

Teachings of Jesus

The Model Prayer

Matthew 6: 7-15

Introduction

The theme of Matthew 5 and 6 is how Jesus provides life in God's kingdom, which is different from man's religion. In Matthew 6 verse 7, Jesus points out another contrast between religion and God's kingdom. Jesus says, "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words." (Matthew 6:7 NKJV)

When Jesus prohibits prayer as vain repetition that's pointless, he sets himself apart from all of the world's religions. Jesus calls things like occultic spells, the Buddhist prayer wheel, and Islamic daily prayers "meaningless repetition." Then, Jesus sets the stage for what is possibly one of the most ironic passages in scripture.

The reason Jesus is so against the religions of the world is because they communicate things that are entirely inaccurate about God. Most religions leave people feeling that God is impersonal, tight-fisted, and can be manipulated through rituals, prayers, and incantations.

Sadly, many people use the "Lord's Prayer" precisely as an impersonal, repetitive act that they hope will persuade God to forgive them or give them what they want. That is not how Jesus meant for the "Model Prayer" to be used. So, how should we use it?

The model prayer that Jesus gives us is perfect for helping us develop a positive and effective prayer life. There is no doubt that this model prayer is an excellent stand-alone prayer in its own right. And there is nothing wrong with memorizing and praying it as it is. However, Jesus didn't say "pray with these words," he said "pray in this way" or pray along these lines.

The model prayer is an example of personal communication that expresses a proper view and attitude towards God. When translated into modern English and applied personally to your own life, this model prayer becomes a helpful framework for talking to God, especially when you lose your way and need to refocus.

The prayer can be divided into three clear sections, arranged in a useful order that enhances our relationship with God. Let's look at this model prayer to understand better what Jesus was trying to teach his disciples.

In verse 5, Jesus says, "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will

reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:5-8 NKJV)

I. Our Father, who art in Heaven

Then, in verse 9, Jesus says, "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name." (Matthew 6:9 NKJV)

The first thing we learn from this prayer is that God is our loving Father, and we are His child." These words communicated something very radical to Jesus' hearers. The religious leaders of Jesus' day never addressed God in this way. They used terms like "Sovereign Lord" or "God Almighty" to emphasize God's power and authority. For them, God was a far-off, distant authority figure that they addressed formally.

But Jesus addresses God as "Father." The Aramaic word is "Abba"--which is roughly equivalent to "Papa." It is a term of endearment. It indicates a close personal relationship between a loving father and his child. So, this prayer begins with "You are my loving Father, and I am your child."

By praying "Our Father," Jesus claims to have an intimate personal relationship with God and invites us to also enter into and enjoy this relationship with God. That is why he came. Jesus came to live a perfect life, fulfilling God's Law, and therefore willingly offering himself as a sacrifice to pay for our sins. Through His sacrifice, we can draw near to God anytime and be confident that he will accept and welcome us into his presence.

Hebrews 10:19 says, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19-22 NKJV)

Christ's payment for our sins makes it possible for God to indwell us through his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us to relate to God and personally experience God's love. Romans 5 says, "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5 NKJV)

Romans 8:15 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God," (Romans 8:14-16 NKJV)

That's why you must have a personal relationship with God to get anything out of this prayer. Do you know him as your personal, loving Father? Do you feel you can draw near to Him at any time with confidence in his love and acceptance? Have you experienced God's love and care in your life? If not, you can begin this awesome relationship with God today. All you have to do is accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:" (John 1:12 NKJV)

When you do this, the walls begin to come down, and you begin to experience a relationship with God that will revolutionize your whole outlook on life. When you begin this prayer, does it cause you to remember and thank God for his grace, your personal salvation, and his faithfulness to you?

That is where we need to start. Above all else, prayer is an opportunity to know and have fellowship with God as our loving Father.

II. Hallowed Be Your Name

The second significant part of this prayer is "Hallowed Be Your Name." Verse 10 says, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10 NKJV)

\Notice that the imagery for God changes from loving Father to ruling King. "You are my rightful Ruler, and I am your servant." Now, the mode of communication changes from relationship to one of proclamation. All three requests acknowledge the spread of God's dominion in a person's heart.

"Hallowed be thy name" means "May you be recognized as the one true God." "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It means that people down here must acknowledge you as their rightful King like the angels do in Heaven. We need to understand God's will and plans to appreciate this part of the prayer.

The central theme of the Bible is, "God is the rightful Ruler of all humanity." The root problem of the human race can be found in its revolt and alienation from God. God's love for us has caused Him to launch a rescue operation to deliver us from sin and rebellion and enable us to return to his loving leadership.

Jesus is the key to that rescue operation. Christ's death provides the way for us to be reconciled to God. At the end of human history, Jesus will return to establish God's kingdom over all the earth forcibly. In between his comings, Jesus is advancing God's kingdom through us as we share this good news and invite people to accept God and his kingdom voluntarily.

2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:20-21 NKJV)

This is not just a request that God will ultimately re-establish his kingdom on earth. It is a statement of personal enlistment for presenting yourself to God as his servant. It is consciously aligning yourself with God's purpose and plan and personally offering yourself to be his instrument to invite people into his kingdom and help them become effective followers. Romans 6:13 says, "And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God." (Romans 6:13 NKJV)

It is to remind me that the world does not revolve around me and my desires but around God and his plan. Prayer is not how I try to persuade God to do my will; it is how I align myself with God to do his will. When you talk to God, it leads you to address many matters. Am I letting your kingdom advance in my own life? Do I have any issues with you that I need to resolve? Is there anything I need to change in my character to be a better ambassador?

Our prayer should be "Please give me opportunities today to share your love and good news with people who don't know you. Show me your unique role more clearly so I can build up your people."

III. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

The third aspect of this model prayer is that God is our faithful provider, and we depend upon Him for everything we need in this life. In verse 11, Jesus says, "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:11-13 NKJV)

This section of the prayer focuses on three personal requests. It may be the most familiar and understandable part of this prayer. There are two important things about these requests. They are requests for the resources to do God's will, not simply a request purely for my own enjoyment. Jesus invites us to ask for whatever we need today to fulfill his mission for our lives. And they are requests that acknowledge that I am not self-sufficient or adequate to do God's will by my own power or ingenuity. I am not strong enough to do what God wills, and I need Him to supply me with the I need to accomplish His plan. God is our faithful Provider, and we am dependent upon Him. These three requests pertain to three important areas I need God's help with on a daily basis in order to serve him effectively.

Verse 6 says, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11 NKJV) We need the Lord for the physical and material strength to do his will. We trust Him to provide the stamina, financial support and health we need each day to live the Christian life.

Verse 12 says, "And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors." (Matthew

6:12 NKJV) We need the Lord to provide the ability to love other people the way he wants me to love them. We trust Christ to help us become others-centered, and develop boldness, insight and courage.

Verse 13 says, "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13 NKJV) The last phrase "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" is definitely true but was evidently a later addition to the original prayer.

"Lead us not into temptation" means "Help me not to succumb to temptation; deliver me from the evil one." How many of you know there is evil in the world and it does have an agenda! We need God in our life for spiritual protection from Satan because our allegiance to God makes us Satan's enemy.

So our prayer is insight into his tactics, strength to remain steadfast in faith, and the power to defeat Satan and his helpers.

Conclusion

In this model prayer Jesus starts by praying "Our Father," not "my." We are not alone. We are in this thing together! As Christian believers we are bonded together by the Holy Spirit. We need God, but also need one another. Do you include your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in your prayers?

Your relationship with God and fellow believers will deepen and grow as you commit to praying along the lines of this model prayer each day.

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13 NKJV)