**It’s Not About You: Worship and God’s Kingdom**

**Rich Nathan**

**January 4-5, 2014**

**Vineyard Core Series**

**Psalms 96**

***Reminders for SG Leaders***

* **Jan 18th** (9am-12pm) - ***All*** SG Leaders Gathering. Childcare provided.
* **Jan 21-Feb 25** (Tues - 7-9pm) Coed New Leaders Training. Submit recs to **deb.george@vineyardcolumbus.org**
* **Jan 25-26** (Weekend services at Cooper Rd.) Small Group Open House

**Interacting with the Sermon**

Synopsis of the Sermon

Pastor Rich began by contrasting “cat” and “dog” theology. We believe everything is about us, but as Rick Warren writes, “*It’s not about you, The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It is far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.”* The question was asked, “How do we start with God in the New Year?”

In Psalm 96 we receive the command to “sing to the Lord”. Rich makes the point that it’s not about our *feelings*. He says, “To be a good and decent man or woman is to live from a place deeper than your feelings this year. It is to live out of your convictions.” In v.2 we read the line “day after day”. We can’t make a God out of our feelings. He illustrated this point using a quote from Screwtape Letters - “*Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do [God’s] will looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.”*

So to live well this new year, our lives need to be about God (v. 1). The Lord’s Prayer illustrates this by not starting with our needs, but rather focuses us on God, our father. We need to lift our eyes off ourselves and practice giving God glory (v. 3, 6, 7, 8). Rich said, “*glory* refers to essential worth, the beauty and value of people, the beauty and value of created things, and most of all the beauty and value of our Creator”. This means making nothing more valuable than our relationship with God…fill in your substitute.

Verse 8 directs us to “bring an offering”. What should that be? God wants us! And where our treasure is that is where your heart will be - not the other way around. Consider faithfully giving to the church if you have’t done so.

Finally, v.10 reads it’s all about the Kingdom. The Kingdom is what it would be like if God was in control. What would it look like if he reigned over us, personally? V.3 and 10 is about God reigning among the nations. Where might God want to extend his Kingdom influence in us this year? V. 11-13 concerns God’s reign over *the earth*. If you want to live well this year, worship God and welcome his kingdom.

*In 5 minutes or less, briefly give a synopsis of this week’s sermon. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend’s message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.*

**Getting the Conversation Started**

*These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.*

* + - What was your best success or worst failure with past New Year’s resolutions?
		- What is one way you’re going to put God first in your life this year? Why?

**Scripture Study**

The Lord’s prayer is the pinnacle of prayers. It has been studied and analyzed throughout history. While you could easily immerse yourself in study the Jewish background and history of the prayer[[1]](#footnote-1), it’s more important to actually practice the reality behind this prayer. Richard Foster writes,

“[i]*nstead of giving them (and us) a lecture on prayer, [Jesus] prays a prayer that teaches them (and us) to pray. It encompasses everything necessary to our unfolding relationship with our heavenly Father. We only move beyond it to the extent that we stay within it”.*

*So, w*hile it can be most helpful to understand more about the Lord’s prayer, its context and background - it’s of utmost importance that we don’t substitute our desire to study and understand it for our actual practice and experience of it.Jesus modeled it for us so that we would actually pray, not just think great thoughts about prayer. Please keep that in mind as we study the Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew 6. (Consider other background reading on the Sermon on the Mount for this text).

Metaphor for prayer by John Ortberg…Consider the difference between a motorboat and a sailboat. The motorboat moves under its own power and thrust, and similarly we can attempt to do that with our lives. But the Christian life is more like the sailboat, which gets powered by the wind and is subject to the direction it blows. See, we can steer and hoist the sails, but we’re not going anywhere with the wind. On their own spiritual disciplines (and prayer) don’t yield transformation and fruit, but they put us in the position to encounter God who transforms us and gives us His Spirit.

**Read**: Matt 6:5-8 (*Consider skipping this portion of the study for sake of time*)

*5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

* + 1. Who is mentioned in this text (v. 5, 8)? What does Jesus say about hypocrites and pagans?
		2. What are negative motivations for prayer (v. 5, 7)? What are good motivations for prayer (v. 6, 8)?
		3. What does this say about God’s character?

**Read**: Matt 6:9-13

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“‘Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

10 your kingdom come,

your will be done,

 on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,

 as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation

 but deliver us from the evil one.”

* + 1. Do you think Jesus commands His followers to pray this prayer verbatim? Why or why not? (a. No, because Jesus prays many different ways throughout the Gospel. It’s best understood as a *model* for prayer.)
		2. (v. 9a) Why does Jesus begin with “Our Father in heaven” (cf. John 1:12-13, Rom 8:17, Gal 4:6, Acts 17:28)? How does starting with this reality affect the direction and spirit of our prayers (Heb 11:19)? Is it hard for you to pray like this?
		3. (v. 9b) What does *hallowed* mean? (a. To magnify or glorify. Also, something holy, that inspires awe and reverence.) Why do we say that about the name of God? What happens in us when we confess this from the heart?
		4. (v. 10a) What did Pastor Rich say the Kingdom of God looked like? (a. “When God is in charge”. More fully, it’s the rule and reign of God in all areas of life. It’s the healing of all that was broken by sin - between us and God, between us and others, between us and creation.) Why yearn for something not yet fully here? Have you ever prayed this?
		5. (v. 10 b) Why would we accept God’s will over ours? How do we do that? The connection between heaven and earth puts us in the realm of our real life and reminds us that Heaven is coming down. How does that affect what we prayer about? How does this affect our feelings and desires?
		6. (v.11a - *daily*) We are we not directed to pray about tomorrow - read (v. 33-34)? Who supplies our needs? What attitudes get fostered within us through this part of the prayer?
		7. (v. 12) Are debts financial obligations? (no, in Aramaic the same word is used for debts and sins). What two actions are linked? Does it surprise you that Forgiveness and Repentance are daily acts (Matt 18:23-35)? Considering Jesus’ inclusion of this in his “model prayer”, what do you need to do to actually live this out?
		8. (v. 13) While we know God can’t tempt us (James 1:12-15) he does allow trials to test and refine our faith (Job, Jesus in the desert)[[2]](#footnote-2). This part could be read- "LORD, do not let us be led (by ourselves, by others, by Satan) into temptations” (cf. 2 Thes 3:3) . Where have you seen this in your past? What about today?

**Connection with the Sermon**

* + 1. How does praying all parts of this prayer, help put God first in your life?
		2. How does it transform and empower you to not live out of your feelings?
		3. What can you deliberately do to make space in your life for prayer?

**Ministry Application**

*Below you’ll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.*

* + - * Ask everyone what’s the hardest part of this prayer to pray? Confess it to another and seek God for a transformed heart.
			* As we begin a New Year, what does it look like to make God first? If your desires were inline with the spirit of the Lord’s prayer - what would look different?
			* Do you desire to experience and encounter God in prayer? If not, talk with another about it and ask God to change your heart, renew your desire, and give you a fresh experience with him. If so, and you desire more - invite God’s presence and seek his will for creative and practical ways to dig deeper this year.
			* Follow-up - consider reading a book on prayer this season - Mystically Wired (Ken Wilson), Prayer (Richard Foster, Sacred Rhythms (Ruth Haley Barton)
1. [bit.ly/19U5AXl](http://bit.ly/19U5AXl) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Greek word “*peirasmos*” can mean in other contexts temptation, testing, trial, experiment. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)