is another DON'T in verse 7. Don't babble like the pagans. Babble means to mindlessly repeat words without thinking about their meaning. If you walked up to me and started saying "Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh". I would have to guess at what you were trying to say and mean. Are you in pain? Are you a monkey? Are you happy? Are you sad? I would not know. If prayer is communication with our Creator, then babbling won't send a message to God nor anyone else. So DON'T babble.

Let's look at some Do's. DO pray. Pray to God who is unseen. We already looked at verse 5. The hypocrites were praying to be seen by men. Loud and visible. Jesus tells His disciples that God sees you and more importantly hears you when you pray invisible; secret, in your own room. At the cafeteria table or before the test that you DID study for. He knows, sees, and hears. Jesus is telling us TO talk to God. Why?

The following verses are known as the Lord's Prayer. Some people pray it just like it is written. There is nothing wrong with that. The words are important. But, I believe, that Jesus meant for His disciples to use it as a pattern; a template. I am going to give you a template that may help you when you pray. It is called ACTS.

A-Adoration

C-Confession

T-Thanksgiving

S-Supplication

Let me explain how it fits the next few verses.

A is Adore. Adore is a synonym for love, worship, praise. The prayer in Matthew starts off with adoration. Our Father. You have family. If you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for sins you could never pay for yourself and you have put your trust in Him alone then you have a Heavenly Father. You have a Big Brother named Jesus AND you have Brothers and Sisters in this community and around the world. You are not an orphan. Your Father cares about you. I don't know your family situation. It may be bad or good or something in between. For some people, our earthly fathers leave much to be desired. Not true of your Heavenly Father. Your earthly father is a pale reflection of your heavenly one. Even if you have the father of the year for your dad, he pales in comparison to God. If you don't have a dad in your life or the one in your life is the worst ever, your heavenly Father adores you.

Now that we understand that we are family, we can begin to understand our response to this good, caring, loving, patient, powerful, gracious Father. We respond with love. The Bible in 1 John 4:19 tells us that. "*We love because He first loved us.*" We respond with praise and worship. We tell God how awesome and amazing He truly is. If you are a Christian, you will know what I mean. What is most amazing about our Father is that He cares for us. Listen to verse 9-11 . "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our* daily *bread.*" Hallowed means holy. Holy means set apart or different. Unique. There is no God like God. He is one of a kind.

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Michael Jordan is the GOAT. What makes him that? Nobody played ball like he did. He was in a class all by himself. How many rings does he have? Too many for one hand. I don't want to hear any argument. MJ+GOAT. In that sense, Jordan was set apart. Weak example, but I think you get what I mean. God is like no other. No one like Him. He is the only one that created the universe. He is the only one making sure your atoms don't fly apart. So when we pray, we let Him know how amazing, patient, and kind He is.

One more reason to ADORE God is because He cares and provides for you. God is King of the universe. He has a kingdom of which we are a part, acknowledged or not. God does as He pleases. He is sovereign. Nothing happens outside of His notice. He is never surprised. He will never say something like. "Oh, Miguel, if I had known that you were going to cheat on the test..." Another reason to pray with ADORATION.

God cares. How does He show it? He provides. That is what "*Give us this day our daily bread*" means. Bread back in Bible times was food. Means the same thing today. No bread. No food. Discomfort. Death. No good. Take a breath. Breathe in. Breathe out. You do this every day without thought. Where did that oxygen come from? What is holding it together? Why is it so vital to helping me get energy from the bread I just ate? How does life in its amazing complexity come to be? Your Heavenly Father, that is who. He is worth ADORATION. **A is for adoration**.

C is for Confession. The verse reads. "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" When I confess, I admit that something was not right. The word debt is interesting because it helps us to understand the idea of forgiveness. Suppose I go buy a car for 20K. I only have 2K. How much do I owe? The difference. . . which would be 18K. I turn to the bank and borrow this money and will pay it back with interest for 6 years. I am in debt for over 18 thousand dollars. I will not be out of debt until the amount is paid in full.

Now suppose Michael Jordan hears about my debt problem and decides to pay it off in full. He has the resources. I don't . Am I in debt to the bank? Not any more. I don't owe them anything. Am I in debt to MJ? Yes, UNLESS he says, "You're good. You don't owe me anything." Now, financially, I am forgiven.

We owe God a debt. It is called sin in the Bible. Anytime we do things our own way and cut Him out of the picture, we sin AGAINST Him. We owe God a sin debt. How do we pay it off? We can't. We don't have enough income, good works, great thoughts. We are bankrupt. No way to pay. Remember how I told you that God loves us? How did He demonstrate His love? John 3:16 is helpful here. Recite it if you know it. " *For God so LOVED the world that He GAVE His only Son that whoever believes will not perish but have eternal life.*" God GAVE. Or better yet God, through His Son Jesus, FORGAVE. If we put our trust in Jesus, our sin debt is paid in full; past, present and future. Wow! That is Good news.

Anytime I mess up and do the opposite of what God would want, I can now CONFESS it to Him and He will lovingly listen. If my son breaks my favorite mug, on purpose or on accident, does he stop being my son? NO! He is always my child. Am I happy with him? No. He will either need to fix said mug or buy a replacement. But don't miss this, he will always be my child. All too often, we think that admitting wrong and confessing is going to harm our relationship with God or our friend. That is the opposite of the truth.

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Confession leads to freedom from shame and guilt. You and I will continue to mess up, screw up, say and do the wrong thing until Jesus comes back. Part of being a human being. God will always lovingly listen to His kids crying and confessing that they have messed up yet again. **C is for Confession.** Admit your mistakes to God and to others. The forgiveness you gained from God you use to forgive others.

T is for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays of the year. Family, Food, Food, Food. Did I say food? Our tradition before feasting and gaining 20 pounds in one sitting is saying what you are thankful for. It might be your friends, your health, your job, your . . . . We would go around the table sharing our attitude of gratitude. It's infectious really. You hear how God cares for you in so many ways. When we pray, we can do the same thing. Sometimes you can mix up thanksgiving with adoration. I don't think God cares. "Hold up Maria, you already told me how awesome I am. Try again." Yeah God won't say that. The way I remember it is that ADORATION is about God Himself and what my thoughts are towards Him. THANKSGIVING is about God and me and what my thoughts are towards Him.

S is for supplication. Big word that just means ask. The word Supply is related to it and may help you to remember it. This is what most people start with when communicating with the Creator. This is the list of your wants. "Dear God, I want an A on that Geometry test that I never studied for. Oh, can you hook me up with a new car? Make Granny ok. Amen." Maybe when you were five years old, this would be considered acceptable. See, God is not Santa. He is not your Granny who gives you whatever you want, whenever you want it. God is a person. Not in the same way you and I are. He is a Spirit, not flesh and blood. But He does have a personality. We can communicate with Him and Him with us.

Suppose your friend Deven runs up to you saying, "Dude what's up? Yo, can you get me a slushy? I have not a dime. Take me to the movies and pay for me. Afterwards, can you finish up that calculus homework I didn't get to? You da best!." How long will you two remain friends? I don't know about you but I would be cutting ties with Deven soon. He is using you. Deven doesn't want a relationship. You are meeting His needs but it is not a two way street. He was talking at you; not with you. How many of us do God this way? We disrespect Him by giving Him a list of demands for Him to take care of before the end of the week. If God is a person, which He is, then this means that we should take time to give respect by doing things we do with other humans we care about. Listening. Caring. Spending time. Figuring out what is important to them. A relationship. That is what you are trying to develop if you are attempting communication. Especially with God.

A-ADORATION-Tell God what is amazing and awesome. Worship Him as holy and completely unique.

C-CONFESSION-Admit to God when you mess up. Accept His forgiveness given through Jesus. Give that same forgiveness to others when they do you wrong.

T-THANKSGIVING-Tell God what you are thankful for. Count your blessings. It will increase your contentment.

S-SUPPLICATION-Ask God to supply your needs. Here is where you pray for others. You should pray for yourself last.

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Speaker: Pray. If time, model this Or, better yet, have students practice this. This could be done individually with you facilitating. Or you could do this in groups of 2-3 assigning one of the parts to each student. Or you could do this whole group, allowing students to pray out loud all at the same time for each section. You know your students.

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