

## Lecture 16

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 10-11:13, 37-54

Good morning/good evening! A belated Happy New Year to you all! I hope your Christmas season was blessed with an abundance of God's presence, and that He has already begun to reveal Himself and His endless love for you in a fresh and powerful way here in the beginning of 2018. Contrary to the widely accepted and sadly well-earned stereotype of the male species, I am not opposed to seeking directions. For those of you who have been listening to my lectures over the years – and stayed awake – God bless you for that, you probably have figured out I like an order to presenting the material we are covering. I like laying things out step-by-step, because that is the way I learn. I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed – I'm not one of those people who can look at a piece of machinery and just figure out how it is put together. I have the greatest admiration for people who can do this. Pretty much with anything I do, I like a systematic approach. After reading through our lesson's Scriptures, I saw a lot of "How tos...". Therefore, I'm going to work through the reading with the following outline:

- How to talk to God – Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4
- How to minister like God – Luke 10:1-20
- How to love like God – Luke 10:25-37
- How to worship God – Luke 10:38-42
- How to know the character of God – Luke 11:5-13
- How to judge like God – Luke 11:37-54

Let's start with *How to talk to God*. We have in both Matthew and Luke examples of what is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. The disciples had been watching Jesus pray a lot, so they asked the Lord to teach them to pray as John had taught his disciples. Jesus graciously and immediately provided them a format to approaching God the Father. Prayer can be intimidating if you think

about it. You are coming face-to-face with Almighty God – the Creator of the Heavens and Earth. That can set anyone’s knees to knocking and shaking in their boots – until you begin to know the God of the Bible. What do the angels and Jesus repeatedly say when they make their presence known? – “*Don’t be afraid!*” This is a so fundamental truth to the God of the Bible. He is your Creator – He made you in love. He designed you to fellowship with Him. Yes, we are to show great reverence and awe of Him – this is what is meant when Scriptures tell us to fear God. Our fear, though, should not prevent us from approaching God because that is exactly what He wants us to do – as much as possible.

Even if we get to this point of comfort that we can come to God without being afraid, what in the world are we supposed to say to Him?!?! Jesus lays out a good format, or outline, for us to follow – see, even Jesus likes a methodical approach! Jesus begins with a logical place to start - identifying Who we are praying to – God the Father. Here Jesus is alluding to the truth of the Holy Trinity – there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The truth of the matter is we can pray to each of Them as they are all co-equal members of the triune Godhead. Jesus, though, as He always does, is looking to glorify His Father, so He sets the basic outline of prayer to God as to the Father. The Greek word used here is “pater” (pronounced pat-ayr), which means a father or parent. God wants us to look to Him as a father figure. For those of us who have not had the best role models for fathers, this can take some reprogramming. *A major goal of our walks of faith is to release God from our understanding of Who He is and what He is like through our interpretations of flawed humans.* In other words, whatever flaws or sins my father committed to me should not be assigned to my understanding of God the Father. This is why Bible study is so important. Quoting that great philosopher, Yoda, “*You must unlearn what you have learned.*”

Once we have identified Who we are praying to, we then acknowledge where He is – He’s in heaven. He’s not in our dogs or cats. He’s not in the trees or the ocean. He’s not even in the pulpit. We’re then to acknowledge His constant state of being – He is holy. The Greek word for Hallowed is “hagiazo” (pronounced hag-ee-ad-so), which means to be holy. Much of today’s Christian teaching emphasizes the grace and mercy of God, which is fine – I’m a big supporter of this. But this type of teaching should never be overemphasized or overshadow the vital importance of appreciating God’s holiness. *The truth of the matter is we cannot truly understand the depths of the gifts of God’s mercy and grace until we truly measure it against His holiness.* God has zero tolerance for anything impure. You may remember when Moses approached the burning bush, God told him to take off his sandals – he was standing on holy ground. You may also recall the story of Ananais and Sapphira in Acts 5 who claimed they had sold all their possessions and given it to the church when in reality they had not. God immediately killed them both. The message was God’s early church would be a place of holiness and have zero tolerance for sin. If we spend some time meditating on God’s holiness, our level of appreciation for His mercy and grace will correspondingly increase.

Going from the initial approach to God, we get into aligning ourselves with His will – for His kingdom to come and for His will to be done – both on earth and in heaven. Prayer is not meant to get God to do things *our way*. *Prayer is meant for us to gain insight, understanding, and appreciation for God’s better way for our lives.* We then move into our basic needs – to be fed, to be forgiven, and to forgive others. Finally, we acknowledge our spiritual citizenship in God’s kingdom and awareness we are constant targets of Satan by asking Him to not lead us into temptation and to deliver us from the evil one. If you’re at a loss at how to pray to the Lord, this prayer is a wonderful place to start. The truth is I could do an entire

lecture just on the Lord's Prayer, but in the interest of time and the rest of the material, I'm going to move into our next "How to".

Jesus gives us an example of *How to approach ministry in the field* in Luke 10:1-20. He appoints seventy-two others to go two-by-two into the towns and places where the Lord was about to go. Jesus was wise in sending people out in pairs - here are several reasons why this is important. The harvest field is loaded with opposition – the Lord Himself acknowledged He was sending them out like lambs among wolves. Therefore, having someone to support the other is critical. An additional person serves as a witness to what God is doing. Furthermore, one person may not connect with whom they are ministering to, so the other may have a different and more effective approach that may work.

The Lord then offers them two scenarios that they will experience – those who will receive the pairs and those who will reject them. For those who will receive them, they will receive God's peace that comes with the pair, their sick will be healed, and they will receive the message that the kingdom of God has come near to them. These are the blessings of the *open hearted*. Jesus, though, has strong words for those who will reject the pairs. He singles out Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum – all places where He spent a lot of time in His ministry and places where He performed many of His miracles. We're not seeing the forgiving and merciful Jesus here, are we? He is laying down serious curses and judgments on those towns that reject Jesus and His ministers. For those of you who are in the field ministering, if you are feeling discouraged over the lack of fruitfulness, you need to listen to what Jesus says in Luke 10:16, "*Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.*" The rejection of your efforts to minister to others is not a rejection of you – it is a rejection of God. While God takes no joy in the death of the wicked, there is a point where He will honor their repeated rejections. He will release them to their

self-imposed condemnation and ultimately be judged for their rejections of Jesus. A major reason for the coming Great Tribulation is God's judgment on a Christ-rejecting world. However, their judgment for their repeated rejections is God's job – not ours.

We next get to learn "*How to love like God*" in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. An expert in the Law asked Jesus, "*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" The Lord asks him what is written in the Law. The expert correctly replies in Luke 10:27, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*"; and, '*Love your neighbor as yourself.*' Jesus confirms this is the right response, and if he does this – *simply to love* – he will live. Here we have the expert in the Law being told all he had to do to inherit eternal life was to love God and love others, *but* he was so conditioned to justify himself via the Law as the better alternative – as if there was an alternative. *Why is it so hard to believe that loving God and others is the only way to have eternal life?* I'll give you at least two reasons. First - *pride* – we think that something drawn from our alleged goodness and wisdom will come up with that something *we* can do; secondly, *it's hard to love when we're slaves to sin*. Both of these reasons prove the need for forgiveness – for our pride and self-righteousness and the rest of our sins. Sin is an obstacle to love, so the things that prevent us from receiving God's love and loving as God loves must be dealt with.

Jesus then commences with the story of the Good Samaritan. Notably, he points out that it was the religious leaders – the priest and a Levite (the tribe that was solely dedicated to being priests) – that failed in how to love on the man who had been victimized by the robbers. He then points out the hero of the story is not a religious leader but rather a hated Samaritan – a gentile. The Samarian gets his hands dirty by bandaging up the man, pouring on oil and wine, putting him on his own donkey, taking him to an inn, and caring for him. He then leaves money

behind to the innkeeper, asks him to look after him, and if he incurs any additional expenses in caring for him, he'll reimburse the innkeeper when he returns. Loving the downtrodden can be messy, my friends. It means sacrificing our time, schedules, comforts, and other things for the sake of showing mercy and love to others. For me, I far too easily play the "*I'm so busy*" card to rationalize not ministering to others. This is why a regular visit to the cross is so important for me – I need to be reminded of the extent God went to in order to show His love and mercy for me. And this is the point – we should not serve in guilt or coercion. *We should serve in love to God as an expression of our gratitude for the love He has and constantly shows us.* God is love, so as His children, that is how we should approach everything we do – to love Him and love others. That is the great commission.

Next, we get a glimpse of *How to worship God* in Luke 10:38-42. We're introduced to a set of sisters – Mary and Martha. We'll learn in a little bit about their brother, Lazarus. You'll die when you hear it. It's a grave story. Anyway, Jesus and the fellas have come to their village, and Martha opens her home to them. She had a servant's heart, so she was busy making preparations to serve Jesus and the disciples. Her sister, Mary, had chosen to just sit and listen to Jesus. Martha's not in her happy place with her sister, but instead of going to her to get her to help, she goes to Jesus. I think this is an interesting point in the story. Whether it's a parent, a spouse, a sibling, or a friend, confrontation is not always easy is it? This is one of the many wonderful blessings of having a relationship with God. As we have read through the Gospels this year I hope one of the things you've taken away from the reading is *Jesus is extremely approachable*. He never once ignores or denies someone coming to Him. When we can't find a way to communicate with someone close to us, we can *always* go to God and ask Him for help. Sometimes that is the better way! First of all, God already is dialed into the

issues you're having with that person – He knows what's going on. By going to Him, He will already have a plan to bring resolution to the issue. He is the King of all things – one of those is intercession.

The Lord lovingly looks at Martha and says, “*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!*” Oops – wrong story. He looks at her and lovingly says, “Martha, Martha you are upset about many things”, but there is really only one thing she should be worried about – what she truly needs. What she needs is what her sister is doing, and it is what every one of us needs to be doing – spending more time listening to Jesus - to spend time worshipping Him by reading His Word, learning from it, allowing it to change our hearts, and then living our lives in devotion to Him. I don't know about you, but if I'm honest with myself, sometimes my acts of service are really a diversion from doing the better thing – spending quiet and intimate time with God in His Word and in prayer. Don't get me wrong – service is a wonderful thing. *But nothing will change our hearts faster than drawing more and more closely to Jesus and spending time with Him.* We will find His peace. We will find His forgiveness. We will find His mercy and grace. We will find the greatest of all that He has to give – His love. That's what worship produces.

Building on the theme of spending time with God, we get to our fifth “How to” –*How to know the character of God.* Jesus offers up a scenario where there is a friend that you can go to even at midnight and ask for three loaves of bread to help you provide for another friend. As the story plays out, it's kind of a weird one on the surface. The Lord poses the friend's response to your request for the bread as a resounding “NO”! Then the Lord throws an even more bizarre take on the scenario saying that while the friend won't give you the bread because of friendship, to preserve his reputation as a giving person, he will provide as much bread as you need. Where is the Lord going with this scenario? There are parallel verses to this scenario – they can be found in Luke 18 with the parable of the persistent widow.

The key to the point of this scenario and the parallel verses in chapter 18 can be found in verses 9-13 of chapter 11 in Luke's Gospel.

The Lord offers three promises that are core tenets of His character found in our memory verse: *if we ask, it will be given; if we seek, we will find; if we knock, the door will be opened.* God has everything and more that we need, and He is ready and willing to provide it. There are a couple of hitches, though. First, we have to ask, seek, or knock. God could just hand out all the blessings without our asking, but how does He reveal His heart and concern for us by doing that? He wants us to realize our best provisions are from Him, so He is where we are going to find them. The second hitch is these things we're to ask for are not a wish list like for a genie. These things that God has an abundance to give us, are the things that are customized to meet our particular needs. Remember, He designed us with specific talents, gifts, and abilities to achieve certain purposes. When we come into alignment and agreement with what God has provided us and what He has in mind for us, He will provide us everything we need to achieve those purposes.

Some of you might be asking yourselves, "*How do I know what those talents and abilities are and what purposes are they to serve?*" Those are good questions, and the good news is there are answers. You'll find them as you spend time with God in His Word and in prayer. Remember, He's alive and wants you to succeed. If you ask Him, He will respond. If you seek Him, He will reveal Himself. If you knock on His Door, He will open it to you. You could say these are God's wills for your life. This is the character of God, my friends. His love for you is so deep and passionate, He can't help Himself but to provide you what you need. That's the point of the scenario Jesus is presenting. Despite how annoying or audacious we can be in asking for something from God, He can't deny Himself from providing what we need. Before I go any farther, *how God responds to your requests may not be what you're initially expecting – but it will be exactly what you need.* What God

will provide you may be what you need to nudge, or maybe shove, you in the direction He wants you to go – the place where He has all the provisions to equip you with your talents and abilities to serve your purposes in His Kingdom.

I'm sure you remember the story of the friends who had a sick friend. The only way they could get him to Jesus was to lower him down from the roof in front of the Lord. The man and his friends were no doubt asking for him to be healed, but what was the *first* thing Jesus did? He forgave the man his sins. I'm willing to bet you a donut *that* response was not what the man and his friends were expecting. However, it was what he needed most, and Jesus knew that. Many years ago when Vickie and I prayed we didn't want to be fence-sitting Christians – we wanted to be real and fully committed. Well...the Lord clearly heard that prayer, but what He was about to put us through was nothing what we expected. Vickie's health deteriorated to the point of almost dying, we lost our home, most of our things, and the majority of our net worth dealing with these circumstances. This was an extremely painful period of our lives. Now that we are mostly on the other side of this period, we both can say that while as painful as it was, where we are today in our relationship with and understanding of God would not have been possible without having gone through all the suffering.

Now our interpretation that these things we suffered through might sound like the very things Jesus tells His disciples God the Father *won't* do – if you ask your father for a fish will He give you a snake or if you ask for an egg will he give you a scorpion? Vickie and I have come to find that God is His most vivid and powerful in suffering – He reveals His goodness and His heart by walking us through tough times because He knows what's available at the end of tough times – a better and truer understanding of His love and faithfulness. *If we choose to believe, suffering produces a significant upgrade in our relationship with God as we identify ourselves with Christ in our sufferings.* There is nothing more valuable

in life than finding that place that despite your circumstances, you can find safety, peace, and joy because you're so sure of God's constant and protective presence. Jesus asks us to consider in the second half of verse 13 in Luke 11, "*how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" One of God's names is Jehovah Jireh – the Lord Will Provide. Everything God provides is good. It may not always seem like it at first, but in the end, He knows what is best for us, and His goodness will always be eventually revealed in His responding to your asking, seeking, and knocking.

The final "How to" in our reading is *How to judge like God* as revealed in Luke 11:37-54. If you're anything like me – God help you if you are – you are capable of being quick to judge at times when what is really needed is the mindset of God where mercy, grace, and forgiveness is the better way. However, there are times when judgment or, at a minimum, an explanation of how Jesus would deal with a situation is necessary. In our reading we're given a series of exchanges between the Lord and the Pharisees and Experts of the Law. The scene begins with a Pharisee inviting Jesus to eat with him. Jesus ate with sinners and his enemies. This is a good reminder to all of us that the Lord wants us out in the field – not just inside our comfort zone and Christian bubbles all the time.

The Pharisee who invited the Lord wastes no time going after Him by calling Him out for not washing before the meal. Jesus immediately responds by comparing having the outside washed – the external self – all dressed up and looking pretty – you know, Hollywood; yet, the inside is full of greed and wickedness. The Lord is speaking of the distinction between the flesh and the spirit. With no judgment on those who have done these things, all the botox, facelifts, and all the rest of the plastic surgery in the world that may make us look good on the outside isn't going to do a thing about where our *real beauty* lies – in the spirit. Jesus noted in verse 40, "*Did not the one who made the outside make the*

*inside also?”* 1 Samuel 16:7b tells us, “*The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*”

Jesus begins to zero in on a major issue He has with the Pharisees and Experts in the Law in verse 41, “*But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.*” Notice the absence of judgment and condemnation at this point – the Lord is merely directing them to the place God wants them to be. Of all the things Jesus could have called the Pharisees out for their sole, but heartless, devotion to the Law, it is interesting that He pointed out the issue of money – the issue of giving to the poor. Even for these allegedly religious elite, they clearly were attached to their money. What was the one outburst of anger Jesus displayed in the Gospels? – Tossing the tables of the moneychangers in the temple. These moneychangers were charging exorbitant prices for supposedly pre-approved sacrifices. No doubt, the Pharisees were getting a cut of these sales. Therefore, the people – even the poor people – who were coming to the temple with truly repentant hearts and a desire to sacrifice for their sins – were being taken advantage of by the Pharisees. If you want to take a test of where your heart is in relationship to your devotion to God, take a look at your giving.

However, let me make one point extremely clear – the giving of your money to God should be between you and God. Giving should never be done under pressure or in fear – that is NOT Biblical. 2 Corinthians 9:7 makes it clear where our hearts and minds should be as we consider giving to the Lord, “*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*” Giving should be done in joy – it is an act of worship to God. It is an act of not only appreciating what God has provided you but also a testimony to your trust in Him that He will continue to provide for you.

Jesus then points out a trap that we can fall into when we give – we can feel overly good about our compliance to the Law by tithing - but that is an outwardly act. Again, Jesus points out in verse 42 the difference between complying with the Law and having the heart of God, “*Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.*” Jesus was ok with keeping the Law but not at the expense of loving others. *God is merciful before He is judgmental.* This does not say God doesn’t judge, but He first desires mercy. Hosea 6:6 confirms His mindset, “*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.*” The Apostle Paul – a “Pharisee of Pharisees” prior to his conversion – lays out an elevated comparison of the gifts of the Spirit vs. what was even more important than them in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, “*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*”

You all are probably sick of hearing me beat you over the heads with the centrality of our faith being loving God and loving others, but that is Biblical, my friends. I’m here to tell you that *the Christian life is truly summed up in God’s love – receiving it from Him and giving it back to God by loving others as He would love them.* Furthermore, Peter reminds us in chapter 4, verse 8 of his first epistle, “*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*” Forgiveness pours out of God’s love. As we sense the depth of God’s love for us, we become more certain of our forgiveness. With the chains released by that forgiveness, we are freer to love without fear or concern of rejection.

Jesus then puts another “woe” on them in verse 43, “*Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.*” What’s the issue here? - Pride and social status. I was in a meeting last year with a lot of pastors and denominational leaders. I was fascinated to watch their interactions and how they positioned themselves. There were some genuinely humble servants, but there were a few who were clearly aware of their “positions” within the denomination and I was advised as to how I should approach them with an escalated reverence. All I could think of was what Jesus said in Matthew 20:16, “*So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*” Whatever honor we get here won’t compare to the honor we will get when we get to heaven. I would much rather forego any honor here if it is going to get in the way of the reward in heaven.

The Pharisees are starting to get insulted with Jesus’ pronouncements of woe, but Jesus doesn’t back down one inch – He focuses on the burdens they are putting on the people, yet they don’t do anything to help them. How does this compare with Jesus’ burden? His is light. Keeping the Law is a heavy burden. Living in love, forgiveness, and grace is light.

Jesus then bears down on the history of the Jewish religious leaders. Jewish leaders loved to talk about their great ancestors, but their history is carefully edited to leave out the bad things. The Lord fills in the blanks and reminds them how their glorious ancestors killed the prophets God had sent them. Jesus then makes a startling proclamation in verse 50, “*Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world.*” This seems harsh given they were not the ones who killed the prophets; however, when we support sinful behaviors of our previous generations, we are accountable for that support. Ultimately, it was their support of the sins of

their ancestors that would lead them to coming up with the mocking of a trial and sentencing Jesus to death.

When we go before God and ask for forgiveness, we must include a confession for any alignment we may have with the sinful actions of our ancestors. For me that included heavy doses of judgmentalism, elitism, pride, and conditional love. The forgiveness doesn't stop there, though. Not only do I need to ask for forgiveness for my participation and support of their sins, I then need to forgive those ancestors who put those sins on me. *If we are to be truly released from the chains of sin, forgiveness is a two-step process. First, we need to ask God for forgiveness of our sins and secondly we need to forgive those whom have sinned against us.* This is the true power of the cross. God has the power to forgive our sins, and He gives us the power via the Holy Spirit to forgive those who have hurt us. When we do this, we are truly free from our past and now have clean slates to love as God loves – with a redemptive mindset – a predisposition to show the love God gave to us to the people He brings into our lives.

The Lord's final woe in our reading is in verse 52, "*Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.*" This is an important reminder to those of us at POW. Bible studies are great, but they should be producing fruit that reproduces more fruit. Bible *knowledge* is virtually worthless if it doesn't translate into Bible *love*. What is Bible love? The fruits of the Holy Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*" For the believer, *Jesus dying on the Cross handled our judgment.* Shouldn't we allow Him to do the same for others – just as He did for us? Our job is to love by showing those in our lives these fruits of the Spirit.

People don't truly find God in judgment in fear – they find God in His love and forgiveness.

As for the things we learned about God through Jesus, we can just look at today's outline as a reminder:

- God wants to hear from us – Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4
- God shows us how to minister – Luke 10:1-20
- God shows us how to love – Luke 10:25-37
- God prefers worship to service – Luke 10:38-42
- God's character is knowable – Luke 11:5-13
- God is a better judge than we are – Luke 11:37-54

Lastly, I want to give you a brief word of encouragement – it is found from Jesus Himself in Luke 10:22: "*All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*" Do you know Jesus chose you to reveal God the Father to you? Think about this important truth for a moment. Jesus saw something in you to go to the Cross and die for your sins, so you could be saved from the eternal judgment of those sins and come to know God. Do you think God chooses losers? If you're hearing voices in your head of unworthiness, condemnation, guilt, shame, etc., do you really think those voices are coming from the same Being that was willing to die for you to reveal God's endless love for you??? My friends, you are deeply, deeply loved with no condemnation in Christ Jesus. My "How to" prayer for each of you this 2018 is you will allow your hearts and minds to totally and completely surrender to the truth of God's sacrificial devotion to - and love for - you. I promise if you do this, God will not disappoint. You will be too anointed to be disappointed and too blessed to be stressed. Let's pray.