

## Sermon Outline

# “Pray Like This,” Matthew: The Life and Words of Jesus, Part 17 – Matthew 6:7-15 – Joshua Harris – September 16, 2012

## Introduction

1. The subject of prayer makes many Christians feel guilty. Instead of feeling guilty for prayerlessness, however, we should feel dumb. If you walked by a pot of gold and there was a sign that said, “Please take as much as you want” and you didn’t take any, should you feel guilty about it? No, you should just feel dumb.
2. The truth is that prayer is not a chore; it’s an incredible opportunity. It isn’t work we do to earn God’s favor – it’s the privilege of already knowing God’s favor. Because Jesus has saved us, we get to talk to the most awesome, wonderful, creative, loving, powerful person in the entire universe! Prayer is access to God’s power and help.

## Prayer is about Relationship

1. In verse 7, Jesus begins by telling us how NOT to pray. Don’t pray like the Gentiles – that is people who don’t know the true God – who heap up empty phrases. Jesus says these people make the mistake of thinking that they’ll be heard because of the *quantity* of their words. Prayer isn’t about heaping up meaningless phrases in the hopes of getting something. God isn’t a vending machine. He’s a person.
2. Even more wonderful, he is our Father.
  - A. “The Muslims have some ninety-nine different names for God. Creator, Enricher, Watcher, Avenger – these different names will feature in a Muslim’s prayer. Not one of them is ‘Father.’ But it would be impossible for a Christian to compile a list of even two or three names for God, without ‘Father’ being one of them. It is the name by which we know him the best.

The implications of this for the prayer life are enormous. The person who, through faith in Christ, has entered ‘the family’ of God no longer regards prayer as a means of twisting the arm of a reluctant deity, of squeezing favors out of a distant and all powerful benefactor, as one of the old Bible commentators puts it, ‘what a distance between us in our helplessness and God in his glory, but “Father” reaches all the way!’” (Richard Bewes, *Talking About Prayer*)
  - B. “He is not only good but great. Thus he combines fatherly love with heavenly power, and what his love directs his power is able to perform.” (John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*)

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3. Prayer is also about our relationship to other Christians. Jesus teaches us to pray *“our Father.”* Because God is our Father, it means we have a new family. We have brothers and sisters in our church and also around the world. All the priorities of prayer that Jesus teaches us have a personal and a family implication. We pray for our needs as well as the needs of others.

### Prayer is about God

1. The first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer center on God’s name, his kingdom and will. They’re all about God’s agenda, God’s purpose advancing.
2. **“Hallowed be your name”** is a request for God to be revered and worshipped. *Hallowed* means to make holy, to set above, to honor. This is a prayer for God to be honored and esteemed the way he deserves.
  - A. “God is to be revered. He is to be thought of, and spoken about, and served with godly fear. He is to be set-apart, not in the sense of placed on a shelf and then ignored, but in the sense of being exalted above everything (everyone) else and worshipped (Derek Thomas, *Praying the Savior’s Way*)
3. **“Your Kingdom come”** is a request for God’s saving reign to spread. It’s a prayer for God to save more men and women from the bondage of sin and the devil and for all the blessings of his kingship to increase.
4. **“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”** is a recognition that God’s way is best in any situation. It’s a petition for God to be obeyed just as he is obeyed in heaven. And ultimately it expresses a longing for God’s final triumph in the world at the end of time when Jesus returns.

### Prayer is about Real Life

1. **“Give us this day our daily bread”** is a prayer for God’s provision of our needs. Your Father isn’t only concerned about your spiritual life. He cares about your body. He cares about your practical needs. The food you eat, the bills you pay. He invites daily dependence on him.
2. **“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”** is a request for forgiveness for our sins against God. Each of us disobeys and stumbles in many ways. An honest, real relationship with God involves seeking his forgiveness.

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3. **“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”** Just as we need God’s provision of food to live, we need his strength and guidance to walk in righteousness. Do you see the dependence on God that this expresses? We don’t just pray when we face temptation, we should pray for God to keep us away from it.

## **Prayer is about Forgiveness**

1. After Jesus concludes sharing a model prayer, he comments on one aspect of it. Out of the six petitions of this prayer he singles out the call to forgive others for further elaboration. Why? Perhaps it is because that of all the lines in the Lord’s prayer, this is one that we’re all most likely to trip over.
2. As people forgiven by God, we ought to forgive others. When you understand how awesome and complete and undeserved God’s forgiveness in Christ is – when you’ve truly encountered this love and grace – it changes how you relate to people whom have wronged you.

## **Fellowship Starters**

1. Take time as a Care Group to read... Matthew 6:7-15.
2. Do you view prayer as a duty or as a privilege? Does the thought of prayer provoke guilt or incite hope?
3. “What a distance between us in our helplessness and God in his glory, but ‘Father’ reaches all the way!” Believer, when you go to prayer, are you aware of God’s goodness toward you in Christ?
4. Prayer is about God. Do your prayers reflect the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer? Are they centered on God and his agenda? Or are they primarily centered on you and your agenda?
5. Prayer is about real life. Are you aware that God cares about even the mundane needs and details of your life? Do you bring your daily concerns to your Father?
6. Do you pray for God’s help to walk in righteousness? Are you depending on your Father’s strength to deliver you from evil?
7. Prayer is about forgiveness. When you pray, are you aware of God’s costly forgiveness of you in Christ? Do you forgive those who wrong you?