

# Coach House Church BEACONS

---

## B A B B L I N G

---

1 1 T H D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 0

The more excuses you produce, the less convincing you sound. The words provide a verbally comprehensible answer to a doubt or request. However, the fact that so many words were used to begin with casts doubt on the answer. Rationally, the excuses may or may not be true, but it's often indicative of someone who's afraid or trying to cover their back.

So, saying your essay is late by a day because the internet glitched when you tried to submit it is easier than saying it glitched, you were feeling ill for the past few days, you had 2 other assignments due, and too many books relating to the subject were missing from the library. Sometimes less is more. As a student, this was a very familiar experience for me.

Similarly, if we say tonnes about something, like alternative suggestions for how the final star wars trilogy should have ended, it probably means we care about it quite a lot. If we say little about football when our colleagues are talking about it, it's likely we don't care much about football. Likewise, we know we're perfectly happy laying into things we don't like (perhaps Star Wars hype and football), because they annoy us.

The words we use matter especially when we talk to others, and they give us a clue about the relationship we have with them. What do we talk about? What's a common subject that comes up? What do we disagree about? What NEVER comes up? Are we the main subject?

In the same way we apply this to our human relationships, we can also apply this to our relationship with God. In other words, what words do our prayers contain and what are they about? If you asked me the above questions about my prayer life, I'd say this:

I pray about work A LOT, every morning and evening, I pray about and for my girlfriend, I pray about having too many different projects and activities on the go. How I feel at any given time is a common subject. We run into disagreement (and disobedience) when it comes to how I spend my time, rapidly jumping from one activity to another. Friends and non-Christians don't come up often enough in my prayers. I am often the main subject I pray about (and I dislike that a lot). These offer clues the way I think about God and the relationship I have with him.

I want to look at Matthew 6:7-8 which looks at the way we pray and the way that we think about God. Jesus offers the crowds this advice:

***“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.”***

Babbling on is a symptom of a problem. Primarily, that we need to persuade God to hear us by using a lot of words. What is the implication? Either that God needs to hear every detail to know what's going on, because he's not really aware of anything. Or, that we need to chew his ear off for him to be bothered to give us what we want, even if he does know what we're requesting. We know that this passage relates to prayers requesting things because the solution Jesus gives to this problem is that God knows what we need already.

This passage tells us that God knows our needs. And notice the word used for God here: Father. A good father will be familiar with their child, knowing what they want and like and need. A child doesn't need to give a dissertation on their personality to their parents every time they ask for something. The relationship that already exists between them continually provides that information. God knows us intimately already, in fact, far better than any parent ever could.

We need to remember and trust how much God cares for us. And there are many passages that tell us of God's love. However, I will quote from Matthew 6:25-27 because it shares the same context, and because it brings together God's care for our needs and our feelings about what we lack in life.

***25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more***

***valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?***

We worry. God cares. God knows our needs. The bird fed by God shows how even small things in our environment are noticed by God and attended to, though they only flutter around in the backdrop of our heavily organised human lives. This is one of several examples Jesus gives that show God's care and provision for even trivial things in his creation. It culminates in verses 32-33 "[...] your heavenly Father knows that you need them (food/clothing/drink). 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

If we are certain and assured that God cares for our needs, this frees us to live for him in peace rather than worrying about our needs constantly.

This whole subject came into my mind because like many of us, I worry a lot. Sometimes this worry is expressed to God in prayers of faith. Sometimes I babble on because I'm anxious, doubt God's love for me, and feel like I need to keep saying the same kind of things to cover every need in detail. These verses should remind us to backtrack and remember that God really does care for us, and secondly, he knows all our needs – we don't have to persuade him to be kind. You may well be thinking – what about all the occasions in the bible where we're told to persevere in prayer. What about Philippians 4 which tells us to come to God in prayer and petition? What about Jesus when he gives the example of the woman banging on the unjust judge's door until she receives justice? How are these distinguished from babbling or repeatedly bringing serious requests and concerns to God?

Babbling is specifically to do with the function of our words. Are we saying a lot because we believe that the more words we use, the more likely God is to hear us and take notice of our needs? If so, it is based on wrong beliefs about God that we need to examine.

I encourage you to think about the things you pray, and your heavenly Father to whom you are praying. It is refreshing to remember who he is and backtrack from our worrying. Right after the initial Bible verses I read earlier, Jesus gives us a specific example of how we should pray to God. He gives us the Lord's Prayer in verses 9-13. I will pray this for us now to finish.

***"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.'***



---

## JONNY KNIGHT



*Coach House Church*

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn