**About prayer…**

Conversation 1

Let’s remember, as we think about Jesus’ teaching on prayer, that he was talking to people who did, in fact, pray. Jews are praying people. As with Muslims today, there were set times of day when Jews were called to prayer, wherever they were. And, sometimes they stood in public, with arms extended, making it very obvious they were at prayer. Jews also had prayers for all sorts of occasions and there was a tendency for prayers to roll off the tongue with very little meaning. Generally speaking, prayer had become ritualistic and not spontaneous. The disciples, these praying men, observed Jesus at prayer and, one day, were prompted to ask, *“Lord, teach us to pray”(Luke 11:1)* the inference being, *like you do!*

With this in mind, and putting aside preconceived ideas, imagine we are hearing Jesus’ words for the first time….

**READ**

*Matthew 6:5-15*

**DISCUSS**

Jesus makes the following points:

**Pray in private**. Jesus is talking about showing off - praying in such a way as to call attention to the fact of their praying and onlookers being duly impressed with (seeming) piety and devotion to God. An example of showing off in prayer is *Luke 18:10.*

(Public, or corporate, prayer is part of church life and not what Jesus is speaking about here)

**How do you find solitude – a quiet place to pray?** Discuss together.

**Pray sincerely.** This means prayer free from pretense or deceit – being honest with God. It would seem that words themselves are relatively unimportant –

*“when God sees you in the place of prayer”(verse 6)* rather than “hears what you have to say in prayer”. After all, God sees into our hearts and knows our thoughts and intentions before we speak.

**What sorts of things can we discuss with God?** Discuss together.

**Pray simply.**  Don’t babble, says Jesus! When we string a whole lot of clichés together without understanding what we are saying to God or use pious sounding words that say nothing… that is babbling.

**How can we keep our prayers simple?** Discuss together.

**ACT**

Write a prayer, that includes each member of the group, without using the word “bless”. Nothing wrong with using “bless” in our prayers but it does get a bit overworked when we pray. What exactly do we mean by that word?

There are so many other verbs we can use. Try to think of some today.

**PRAY**

Pray for each other, using the words you have written together.