

THE MODEL PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:9-13

For many of us prayer is a great mystery. We are uncomfortable with it. We are not sure how to pray or what to say. Think about what you last prayed about. Were you more interested in getting what you want, or in talking to God?

“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Keep praying in order to get a perfect understanding of God Himself. And Jesus assumes that we will pray. Look what He says...

Verse 5, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites.” Verse 6, “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.” And verse 7, “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans...”

Prayer is communication between God and you and you and God. The key to communication when you talk to another person is some kind of agreement about what you are talking about.

When that’s not there, communication tends to break down. But when there is an atmosphere of trust between you and the other person, then you speak and to listen to one another.

This is the same with when we talk to God. What do we have in common with God? Simple, we’re in His family! He’s our heavenly Father. We want to please Him.

To be obedient disciples of Christ, we pray. To experience the fullness of communicating with God, we pray. To open the floodgates of heaven’s blessings, we pray.

It is good to look at the prayer life of Jesus. Jesus ever taught His disciples how to preach, but He taught them how to pray. He wanted them to have power with God; then He knew they would have power with man.

I am impressed by the fact that the only thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to do was to pray. They recognized its importance to Jesus, and wanted the same for them.

James, Jesus' brother, said that "Prayer is powerful and effective" (Jas. 5:16). Prayer is vital to our personal spiritual growth, to the well being of our church, and to kingdom of God living.

Prayer is important, so Jesus gave us a model in chapter 6 for effective praying. We commonly call it the Lord's Prayer.

Remember, throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is concerned with our attitude. Here He is contrasting this prayer with those of the Pharisees who babbled on and on (vv. 5-8).

Look how concise the Model Prayer is. Sometime we think the more we say the more we influence God. We use a gallon of words to express a spoonful of thought.

Consider this: Lincoln's Gettysburg Address contains 266 words; the Ten Commandments, 297; the Declaration of Independence, 300; and a recent U.S. government order setting the price of cabbage, 26,911. The Lord's Prayer contains 52 words (NIV).

It's not how long we talk; it's our attitude in what we say that is so important.

Verses 9-10 have to do with God's glory (read). Verses 11-13 are about our needs (read). That's all—52 words. Simple isn't it!

1. What Jesus does not say.

(1) He does not tell us where to pray.

He mentioned a prayer room (closet) in v. 6. He's telling us that there are times that we need to block out all distractions that interfere with communing with God. Jesus prayed in many places, both public and private, so we too should pray wherever we are.

(2) He does not tell us when to pray.

Jesus prayed at every hour of the day and night. He prayed in times of danger and at special occasions, at meals and after meals, on arriving at a destination and when leaving. He prayed in every conceivable circumstance.

(3) He does not tell us the correct posture of prayer.

It is our attitude and the content of our prayers that are important—not whether we are bowed, standing, looking heavenward, or whatever—it is the attitude of our heart that is important.

2. Jesus teaches a simple and profound way to pray.

(1) “Our Father in heaven...”

As the Creator God is the Father of all mankind. God is uniquely the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus called Him his Father. His desire was to fulfill the will of his Father. None of us can ever have the unique relationship with God as Father that Jesus has. But spiritually God is not the Father of all.

Because of Jesus’ unique relationship with God, when we accepted Jesus as our Savior, God became our heavenly Father.

No one else in the entire world can claim this. He is Father only of believers in Jesus Christ.

As our Father, God knows our needs. He cares for us, looks out for us, is concerned about us, and anticipates our every need. He has a plan for us, and wants to bless us

He is my Father and your Father in a very personal sense, but there is no selfishness in this. Jesus said that He is “our Father,” because all believers are His children in the household of God.

(2) “Hallowed be your name.”

God’s name represents His character, His plan for us in His kingdom, and His divine and wonderful will. There are wonderful names for God in the O.T. that show a different facet of His character and will.

Elohim: the Creator God; El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth; Jehovah-Jireh: the Lord will provide; Jehovah-Shalom: the Lord our Peace and many others. All these names speak of God’s character and will.

But the greatest name of all for God is Jesus Christ! Everything Jesus did on earth manifested God’s name. Jesus lived a perfect life of love, ministry, and compassion. In Jesus we see God.

When you pray “Hallowed be your name,” you acknowledge that God is absolutely holy. He always has been and always will be. To pray this means that we revere, honor, glorify, and obey Him because we recognize His holiness.

And it means that Jesus is Lord in our heart—that is the beginning place. This is what the entire Sermon on the Mount is about. Jesus is our Lord and He is seen in and through our lives.

(3) “Your kingdom come.”

This is to get our focus right. As God’s children, our supreme concern should be God’s kingdom. Too often in our prayer lives we’re like babies who only care about their own wants.

Our prayers are often self-centered, focused on our own needs, our plans, our aspirations, and our understandings.

We have a responsibility to pray for one another, for our pastors and missionaries, for the sick and hurting. But our prayers should be that God’s purpose will be done in and through those we pray for, and that God’s kingdom be advanced through that person or cause.

When we pray that His kingdom come, not only are we looking forward to the return of Christ, we are committing ourselves to Christ that God’s purpose will be accomplished in our lives, and that Christ’s rule will be seen through how we live our lives.

(4) “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

God is sovereign. It is true that God’s purpose and plan will ultimately be carried out. Yet, it is also the most obvious fact of life is that God is not now ruling on earth as He rules in heaven.

So when we pray that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are praying that God’s purpose will become our own.

God is sovereign, and He has purpose for our lives, yet He allows us to make our own decisions. If we were not able to make our own choices there would be no such thing as free will.

God lets us choose to obey Him or not, and to accept Him and His purpose for our lives or not—to accept or reject the Savior. Even as Christians, we still must constantly choose to let God’s will be our own and to obey Him.

(5) “Give us today our daily bread.”

Bread is symbolic of all our daily needs. It symbolizes everything necessary for the preservation of this life, like food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, family, good government, and peace.

Jesus is not talking about luxuries of life, but our daily needs. It’s important even for Christians to understand that every good thing we have comes from God.

This prayer recognizes that God is the source of every physical thing that we have. In praying

we are expressing our absolute dependence upon God. We also, through prayer, express our thankfulness for His gifts of goodness.

(6) “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Jesus uses an interesting word here—rather than “forgive us our sins” He says “forgive us our debts.” Sin is a moral and spiritual debt to God that must be paid. What a wonderful way of showing our indebtedness to God.

Sin is the great problem of mankind. It separates us from God. So whether we admit it or not, sin is our greatest enemy. This means that continual forgiveness of our sins is more important than our need for daily bread.

Included in this prayer is the idea that we must be forgivers just as God has forgiven us. “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” All sin is against God. But our sin is also against others. And others sin against us.

“As we also have forgiven . . .” Read that over and over. This doesn’t mean that our forgiveness of others earns us the right to be forgiven.

But, our forgiving others is one of the primary evidences that we have been forgiven, that we are children of God, that we are new creatures.

(7) “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

This is a heart desire to be right with God. We have some difficulty in understanding here about the proper translation of the Greek word used here for temptation. It can also properly be translated “testing.”

We know that our Holy Father God cannot and will not lead us into temptation to sin (Jas. 1:13). Yet, we also know that testing and trials can help mature our faith (Jas. 1:2-3). The key here is “the evil one.”

In other words it is Satan that Jesus has in mind here. We admit our weakness, and that the devil is too strong for us, but that our Heavenly Father will deliver us, will rescue us as we call upon Him.

This is also an appeal to God to protect us from sin. We pray to God to not leave us in the

temptation. We pray for strength not to give in to the temptation.

So here's what happens: We appeal to God to place a watch over our eyes, a muffler over our ears, a gag over our mouths, to tether our feet and our hands—that in whatever we see, hear, or say, and in any place we go, and in anything we do, He will protect us from sin.

Application:

The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer. The “Lord’s Prayer” is actually a model prayer by Jesus to teach us how to pray. Its effectiveness is in how we allow it to guide our prayers.

True prayer is not trying to get God to agree with us or to provide for our selfish desires. Prayer is affirming God’s sovereignty, His righteousness, and His majesty. In prayer we seek to conform our desires and purposes to His will and glory.