

## The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-15

Introduction: 1) It is both interesting and amazing to realize that the Bible only records one instance when the disciples specifically asked Jesus to teach them to do something. This is recorded in Luke 11:1 where, "one of His disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples." What follows in an abbreviated form of what we know popularly as "The Lord's Prayer." Its expanded and more well-known version is found in Matthew 6:9-13 in the Sermon on the Mount.

2) The text in Matthew has been called "The Lord's Prayer", "The Model Prayer" and "The Disciples Prayer." A good case can be made that the "Lord's Prayer" is found in John 17, also called "The High Priestly Prayer." Personally, I like to call Matthew 6:9-13, "The Disciples Model Prayer." I like this designation because as Sinclair Ferguson says, "[This prayer] serves two purposes. First, it provides a model prayer, an easily memorized outline that serves as a lesson in how to approach God as Father and how we are to speak with him. Second, it serves as an outline of the whole Christian life by providing certain "fixed points" of concern for the family of God. It underlines life's priorities and helps us to get them into focus" (*The Sermon on the Mount*, 120). Perhaps we could say, it is a model prayer from the model Teacher!

3) It is very common, and with good reason, to divide the prayer into two sections (9-11, 11-13) with each containing three petitions or requests. The first 3 focus on God. Note the 3-fold repetition of the word “your” in verses 9-10. The second 3 focus on us and our needs. Note the 3-fold use of the words “our” and “us.”

Verses 14-15 provide additional commentary on our prayer for forgiveness in verse 12. John Piper says, “Prayer is a wartime walkie talkie for spiritual warfare, not a domestic intercom to increase the comforts of the saints” (Twitter tweet, 6-13-11). I like that image very much, and I think keeping it in mind as we walk through the disciples model prayer can help us see the familiar with new eyes.

#### I. When you pray start with your heavenly Father 6:9-11

Jesus warns us in Matthew 6:5-8 that when we pray we should neither be like Pharisees who pray for show or pagans who pray thinking there many words will bagger God into answering their request. There is a better way, and how we start is very important. Jesus says, “you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven...”

The privilege to approach the Sovereign Lord of the Universe in such a manner should not be underestimated. It goes to the very heart and core of the Christian faith. The wonderful theologian J.I. Packer says it so very well, “You sum up the whole of the New Testament teaching in a single phrase, if you speak of it as a revelation of the Fatherhood of the holy Creator. In the same way you sum up the whole of the New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as

one's Holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all" (*Knowing God*, 182).

When we pray, we do not approach another father, the one Jesus calls "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). No! That father, the devil himself, is our sworn enemy in the cosmic battle between heaven and hell. We could accurately say he is the father of hell. When we pray, we flee to the "Father in heaven," the One who through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus, has brought us into His family by adoption (Gal. 4:5-6). We can approach the great God now as "Our Father." What a privilege we have, and one that we should never take for granted. As we approach the one who is our heavenly Father, Jesus teaches us to begin with three petitions that cause us to focus on Him, not us!

1) Pray for the Lord's name to be honored 6:9

I like the way the *CSB* renders verse 9, "Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy." The idea is as we pray, we admire, esteem, honor, reverence, treasure, value God's name above everything else. John Piper says there is a sense in which the five petitions that follow the first serve the first. I think he has a point. John puts it like this, "Nothing is more clear

and unshakeable to me than the purpose of the universe is for the hallowing of God's name. His kingdom comes for THAT. His will is done for THAT. Humans have bread-sustained life for THAT. Sins are forgiven for THAT. Temptation is escaped for THAT." ("Our Deepest Prayer: Hallowed Be Your Name," 1-9-11). I will simply add, I love that! So, we begin by saying to God, we value you and your Name as holy. We acknowledge and value you as infinitely unique, pure, undefiled, righteous and "transcendent Godness." You are "the supreme and absolute treasure in all the universe and over the universe. All other treasures are as nothing by comparison" (Piper, "Be a Radically God-Centered Pastor," 6-13-11).

2) Pray for the Lord's Kingdom to come 6:10

1) This petition, "Your kingdom come," naturally flows from the first and has a strong missionary impulse as does the next ("Your will be done"). It also invites us to cultivate a balanced and healthy eschatology on the personal and cosmic levels, and on our present and future perspective. Personally, I want God's kingdom, His rule and reign, in my life right now, today, this very moment. I also pray and long for the day when His glorious Name is honored as holy among all the nations and throughout the universe. I want victory today as I battle the one Paul calls, "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4). Even more, I long for the day when all the

forces of evil and wickedness are banished to the regions of hell forever and we enjoy the blessed and eternal promise of Revelation 21:4, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more.”

- 2) The Kingdom of God is locked in a cosmic conflict with the transient and fleeting kingdoms of this world. This world is at war, and one of our greatest weapons in this warfare is prayer. And, a “battle prayer” that we should daily radio to our Father in heaven is, “Your kingdom come.” I want your kingdom not mine. I want your name to be honored, not mine. In this battle for the souls of men and women I ask you my Father, deploy your troops among the nations. Equip your soldiers to wield “the sword of the Spirit – which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17) as we advance your kingdom. Empower us as your spiritual Navy Seals, Green Berets and Army Rangers to invade enemy territory and by the power of your gospel see prisoners of war set free and brought into your kingdom. Help us claim the promise of your word, that there is coming a day when “a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, will be standing before your throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). Help us Father to long for and to daily pray for that

day when, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

Dear Father, we want, we long for, your kingdom to come.

3) Pray for the Lord’s will to be done 6:10-11

The third petition, “Your will be done,” is closely connected to the second. We pray for our Father’s universal rule and reign to come personally and cosmically in His kingdom which naturally leads to praying for His will to be done in the same. I want His will to be done in my life. I want His to be done worldwide and among the nations that His Name would be revered and treasured above all things. J.I. Packer says, “Here more clearly than anywhere the purpose of prayer becomes plain: not to make God do my will, but to bring my will into line with his” (*Praying the Lord’s Prayer*).

The 18<sup>th</sup> century Puritan Richard Alleine beautifully and powerfully adds, “I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.”

It is often said that Jesus is the best commentary on His teachings. That is certainly true when it comes to praying for God’s will to be done on earth as

it is in heaven. All we have to do is visit the Garden of Gethsemane and watch our Lord, in His greatest hour of agony, pour out His soul to His Father in heaven. Matthew records this critical redemptive moment in chapter 26. As He contemplates the cross, bearing the wrath of God for the sins of the world, knowing it will involve a real and authentic separation from the Father, Jesus prays in verse 39, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Again, in verse 42, we hear our Savior say, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” And finally in verse 44, Matthew simply records, “he went away again, and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.”

All of this causes us pause because we are on sacred and holy ground. It also provides for us an incredibly important spiritual lesson. The will of God is not always easy and it is not always safe. But, as Paul teaches us in Romans 12:2, it is always “good, pleasing, and perfect.”

We need to be brutally honest at this point. To pray “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is a dangerous prayer. It means the exaltation of the Sovereign will of God and the death of your sovereign will. It means you are willingly submitting your life to be molded and shaped by another. It means as a friend of mine said, “You will experience the messiness, discomfort, and difficulty of God’s refining grace. It means surrendering the

center of your universe to the One who alone deserves to be there. It means loving God above all else and your neighbor as yourself. It means experiencing the freedom that can only be found when God breaks your bondage to you! It means finally living for the one glory that is truly glorious, the glory of God.

You see, the prayer that Christ taught us to pray is the antidote to sin. Since sin starts with the heart, it's only when my heart desires God's will more than it desires my will, that I'll live within the moral, gospel boundaries that God has set for me. And, it is only God's grace that can produce this kind of heart.

"Your will be done" are words of surrender, words of confidence and words of grace. They can only be prayed by those who've been delivered by the Redeemer from the one kingdom that always leads to destruction and death, the kingdom of self. It can only be prayed by those who surrender their will to the will of a loving Father in heaven."

## II. When you pray share your concerns with your heavenly Father 6:11-15

Our Lord's model prayer now shifts its focus. It moves from our heavenly Father to us and our needs. I am grateful that right here in this famous passage our Lord addresses a fallacy that well-meaning persons sometimes argue. We should never pray "I", "me" or "we" prayers, they say, because that means we



are man-centered rather than God-centered. Now, I readily acknowledge that too many of our prayers focus more on us than God. However, as our perfect heavenly Father, He delights in our coming into His presence, pouring out our heart and sharing our needs. In particular, Jesus tells us to ask for our daily needs, to ask for daily forgiveness of our sins, and to ask for our Father to daily deliver and rescue us from the evil one, Satan himself. It is right to pray for these things. It is good for us to pray for these things. If prayer is a wartime walkie talkie equipping us for spiritual warfare, it is a wise strategy to ask our Commander-in-Chief, who is also our Father, for the essential equipment and reinforcements necessary for victory. Warren Wiersbe is right, “Satan wants to convince us that prayer is a waste of time, but the Word of God and our own Christian experience assures us that prayer is a key to God’s treasury of grace” (*On Earth as it is in Heaven*).

1) Ask for your daily needs to be met 6:11

- This is a prayer most modern persons take for granted, pray without thinking. Why? Because we have an abundance of daily bread. The fact is we have much more than we will ever need. However, “Give us our daily bread” is a prayer that, in much of our world, is prayed with a sense of urgency and desperation. The simple fact is much of the world lives day to day. There need for the necessary bread just to live is very real

every day. We can rest assured their prayer is a prayer of complete sincerity. It is also a prayer of genuine humility. It is a cry of the heart that says, “Lord, you must supply what I need just to live or I will die. I am totally dependent on you and you alone.” J.I. Packer again is very helpful at this point: “Petitions looking to God as the sole and Omni-competent source of supply of all human needs, down to the most mundane, are expressing truth, and as the denying of our own self-sufficiency humbles us, so the acknowledging of our dependence honors God.” (*Praying the Lord’s Prayer*).

- This petition immediately recalls God’s provision of manna for the Hebrew children during the Exodus (cf. Ex. 16). They were instructed to gather only what they needed for that day and no more. When the next day came, God would again provide for the daily needs of that day. It also reminds us that our eternal needs as well as our daily needs are met by the One who Himself is called, “the Bread of Life” (John 6:35). Don Carson is right, asking God to “give us today our daily bread: should not be “empty rhetoric.” Disciples of Jesus are “to learn to trust their heavenly Father to meet their physical needs” (*The Sermon on the Mount*, 67). After all, as James 1:17 reminds us, “Every good and perfect gift is

from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

2) Ask for God to forgive you as you forgive others 6:12, 14-15

The second petition where we share our concerns is our prayer for forgiveness. Verses 14-15 provide a helpful commentary on this request.

Now, some may find this petition confusing. It is not the case, that all of our sins have been forgiven past, present and future? Isn't Romans 8:1 true for everyone who has repented of sin and placed their trust in Jesus alone for salvation; that “there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus?”

How do we square this with what we read in verses 12, 14-15? I think the answer is this. When we were converted and justified, we stood before God as Judge. Here, in the disciple's model prayer, we stand before God as

Father. J.I. Packer once again is helpful at this point when he says, “The Lord's Prayer is a family prayer, in which God's adopted children address

their Father, and though their daily failures do not overthrow their justification, things will not be right between them and their Father till they have said, “Sorry” and asked him to overlook the ways they have let him down.” (*Praying the Lord's Prayer*).

Paul Tripp adds, “When I live this lifestyle I find joy in telling Jesus, day after day, that I need what he did in his life, death and resurrection. This

lifestyle is about growing to acknowledge that in some way, every day, I give evidence to the fact that the cross was necessary. This lifestyle of confession and forgiveness makes my daily attitude one of heartfelt gratitude and joy, and causes me to love Christ and live for Christ more and more.”

*(Living for More).*

So, as I ask for daily bread, I also ask for daily forgiveness for my sins which is what the word “debt” means. There is a simple song that captures this thought so well, “He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. I needed someone, to wash my sins away.” So in justification, He, the Lord Jesus, washed (past tense) all my sins away. Now, in sanctification, He washes (present tense) daily my sins away.

- Jesus then adds a crucial qualifier that must not be missed. I ask God to forgive me of my sins in the same way I forgive those who have sinned against me. I am not like the ungrateful servant in Matthew 18:21-35, who forgiven an unpayable debt by the great king, refused to forgive a fellow servant of a very minor debt. Jesus makes the principle crystal clear in verses 14-15 where he says, “For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don’t forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.” John Stott helps us see what our Lord is saying when he writes, “[Our Lord] certainly does not mean that our

forgiveness of others earns us the right to be forgiven. It is rather that God forgives only the penitent and that one of the chief evidences of true penitence is a forgiving spirit. Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If, on the other hand, we have an exaggerated view of the offences of others, it proves that we have minimized our own. It is the disparity between the size of debts which is the main point of the parable of the unmerciful servant. Its conclusion is: ‘I forgave you all that debt (which was huge)...; should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ (John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 149-50).

Thomas Watson nails the application when he says, “We not bound to trust an enemy; but we are bound to forgive him” (*Body of Divinity*, 581). For the disciple of Jesus, Ephesians 4:32 must be an ever present number on speed dial!

### 3) Ask the Lord to deliver you from the evil one 6:13

- The final petition of the Lord’s prayer is crucial for our success in spiritual warfare. It is two-fold, set in the form of a negative/positive request. First, “do not bring us into temptation.” Second, “deliver us from the evil one.” Though the last two words (“evil one”) could be

rendered “evil,” the phrase “evil one,” a reference to the devil, is to be preferred.

- Now, the first phrase begs a theological question: why would we need to ask the One who, as James 1:13 teaches us, doesn’t tempt anyone,” to “not bring us into temptation?” Chuck Quarles is helpful when he notes, “request for protection from temptation were standard fare in ancient Jewish prayers” (*Sermon on the Mount*, 213). They would not have seen anything odd about this request at all. Further, the plea to our heavenly Father is not, “Do not tempt us,” but do not lead us into temptation. Drawing on the second part of verse 13, the idea “simply ask God not to lead Jesus’ disciples into situations which the evil one would seize as an opportunity for temptation.” (Ibid., 217). In this light the request is a wartime cry for protection and guidance. Jesus could take Satan on, one-on-one, in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). We cannot! We need the Father’s guidance, the Savior’s work, and the Spirit’s strength to win the victory over the evil one. We need God for our spiritual survival. Quarles again puts it perfectly, “The disciple is so weak that he is no match for the Devil. He needs a Savior, not an assistant; a Hero not a helper. He needs a Champion who will fight the evil one for him and

who will snatch him from the clutches of the enemy who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy” (Ibid., 221).

- Satan’s wartime goal is to discourage us, defile us, devour us and defeat us. Without the Lord guiding us thru the minefield of his demonic devices, we are certain to be blown to spiritual smithereens! The prayer for deliverance from temptation and the evil one is preventative medicine! This is a petition to be prayed at the beginning of every day. It is a prayer that you should also pray, throughout the day. Remember 1 Corinthians 10:13 and claim it throughout the day, “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide a way out so that you may be able to bear it.”

Conclusion: Andrew Murray (1828-1917) was a pastor and advocate for missions. He wrote over 240 books. Yet, for all his achievements, he was best known as a man of prayer. One of his best known works is *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. There he provides a powerful word, in the form of a prayer, that serves as an appropriate conclusion to our study of the Disciples Model Prayer. He writes: “Lord Jesus! Enroll my name among those who confess that they don’t know how to pray as they should, and who especially ask you for a course of teaching in

prayer. Lord, teach me to be patient in your school, so that you will have time to train me. I am ignorant of the wonderful privilege and power of prayer. Lead me to forget my thoughts of what I think I know, and make me kneel before you in true teachableness and poverty of spirit. Fill me, Lord, with confidence that with you for my Teacher, I will learn to pray...Blessed Lord! I know that you won't put that student to shame who trusts you. And, with your grace, that student won't shame you, either. Amen." (Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*).