

*Meeting with God*  
Session 4  
**How to Pray**

*Prayer is the highest activity of the human soul, and therefore it is at the same time the ultimate test of a man's true spiritual condition.*  
--Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Effective, satisfying prayer is not an unattainable goal. It is God's will. It is not the preserve of super-saints. The Spirit longs for communion with every child of God. Jesus intends that we not only listen to the words he taught, recorded in Scripture, he desires for us to commune with his Father by addressing him in prayer. It is a great irony that the prayer most familiar to Christians, what is called "The Lord's Prayer," is so often little understood or mindlessly muttered. Grasping Jesus' meaning and intentions for this model prayer can lead us to a life of prayer that pleases God and allows us to commune with him in joy and confidence.

## Matthew 6:1-13

- I. "This, then," Jesus said, "is *how* you should pray..." (Matt. 6:9 NIV).
  - A. The prayer of verses 9-13 is a model prayer.
  - B. Pray by establishing my concerns in God's concerns—first for his glory on earth and then for the care of his people while they live on the earth.
- II. God does not reward prayers prayed to impress others (verses 1, 5-6).
  - A. Motive is key for prayer that pleases God. Private prayer can reveal pure motive.
  - B. God does not reward prayer that is prayed with human ears as the primary audience.
  - C. The good news is that God rewards sincere prayer.
- III. God does not reward prayers that seek to manipulate him (verses 7-8).
  - The idea behind "Gentile" ("pagan," NIV) religion is that certain religious activities—sacrifices, oaths, prayers, can force a god to act.
- IV. God rewards prayers that reflect his concerns: for his glory in the earth and our good under his rule (verses 9-13).
  - A. We pray to a Father (verse 9b).
    1. A Father by adoption—this leads us straight to the Cross.
    2. An adopted child is chosen personally by his father. He enters into personal fellowship and experiences personal care for his every need. He is corrected and encouraged; protected and trained.

### 3. A Father “in heaven.”

#### B. God’s concerns for his glory (verses 9c-10)

- The context: “...on earth as it is in heaven.” Earth remains in darkness, God wants the heavenly standard established on earth as it is in heaven. He calls us to extend his rule by participating through our prayers.
- Three requests
  - His Name hallowed
  - His kingdom acknowledged
  - His will done
  
  - Note the logical progression

##### 1. His Name hallowed

- a. Recall from Session 2—God’s name is the revelation of his character which is revealed in word and then experienced in his acts. Knowing God’s name implies entering into a personal relationship with God.
- b. God’s name is perfectly hallowed in heaven. We pray that he be *treated* as he is, holy, on the earth.

##### 2. His kingdom acknowledged

- a. “Kingdom” implies there is a king—someone who rules.
- b. “Kingdom” is not a geographic place but a condition of submission.
- c. One day our King will return to judge those who refuse his kingdom with eternal, punishing wrath.
- d. So we pray that Christians will understand the nature of their king: his saving acts on their behalf, his authority over every aspect of their lives. We also pray that those who have yet to bow their knee to Jesus will do so in humility and faith.

3. His will done

- a. Our holy king has a will for every aspect of his subjects' lives. They must seek it out in his Word and obey it humbly.
- b. We pray too, for wisdom—guidance for those decisions in which the Word does not have specific direction.

C. God's concern for our good, as defined by Jesus—a goodness that fulfills the first half of the prayer and brings glory to God (verses 11-13).

- Prayer is an acknowledgment of dependence on God.
- Note the switch in pronouns: from “Your” to “our.”
- Note the plural pronoun: “*our* daily bread.”

1. *Give us this day our daily bread...* Daily bread is daily food and by extension, the necessities of life.

- a. “*Daily bread*”? This is a hard prayer for most Americans to pray. Most of us have food for a month in our pantries.
- b. D.A. Carson, “The prayer is for our needs, not our greeds.”<sup>1</sup>
- c. Still, out of dependence and humility, we should pray for those things that are necessary for our physical subsistence. We may have an abundance, but God could allow it to blow away in a day.
- d. We should pray for those who do lack basic necessities (and give if we have an abundance).

2. *...and forgive us our debts...* Forgiveness of sin

- a. Sin creates a debt which can only be paid by punishment.

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<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson, *Matthew* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, Gen. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), p. 171.

- b. While Jesus' death removed the punishment of wrath for all our sins, past and future, still God wants us humbly to acknowledge those sins that we continue to commit while in the flesh, and in our acknowledgement to take steps to change.
  - c. *...as we also have forgiven our debtors.* Is this forgiveness based on my works—my forgiveness of others?
3. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Freedom from tests that could overwhelm us
- a. One petition looked at from two sides: "...lead us not...but deliver us..."
  - b. The word "evil" can just as naturally be translated "Evil One"—Satan, the great tempter.
  - c. We know from James 1:13, that God tempts no one to sin. Satan is the tempter, and God allows him to work in our lives, turning our temptations into opportunities for his glory. God's intends that any temptation we face "test" us or "prove" us to be his children living for his glory. And when we pass the test, he rewards us!
  - d. Why pray for deliverance? John Stott answers:
    - "Perhaps we could paraphrase the whole request as 'Do not allow us so to be led into temptation that it overwhelms us, but rescue us from the evil one.' So behind these words that Jesus gave us to pray are the implications that the devil is too strong for us, that we are too weak to stand up to him, but that our heavenly Father will deliver us if we call upon him."<sup>2</sup>
    - See 1 Corinthians 10:13.

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<sup>2</sup> Stott, p. 150.

V. How to pray

- A. Get your motive right—I pray not to gain a reputation, not to manipulate God to give me what I want, but to ask him to fulfill those things that he desires.
- B. Establish in your mind your relationship before God—he is your Father by adoption through the death of his Son. He is perfectly exalted in heaven. He is holy. Thank him for it, exalt him for who he is and what he has done for you.
- C. Pray for God’s concern for his glory by asking yourself these questions:
  1. Where is God’s character not treated as holy?
  2. Where is God’s rule not acknowledged?
  3. Where is God’s will not done?
    - This may also be a prayer for guidance in a situation where Scripture does not make God’s will clear.
- D. Pray for daily necessities by asking yourself these questions:
  1. Who needs food, clothing, shelter, healing?
  2. Who needs forgiveness of sins?
  3. Who needs freedom from overwhelming tests, trials, temptations?

## Group Discussion

1. What does a lack of prayer say about a Christian?
2. What do you typically pray for in your private prayers? What does this say about your interests?
3. What do you need to add to your prayers in order to pray according to what Jesus taught? What do you need to discard?
4. Spend time as a group praying through the Lord's prayer, using the notes as a guide. First cover God's concerns for his glory, then cover God's concerns for our needs.

## 5. Practice

For the coming six days, read Matthew 6:1, 5-13. Go over the outline to make sure you completely understand each part of the prayer Jesus gave to us, his disciples. Try to memorize the ideas given in the last summary of the outline (section V). Then use the attached sheets as a prayer journal. In the blank spaces of the sheet, list those things you prayed for according to the directions Jesus gave us. You can use one sheet for the week, or one for each day. Copy the last one if you want to continue to use this format to assist you in your prayers.

# Jesus' Way to Pray

Matthew 6:5-13

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Motive—God's glory—not my reputation or selfish desires.

*Our Father in heaven...* —A transcendent Father by adoption through the cross

## God's concerns for his glory

- *...hallowed by your name.*  
His character known  
and treated as holy.
- *Your kingdom come...*  
His rule acknowledged  
and revered.
- *...your will be done...*  
His commands obeyed  
and will accomplished.
- *...on earth as it is in heaven.*

## God's concerns for our needs

- *Give us this day our daily bread...*  
Necessities of life for today
- *...and forgive us our debts*  
Any unconfessed sin?
- *... as we also have forgiven our debtors.*  
Any unforgiven offense?
- *And Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.*  
Protection from Satan:
  - No overwhelming trials/temptations
  - Grace to endure until deliverance comes.

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